



stewardNet

News and inspiration

FALL 2015



Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

God's work. Our hands.

You're receiving this email because you or your congregation indicated you are a stewardship leader in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA). If you'd prefer to unsubscribe from this newsletter, please [let us know](#).

Dear friend in Christ,

The other day I came across an unconventional program that might be insightful to our church's efforts to grow stewards. While surfing the Internet, I stumbled upon the University of Jesus, a school that is dedicated to propagating the ideas, teachings and pedagogy of Jesus of Nazareth. The school's hope is "to further Jesus' vision (the Kingdom of God) of a different and better reality for all people." Here is what caught my attention.

For starters there is only one degree offered at the University of Jesus. Even stranger, this discipleship (or learner) degree is not a standard four- or five-year curriculum but instead a lifelong journey. That's right, once a person starts, they never finish. U of J advocates a growth mindset, that there is always more to learn in both depth and breadth, and since ideas change over time, there is a continuous need to keep learning. The school says, surprisingly, that students do not view this as drudgery or a hardship but instead see it as part of the recipe for both the personal and social transformation that Jesus envisioned for their lives and the world. The diversity of the subject matter offered (from theology and faith practices, leadership, communications, social entrepreneurship and organizing) gives students the skills and confidence they need to actively work for Jesus' world vision.

Here is something else that is different. Unlike traditional models of education that are all about moving information from the head of the expert lecturer to the heads of the passive learners, the U of J tries to use Jesus' teaching style. The school suggests that when Jesus trained his own disciples, he used a hands-on, learning-by-doing approach that would be more consistent with coaching, mentoring or apprenticeship. The university believes "we are more likely to act our way into a new way of thinking, than think our way into a new way of acting." The goal of teaching this way is to as quickly as possible equip students to be imitators of Jesus – yes, leaders like Jesus wherever the students happen to be.

Also related to how Jesus taught, the U of J attempts to take learning to their students instead of



centering all learning on campus. They have embraced technology including smartphones to connect students to each other and to a variety of personalized learning options, with differing time commitments, subject matter, and service and discussion meetups. Content and opportunities can be customized by each student to tap into their own gifts, passions and location. The challenge and inspiration to connect, serve and learn is always at a student's fingertips.

How does all this apply to stewardship? The University of Jesus has found this kingdom of God vision can be contagious and can drive commitment, sacrifice and passion in its leader-students, even though they have no hope of ever finishing the program ("If you are not dead, you are not done"). Students keep coming back because of Jesus' vision, the taste of the salvation it offers, and the potential to grow into people that they currently are not. It is the growth in this journey that we steward as a call, a vocation and a career.

This issue of stewardNet focuses on how the church might similarly teach, inspire, challenge and affirm that learning to imitate Jesus for the sake of the kingdom is at the heart of being a disciple and steward.

We are a church that is energized by lively engagement in our faith and life. Thank you for leading in God's work with a generous heart!

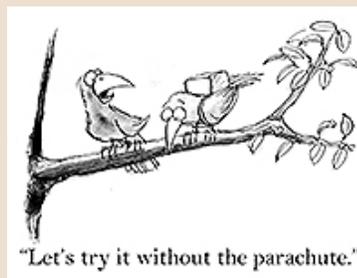
In Christ's service,

Steve Oelschlager
Stewardship Program Coordinator
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Rethinking faith formation

Ideas from David Lose

At the 2014 Rethinking Faith Formation conference at Luther Seminary, David Lose pointed out the difference between learning to appreciate music as opposed to learning to play an instrument ([watch here](#)). While both involve learning and music, only one equips the student to actually play music. Similarly, he claims that in the church we have made learning faith too passive, and without challenges or agitation to get involved, the process will leave faith formation students as people who appreciate faith without skills or confidence to live it. How do we evolve our models and ideas around faith formation to drive greater engagement? Does it make sense that a passive faith probably leads to passive giving practices? [See](#) how Redeemer Lutheran in Park Ridge, Ill., challenges people to articulate their faith stories through the use of video.

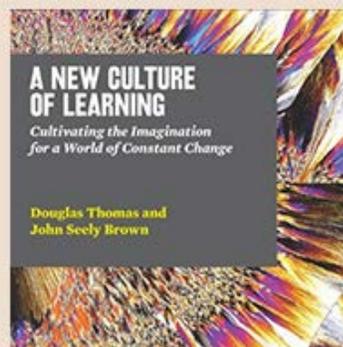


A new culture of learning

How we think about learning in a world of constant change

How learning happens most effectively at this point in history is an important question for schools, corporations and the church. To immerse yourself in this question, see the book ["A New Culture of Learning: Cultivating the Imagination for a World of Constant Change."](#)

Here are a few principles from the book: "The old ways of learning are unable to keep up with our rapidly changing world" and technology and peer-to-peer learning go hand-in-hand to make learning happen in powerful new ways. How is learning in the church and faith formation changing with the times?



"In communities, people learn in order to belong. In a collective, people belong in order to learn. Communities derive their strength from creating a sense of belonging, while collectives derive theirs from

participation."

[See](#) this short video to reflect on how technology is changing education. How does this apply to learning discipleship and stewardship?

Turn the ship around

Cultivating learning through leadership

David Marquet is a Navy captain who took over one of the worst performing submarines, the USS Santa Fe, and in one year totally turned it around. In his book "[Turn the Ship Around](#)" he talks about the "leader-follower" model of leadership he learned at the Naval Academy, which is practiced throughout the Navy and, according to Marquet, breeds passive crews that solely focus on compliance and following orders.



The book goes on to talk about a different model of leadership, "leader-leader," where everyone is treated as a leader and the dramatic difference that approach produces around learning, competence and engagement. Training programs (passive) were replaced by learning programs (active) in a culture that embraced "we learn, everywhere, all the time." It's fascinating to see the connection Marquet makes between learning, being a leader, engagement and morale. Isn't Luther's idea of the priesthood of all believers a leader-leader (minister-minister) framework?

Faith formation in the ELCA

Working for a grander vision

A task force of individuals across the ELCA has been meeting to energize a new faith [formation movement](#) in our church. Here is an excerpt from their work:

As a church with a rich history of attending to faith formation and blessed with many faith formation resources, the ELCA is poised to nurture faith in this generation and beyond. Stewarding these gifts for the sake of God's church and God's world rests in our hands.

Imagine people of all ages living their faith, claiming their Christian identity, and sharing God's love in the world in creative and unique ways. Perhaps the church our children lead will be more vibrant than the one they grew up in. What a witness to the gospel this would be.

For people to know their identity as children of God, engage in Christian practices, love and serve their neighbor, and bear witness to God's love in the world requires ministries within the ELCA to connect, align, and collaborate.

The ELCA has an extensive ecosystem for faith formation beyond the congregation including [lay schools for ministry](#), [outdoor ministries](#), [campus ministry](#) and much [more](#).

Mission interpretation news

Faith formation, advocacy and New York City

Living our baptismal promise means "living a life of growth

in the faith practices of discipleship." One of those practices is to "strive for justice and peace in all the earth."



During the recent Mission Interpreter Coordinator's Conference held in New York City, 42 members of our ELCA had the opportunity to spend the day at the United Nations touring the building and in conversation with members of the Lutheran Office for World Community (LOWC). We heard stories of our involvement in striving for justice and peace around the world, particularly the issues of migration, gender justice and a sustainable environment.

Our faith is lived out through our active involvement in bringing about change in the inequalities of the world. Sometimes getting involved, learning faith, striving for something is messy, aggravating work, but it means we are living out our covenant.

The ministry of the LOWC involves collaboration and cooperation with the United Nations and accompanies members of The Lutheran World Federation in their work for peace and justice. As a member of the ELCA, one way you can become involved is to first become informed. Find out more about our work together in the world at www.ELCA.org/advocacy.

Stewardship events to know about

Past and future

Check out the [videos](#) from the recent stewardship workshop co-sponsored by the Southeastern and Southwestern Minnesota synods, titled "Building Your Stewardship House: Laying a Foundation of Generosity." In particular, check out the session on how "Introverted Treasurers Positively Affect Stewardship" and a different presentation on "Crowdfunding the Church."



Save Feb. 27 from 10 a.m. to noon (Central time) for a live "stewardCast." An event in Chicago will be streamed and will include learnings and inspiration for new and existing steward leaders using experiences from ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton, the ELCA Macedonia Project, an ELCA online giving pilot and the introduction of new resources, including Embracing Stewardship and stewardEssentials.

New stories of Faith in Action

Showing up and making a difference

As followers of The Way, our discipleship is evident in our personal and collective lives and can be told through statistics and narratives. Every year the ELCA publishes Stories of Faith in Action, which features photos and stories of people whose lives have been touched by the ministries of the ELCA. This resource shows how your regular congregational offering, shared with your synod and the churchwide organization, is changing lives. For many of us, the Lutheran church is the most important organization we belong to for making a difference in the world. Inspire your members by telling these stories through this [resource](#) and the related bulletin inserts.



Sayings, quotes, thoughts

Stephen Covey

"Leadership is communicating to people their worth and potential so clearly that they are inspired to see it in themselves."

Biblical foundations

Matthew 4:18-22 (NIV)

"As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will send you out to fish for people.' At once they left their nets and followed him."

Upcoming events (watch the [calendar file](#) for details)

Dec. 2-4

New Orleans, La.

Ecumenical Stewardship Center Leadership Seminar

Feb. 21-24, 2016

Chicago

Association of Lutheran Development Executives Annual Conference

Feb. 27, 2016

stewardCast with ELCA Presiding Bishop Elizabeth Eaton

April 27-29, 2016

London, Ontario

North American Conference on Christian Philanthropy

[Full calendar](#) | Subscribe to [Our Calendar File](#)

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