
STEWARDSHIP 2021: SHARING THE GOOD NEWS



So often when members hear 'stewardship season' they automatically think about congregation and personal finances. Perhaps this is because congregations typically address stewardship in the fall as the congregation council prepares the annual budget, or perhaps it is because 'money' is frequently synonymous with 'stewardship' in the minds of many. Whatever the reason, Sharing the Good News is a holistic stewardship resource that, following the Revised Common Lectionary, takes a deeper look into stewardship of the whole self. With this 4-week series pastors, deacons, and stewardship teams will be invited to explore how stewarding all aspects of our lives is a way of living our faith and sharing the good news with the world.

October 3: Stewarding Relationships
October 10: Stewarding Wealth
October 17: Stewarding Power
October 23: Stewarding Courage



Scriptures

- Genesis 2.18-24
- Psalm 8
- Hebrews 1.1-4; 2.5-12
- Mark 10.2-6

“They will know we are Christians by our love,” is not just a song lyric. Time and again in Scripture readers are reminded that not only will the world know we are Christians by our love, but that the world will come to know God’s love through our love. Given recent studies showing trends in both decreasing participation in faith communities and public opinion about Christians being hypocritical, judgmental, and anti-gay, the church has work to do in terms of living God’s love in meaningful ways.

The church is inherently relational, as relational as God’s Triune self, forever working, moving, and pouring out love for the world. In Genesis God’s love is poured out through the Word and Spirit in the act of creating. Life, in all its beauty and wonder came from the eternal love and spark of God’s passion and in God’s desire for abundant life for all, we read about God’s delight in creating a partner for the first human.

“This at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh” the human says, after several attempts of God finding a suitable partner. Yet there was still relationship before the second human was created. The first human was in relationship with plants, animals, and working to steward their home, God’s good creation, from their first breath. Since that first partnership with the earth, God’s desire is for every relationship we have to be an expression of God’s divine love. It is imperative, however, to acknowledge that many relationships do not express this love and become abusive, harmful, and all too often reflect the evil and sin that separate us from God’s love, evidence of which is seen in more intense natural disasters, famine, violence and war, broken relationships and commodification of humans.

But, when these relationships blossom, beautiful love is shown: in friendships, families, communities of faith, and partnerships lived out in surprising ways. Care for the pollinator garden, welcome of refugee, meals shared, and love poured out. To create this kind of love that glimpses the divine takes discipleship, faith, and work. They take time, they take understanding and forgiveness, they take compromise and willingness to laugh (with each other and often at ourselves).

At its core, the Christian life of discipleship centers around the wise stewardship of relationships that God has entrusted us with. How we live in relationship is how we share God’s good news: that all are loved, all are worthy, and all deserve our respect.

STEWARDSHIP RELATIONSHIPS



OCTOBER 3

Questions for Reflection

1. Who are the people God has given in your own life who cause you to react like Adam, “Finally! Someone who gets me!”? How do you tend to your relationship with them?
2. What relationships has God given you that seem to test you? How might you pray for the other person(s) today?
3. Reflect on your relationship with creation. How do you tend to this relationship so that the earth can be home for generations to come?
4. How do the relationships in your faith community communicate God’s love to the world?
5. What conflicts have you experienced in your faith community?
6. How might reframing our communal life in terms of ‘stewarding relationships’ help your community overcome adversity for the sake of inviting others into the abundant life in the love of God?

Litany

One: Since the beginning of time God has formed the world for love.

Many: Let us live out our love in faithful relationships.

One: For the sake of the world and all who despair,

Many: Let us live out our love in faithful relationships.

One: For those who yearn for someone to care,

Many: Let us live out our love in faithful relationships.

One: For healing and reconciliation across creed and race,

Many: Let us live out our love in faithful relationships.

One: For all who seek justice, forgiveness, and grace,

Many: Let us live out our love in faithful relationships.

Suggested Hymns

ELW 655 – Son of God, Eternal Savior

ELW 656 – Blest Be the Tie That Binds

ELW 679 – For the Fruit of All Creation



Scriptures

- Amos 5.6-7, 10-15
- Psalm 90.12-17
- Hebrews 4.12-16
- Mark 10.17-31

"It is not from your own poverty that you give to the poor. Rather, you make return from what is theirs. For what has been given as common for the use of all, you have appropriated to yourself alone. The earth belongs to all, not to the rich. Therefore you are paying a debt, not bestowing a gift."

St. Ambrose of Milan

This notion that what we possess is not actually ours is foreign in the culture of the United States, particularly in the last hundred years. In reality, this is an ancient, deep knowing in the hearts of our ancestors. Yet even so long ago the man with many possessions was sad and grieved that Jesus asked him to sell all that he had and give the money to the poor. In this way, Jesus said, he would have treasure in heaven.

Treasure in heaven is what eternal life is all about. This text makes it rather clear that entering into eternal life does not start at death, but begins when humans can begin to trust God above all else. Having nothing but the love of God is not a place most people like to be. Security has become such an important value that we trust in our own provisions above God's. With wealth we can make sure we have what we need: food, shelter, clothing, all the toys to keep us entertained, all the pleasures that the world can offer, and so on. Yet while we store up for ourselves treasures on earth, the majority of the world goes without. Without food, without shelter, without the security of peace.

As people of a global community, disciples of Jesus Christ, we are called to steward wealth so that all people know the goodness of God's eternal life. So that no one goes to bed hungry. So that none freeze on a park bench in winter. So that children grow to become the potential God created them for.

How we steward our wealth is how we share God's Good News: that there is enough, that material wealth does not equal happiness, that God's desire is for all to have eternal life.

**STEWARDED
WEALTH**



OCTOBER 10

Questions for Reflection

1. How do you react when you hear these words from St. Ambrose of Milan?
“It is not from your own poverty that you give to the poor. Rather, you make return from what is theirs. For what has been given as common for the use of all, you have appropriated to yourself alone. The earth belongs to all, not to the rich. Therefore you are paying a debt, not bestowing a gift.”
2. What would our world look like if Christians took seriously the call to trust more in God rather than our own wealth?
3. When it comes to your own wealth, how do you make decisions about how much you give and to whom?
4. What is your favorite possession? What value do your possessions have in your life?
5. How does your faith community steward its wealth?
6. How does wealth empower your faith community to share the Good News of Jesus Christ?

Litany

- One: God’s abundance pours forth from the heavens, ensuring enough for all.
Many: Let us live out our love in faithful stewardship.
- One: For the sake of the hungry, the homeless, and poor,
Many: Let us live out our love in faithful stewardship.
- One: For God’s gifts poured out in loving care,
Many: Let us live out our love in faithful stewardship.
- One: For disciples to generously follow and give,
Many: Let us live out our love in faithful stewardship.
- One: Until all are fed and can truly live,
Many: Let us live out our love in faithful stewardship.

Suggested Hymns

- ELW 686 – We give thee but thine own
ELW 583 – Take my life, that I may be
ELW 696 – Jesus Calls Us; o’er the Tumult



Scriptures

- Isaiah 53.4-12
- Psalm 91.9-16
- Hebrews 5.1-10
- Mark 10.35-45

With great power comes great responsibility.

~ The Peter Parker Principle from Spiderman by Stan Lee

Well, almost. While the phrase was made popular after the success of the Spiderman franchise, its roots are biblical, most notably from Luke 12. However there are tones of this in the gospel from Mark 10. “Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you must be slave of all.” Jesus is responding to the disciples who have been arguing about who is greatest and vying for the seat of power and glory at Jesus’ right hand in the Kingdom of God.

It is not necessarily every day that you assess your position of power in the world, but every person has power: power to make choices, power to be present to God’s love and presence in the world, etc. How you choose to steward the power you have is a testimony to God’s love in the world. It is sometimes difficult to even perceive the power we have, because it has been granted from birth and is not the result of any work ethic or drive within us. It is easy to see how the CEO of a multi-national company worked to achieve the power they yield, and it is easy to see how they steward that power: do the employees have a living wage? Does the company prioritize lowering their carbon footprint? What is the work culture like and is it one of kindness and compassion or bullying and vying for position?

But not very many of us become this CEO (nor do we want to!). Our power is held in our everyday decisions: how do you stand up for and amplify the voices of those the world ignores? How do you choose to live a more simple, clean life (reduction of single-use plastics is a great example of this)? How do you form intentional relationships with communities who have been disenfranchised? Your power comes most in service of neighbor, having been set free from the one whose power was made clear in dying and in doing so has set you free to live a life of love.

How we steward our power is how we share the Good News: that the power of the cross – Jesus’ death and resurrection – is more powerful than the empty power of the world, and this power empowers us to serve our neighbor.

**STEWARDED
POWER**



OCTOBER 17

STEWARDED POWER

Questions for Reflection

1. Take a moment and reflect on the power you have. What surprises you?
Do you notice this power in your day-to-day interactions?
2. How have you seen power used well? How have you seen power abused?
3. In what ways can ignorance of one's own power be harmful?
4. What power does your faith community have? What are the power dynamics like within your own faith community?
5. How have you seen faith communities use their power in service of neighbor? How does your own faith community use its power?

Litany

One: God's power is made known in serving, on the cross, where the world saved.

Many: Let us live out our love in faithful service.

One: For the voiceless, and those the world would ignore,

Many: Let us live out our love in faithful service.

One: For the immigrant, and refugee, your service we implore:

Many: Let us live out our love in faithful service.

One: For the rain forests, deserts, and fields of grain,

Many: Let us live out our love in faithful service.

One: For the care of all things, our neighbor and friend,

Many: Let us live out our love in faithful service.

Suggested Hymns

ELW 712 – Lord, whose love in humble service

ELW 725 – When the poor ones

ELW 659 – Will you let me be your servant

OCTOBER 17



Scriptures

- Jeremiah 31.7-9
- Psalm 126
- Hebrews 7.23-28
- Mark 10.46-52

Mark's gospel begins thus, "The good news of Jesus Christ, the son of God," and continues to tell story after story about what the kingdom of God is like. The kingdom of God looks like healing, feeding, and often times it looks like making 'good trouble' as John Lewis said.

The blind beggar in Mark 10 shows phenomenal courage in shouting out when he hears that Jesus is passing by. Despite the efforts to quiet his shouts, to 'put him in his place,' he shouts even louder, thereby getting Jesus' attention. The phrase 'Jesus stood still' only occurs in this story, and it is the same in all 3 gospels. There is something about the courage of this blind man who, upon being healed, followed Jesus on the way. In this story, the blind man was courageous to cry out but showed more courage to follow Jesus after being healed.

It is easy to see people shouting today, and to witness 'arm-chair advocacy' where either on social media or in other public ways, people can either be very for or against something. It takes more courage to take that sentiment and put it into action. To actually do the work of having hard conversations with people who disagree with us, and particularly if those people are someone we love. It takes more courage to show up to a march or school board meeting or legislative hearing. It takes more courage to speak up at a congregation council meeting, or to speak up a differing opinion during a meeting within your faith community.

Following Jesus is not for the faint of heart. Standing up to injustice, speaking out in the face of power, making the small, everyday decisions that upset the status quo, and resisting the ways of the world that are contrary to the kingdom of God are par for the course in the life of a disciple.

How we steward our courage is how we share the Good News: that crying out to God and receiving the healing words of eternal life, we courageously live out our faith.

STEWARDED COURAGE



OCTOBER 24

Questions for Reflection

1. When have you acted courageously? When have you shied away from doing the courageous thing?
2. How does thinking about courage as something you can steward change the way you think of it?
3. Who do you perceive to be courageous? Why?
4. How do you sense God calling you to be courageous?
5. What would your faith community do if it acted out of courage?
6. How can your local faith community embolden you as a disciple to live out your faith?

Litany

One: God's healing power calls disciples to live courageously.

Many: Let us courageously live for the Lord.

One: To stand up to powers, injustice and greed,

Many: Let us courageously live for the Lord.

One: To graciously tend to all those in need,

Many: Let us courageously live for the Lord.

One: To boldly cry out, seeking healing we crave,

Many: Let us courageously live for the Lord.

One: To share the Good News that Christ came to save,

Many: Let us courageously live for the Lord.

Suggested Hymns

ELW 722 – O Christ, Your Heart, Compassionate

ELW 725 – When the Poor Ones

ELW 669 – Rise Up, O Saints of God!

