

Your Stewardship Toolkit for August 2021!

August's theme: Stewardship of our leisure time



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Personal note from the editor:

Friends: For the first time since I started writing the Toolkits five years ago, this month I am “recycling” a newsletter article because of a family tragedy that has engaged my energies elsewhere. After declining in health dramatically for her last six weeks, my wife, Sharron Riessinger Blezard, died on July 10 from the metastatic breast cancer that she had fought for nearly three years. The newsletter article below is from July 2018. If your congregation has used this one before, I invite you to find another from the [Newsletter Archive](#). Sorry if this causes inconvenience or hardship.

--Rob Blezard

If you want the free Toolkit sent directly to your inbox every month, [just drop me an email](#).

Feel free to forward it to colleagues who might find it useful.

Consistent communication, education and action can help your congregation develop a healthy culture of stewardship and generosity. This Toolkit can help get you there!

The resources of this toolkit are most effective when used to support a monthly emphasis about a different aspect of stewardship. Exploring this month's theme, “Stewardship of our leisure time,” your congregation might not only share the newsletter article but also plan Bible studies, temple talks, a preaching series, or other activities.

Here's what you'll find in the Toolkit:

-Snippets: Cut and paste a monthly themed “Stewardship Snippet” in every Sunday bulletin! It's a verse or two from the week's Revised Common Lectionary lessons, followed by a brief reflection.

-Newsletter Article: Cut and paste a fresh article on stewardship every month in your newsletter.

-General Resource Websites: – These are places you can go for great ideas to jump start your stewardship ministry!

Stewardship Snippets

Copy and paste into your bulletin!

Source: Rob Blezard

Stewardship Snippet

Aug. 1, 2021 (10th Sunday after Pentecost, Year B)

John 6:35 – Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never be hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty."

In the Lord's Prayer we ask God to "Give us today our daily bread." Jesus reminds us that he is the true bread that feeds our lives and souls. Daily we partake of Jesus through prayer and Scripture, and as often as we may through Holy Communion.

Aug. 8, 2021 (11th Sunday after Pentecost, Year B)

Ephesians 4:31,32 – Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you.

As God's called and blessed community, Christians live by different rules than "the world," which is too-often angry and blameful. We are good stewards of community and relationships when we do our best to live with kindness and love.

Aug. 15, 2021 (12th Sunday after Pentecost, Year B)

Ephesians 5:15,16 – Be careful then how you live, not as unwise people but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil.

God gives all of us the same abundance of time – 24 hours in every day, and it's so easy to waste! Steward disciples pray for wisdom to live each day to its fullest, and to turn away from the world's evils.

Aug. 22, 2021 (13th Sunday after Pentecost, Year B)

John 6:68 – Simon Peter answered Jesus, "Lord, to whom can we go? You have the words of eternal life."

We hear so many voices in our culture luring us to follow by promising us prosperity, power, fun, escape, prestige, etc. But steward disciples know that only Jesus has the words of true life, eternal life. We listen only for Jesus' words.

Aug. 29, 2021 (14th Sunday after Pentecost, Year B)

James 1:17 – Every generous act of giving, with every perfect gift, is from above, coming down from the Father of lights.

Make a list of the blessings in your life. Go ahead! These are gifts to you from God, the source of all. Now review the list and pray for each, "I thank God for" Do this every day and see how you feel.

Newsletter article (306 words)

Select the one below, or from the [Toolkit Newsletter Article Archive](#)

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Stewardship of our leisure time

I commend enjoyment, for there is nothing better for people under the sun than to eat, and drink, and enjoy themselves, for this will go with them in their toil through the days of life that God gives them under the sun. Ecclesiastes 8:15

Busy-ness keeps us from living with joy and peace in today's 24/7 world, but Scripture reminds us that this is hardly new. Ecclesiastes was written some 2,500 years ago! Ecclesiastes does not give license for mindless pleasure-seeking, but rather affirms that our hard work should be balanced with time for relaxation and enjoyment with friends and family.

Saints and mystics have long touted the need for rest and renewal. In the monastic tradition it's referred to as *otium sanctum* – Holy Leisure. Not just wasting our free time, but using it for renewal. As steward/disciples, we aim to use our leisure time wisely. Here are some ideas:

Keep the Sabbath: God actually *commands* us to stop working one day per week, as Exodus 20:8-11 makes clear. But there is no prohibition against leisure. (Why else would God give us a day off?)

Plan your vacation: Even if you're taking a STAYcation, *plan* your time for maximum rest and enjoyment.

Manage your schedule: Are you a slave to your appointment book, driven by *other people's* priorities? Put yourself first – scheduling in time for leisure. Even if it's just 30 minutes here and there!

Find an activity you like: What do you do just for you? Discover – or REdiscover – what brings you joy, then make time to do it.

Socialize: Friends and family make life enjoyable. Spend time with them.

Invest, don't waste, time: Many activities pass the time but don't give back much in renewal or refreshment. Choose activities wisely.

God expects us to work, but not work ourselves to death. Sabbath and leisure time provide means for us to find balance in our life, as well as friendship, love, renewal and purpose.

--Rob Blezard

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General Stewardship Resource Websites

Stewardship of Life Institute– Headquartered at United Lutheran Seminary, this site has a trove of resources in areas of congregational and personal stewardship. (www.stewardshipoflife.org)

ELCA Stewardship Resources– Our denomination’s deep well of materials. (www.elca.org/stewardship)

Center for Stewardship Leaders – Luther Seminary’s excellent website. (faithlead.luthersem.edu/stewardship/)

The ELCA Foundation a ministry of our denomination. (www.elca.org/give/elca-foundation)

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