

Your Stewardship Toolkit for April 2021!

April's theme: Stewardship of our natural world

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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 natural world," your congregation might not only share the newsletter article and snippets but also use the resource links below to 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 quote from the week's Revised Common Lectionary lessons, followed by a brief reflection.

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

-Links to Resources: You'll find URLs to resources on the Web to help you explore this month's theme.

-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.

Maundy Thursday, April 1, 2021

"I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another." – John 13:34

On Maundy Thursday we remember Jesus' selfless service. How may we serve one another by caring for God's good creation so that clean water and air, healthy food, and a sustainable world are available to all people?

Good Friday, April 2 2021

"And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet

together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” –Hebrews 10:24-25

Today we recall Jesus’ cruel death at the hands of empire. As the Body of Christ, we remember we have greater capacity to do the hard holy work of love and care for all that God has and continues to create.

Resurrection of the Lord, April 4, 2021

So [the women] went out and fled from the tomb, for terror and amazement had seized them; and they said nothing to any one, for they were afraid. –Mark 16:8

How often has fear silenced you? Too often Christians are afraid to speak up about creation care. Let us take a deep breath and put aside our fear, trusting the God of resurrection hope to guide our words and deeds as we work for a cleaner, sustainable world.

Second Sunday of Easter, April 11, 2021

“If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.” – 1 John 1:8

The Creator of all has given us responsibility for our home planet. If we say we have no responsibility for being good stewards of creation, we also deceive ourselves. May we rise to the task and work for the good that God breathes into existence.

Third Sunday of Easter, April 18, 2021

“You are witnesses of these things.” – Luke 24:48

Jesus appears to his disciples and gives them a mind-opening experience. As witnesses they are charged with telling the truth of their experience. We, too, are witnesses charged with telling the truth. How might you share the truth about creation care and climate change in our polarized culture?

Fourth Sunday of Easter, April 25, 2021

“Little children, let us love, not in word or speech, but in truth and action.” -- 1 John 3:18

Care of God’s good creation is love in truth and action. Ponder how you might better exhibit this love through your care of our planet and all that God has created. What one small step might you take this week?

April 2021 newsletter article (285 words)

Select the article below, or one of more than four dozen in the [Toolkit Newsletter Article Archive](#). Reprint permission is granted for local congregational use. Just copy and paste into your newsletter! Please include the copyright notice. Other uses please inquire: editor@stewardshipoflife.org.

Stewards of our natural world

“God saw everything that God had made, and indeed, it was very good.” –Genesis 1:31

Type “glacier loss” into an internet search engine, examine photos of ice sheets today versus just a few decades ago, and you will draw the same conclusion as the world’s best scientists: We are losing ice, and fast.

But melting glaciers is just one of the many crises facing our natural world. Stressed by warming temperatures, rising sea levels, shifting weather patterns, acidifying ocean waters, and pollution of land, air and water, nature itself is under grave threat. Thousands of species of insects, plants and animals are going extinct as habitat, from coral reefs to rainforests to estuaries, is destroyed.

“Our planet is in crisis,” says campaignfornature.org. “The natural world is disappearing at an unprecedented rate.”

For God’s people, appointed as caretakers of God’s creation, this is not just troubling news but also a call to action.

This April 22, the 51st Earth Day, let’s dedicate ourselves to learning about and fighting for God’s creation. Here are some ideas:

- Learn about the growing crises and how they threaten our lives. Teach others.
- Pick one problem and make it a focus for education, awareness, and action in your family or congregation.
- Connect with nature by visiting a park or wild place near you.
- Pick up litter and trash from the street or public land.
- Learn about the plants and animals that live in your area.
- Plant flowers, herbs, vegetables, or trees.
- Advocate for public policies that will promote conservation.
- Find a special way to observe Earth Day in your family, congregation, or community.

Our natural world is under threat, but God’s people can make a difference by caring and getting busy.

--Rob Blezard

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Links to resources

[A call to heal creation](#) – *Living Lutheran* magazine’s August cover story focuses on ways the church and God’s people are mobilizing to help our planet. Lots of good work being done! How can you get involved? [Click here](#) for an accompanying study guide to help you or your congregation explore the issue.

(Article: <https://www.livinglutheran.org/2020/08/a-call-to-heal-creation/>)

Study guide: <https://livinglutheran.blob.core.windows.net/cdn/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/0820creation.pdf>)

[I’m a climate scientist who believes in God. Hear me out](#) – In this succinct and illuminating essay in *The New York Times*, evangelical Christian and climate scientist Katherine Hayhoe explains why God’s people should be on the forefront of environmental action. She also speaks of her own struggles to speak truth to Christians who are hostile to talk of climate change. Dr. Hayhoe co-directs the [Climate Center](#) at Texas Tech University in Lubbock. She also hosts the PBS digital series [Global Weirding](#).

(<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/10/31/opinion/sunday/climate-change-evangelical-christian.html>)

[Awakening to God’s Call to Earthkeeping](#) - Here is a real gem! This 50-page resource includes a leader guide and participant materials for use in small groups: adult or older youth Sunday school, Christian Education classes, women’s circles, men’s groups, congregational “Green Team,” or in a retreat setting. (Also can be ordered for \$5 from the ELCA Resource Catalog.)

(<http://www.stewardshipoflife.org/2016/09/gods-call-to-earthkeeping/>)

[Every Creature Singing](#) - Educate your church on how our decisions impact the one and only planet that God gave us to live on — and how we can care for creation! “Every Creature Singing” gives you a detailed 13-session lesson plan, as well as a teacher’s guide. Each lesson has Scripture, readings, discussion questions that focus on your neighborhood, and other resources. From the Mennonite Creation Care Network.

(<https://mennocreationcare.org/every-creature-singing>)

[Form a ‘Green Team’](#) – Get your congregation involved in the environmental movement to inspire members to take personal and collective steps that will help ensure we will leave a safe, fertile planet for our children’s children. A congregational “Green Team” can help through education, advocacy, and action. Lutherans Restoring Creation explains how!

(<https://lutheransrestoringcreation.org/ccck-green-teams/>)

[Let’s talk climate and faith](#) – Understanding that environmental action is controversial in some Christian circles, several church groups got together to create this helpful 21-page guide for initiating helpful conversations around creation care. Extremely helpful in your personal or congregational ministry.

(<https://thestewardshipguy.files.wordpress.com/2020/02/lets-talk-faith-elca.pdf>)

[**17 ways to become and 'eco-preacher' and help the planet**](#) -- As the environmental crisis deepens, many Christian leaders would like to say more about the environment in their preaching, but they don't know how. In this post, Pastor Leah Schade of Lexington Theological Seminary has some creative ideas for kickstarting your preaching!

<https://www.patheos.com/blogs/ecopreacher/2017/04/17-ways-ecopreacher-2017/>

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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