



Dear friend in Christ,

If we truly embrace the universal pattern of loss and renewal, death and resurrection, it's not folly to anticipate something positive emerging in our lives post-COVID-19. The destruction and suffering of the present moment are real, but the Easter paradigm that gives us hope is one of God transforming and redeeming the worst circumstances into new paths forward. What might that look like in this particular case?

Here is one possibility I've been contemplating. As churchgoers have necessarily avoided church campuses to maintain physical distance from each other, I wonder about the radical potential to release faith from our buildings. What if, when COVID-19 is all over, people sense that church is so much more than where we worship, that faith is so much more than what we do on Sunday morning, and that stewardship is so much more than how we collectively pay our congregation's bills? Maybe being challenged to leave the building, as difficult as this has been, will bear fruit in ways we could never have imagined.

This issue of stewardNet entertains a future in which faith, stewardship and real life intersect not just on Sunday morning, but perpetually, in profound and impactful ways.

We are a church energized by lively engagement in our faith. Thank you for doing God's work with a faithful, generous heart!

Faithfully,  
Steve Oelschlager  
Stewardship Program Coordinator  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

I'm interested in hearing your thoughts. [Let me know what you are thinking.](#)



## CHURCH AND A LIFE OF FAITH

Thinking about means and ends

I don't have to think too long to realize how the church has positively influenced my life. I grew up a pastor's kid seemingly immersed in congregational life from Day One. Lutheran campus ministry nurtured the shoots of faith during my college years and introduced me to my future wife. Involvement in a couple of congregations since then has blessed my life with warm relationships, opportunities to grow in faith and graceful nudges to give and serve.

Despite that experience, I can easily see how faith gets "churchified," as if our ultimate aspiration is to raise loyal soldiers, company men and women for our congregations and denomination. As good Lutherans, how do we keep reminding ourselves why we do what we do and what following Jesus truly is all about?

The Life of Faith initiative is a movement within our church that raises these concerns, not to diminish how critical organized religion is but to keep clear about means and ends. The ministries we pursue together certainly are praiseworthy. So is the ministry of daily life that Jesus calls each of us to embrace. In other words, as the church, we don't do things just to make the world a better place; we also raise and multiply disciples and stewards who do these things 24/7/365. Please raise and multiply disciples and stewards who do these things 24/7/365. Please consider the Life of Faith movement. Click [here](#) for more information, resources, videos and links.

LIFE OF FAITH



## VOCATION, STEWARDSHIP AND CONTRIBUTING TO THE WORLD

Where faith and real life intersect

Six years ago, pastors at Westwood Lutheran Church in St. Louis Park, Minn., became painfully aware of the disconnect between what happened on Sunday morning and its impact on daily life. Members seemed challenged by how their church experience made a difference in their thoughts and actions at home, work or anywhere else. That started a process of thoroughly rethinking how Westwood did church, and a culture change ensued, reframing everything around the Lutheran themes of grace and vocation. Watch Westwood pastors and laity talk about the difference this has made in their faith in this [powerful new video](#).

If we want people to engage with discipleship and stewardship in the broadest possible way, we need to get the message out somehow that God calls all of us to invest in the common good, including financially, even when our congregation or denomination does not organize those opportunities. If people internalize this sense of call, then congregational ministries become an extension of, not a replacement for, the ministry of daily life.

Along these lines, check out Tom Rath's new book *Life's Great Question: Discover How You Contribute to the World*. Rath's underlying assumption is that we already serve others; having a greater awareness of that inspires us to do more and blesses us with a stronger sense of meaning and purpose. Rath created a unique assessment tool to help each person align their gifts and strengths with opportunities to meet the world's needs. How might our stewardship educators make use of this book and tool?

LEARN MORE



## SHARING STORIES

Telephone carriers have reported an extraordinarily high volume of phone calls during the early weeks of April. Virtual meeting platforms are also experiencing exponential growth in users during this time of physical distancing. People are reaching out in more and various ways to maintain contact with one another and reach those who may be alone. Mission interpreters can play an important role in your congregation as part of that network to maintain communications within the community. They listen for and share stories of ways in which your congregation's ministry has made a difference in people's lives: stories that affirm the congregation's past or recently introduced activities; ways in which individuals have been motivated to strengthen the church's ministry through their time, talent or resources. These stories bring people together and share the transforming love of Christ. To learn more about mission interpreters and their ministry, contact ELCA Mission Interpretation Ministry Coordinator Karen Kaufman at 330-929-9020 or [kkaufman@neos-elca.org](mailto:kkaufman@neos-elca.org).

## OTHER ITEMS OF INTEREST

- Looking for theologically sound and age-appropriate ministry tools so you can spend your time in relational life-changing ministry? Check out the carefully curated resources at [Ministry Links Online](#) from the ELCA's First Third of Life Faith Formation Team.
- Over the last few weeks, there have been fundamental changes in the way we do church, raising many questions about financial giving and resources. Explore FAQs and more in a new document, "[Financial Giving in a Time of Crisis](#)."
- Resources from the [Generosity Project](#) (TGP): Conversations around money are almost always challenging, but in this time of COVID-19 they become even more essential and possibly more difficult. "[LIVE IT OUT!: A Household Supplement Connecting Church and Home](#)" is now available as a FREE resource for household and congregational use to encourage us as God's faithful, generous stewards.
- Learn how Mission Support adds vitality to congregational life from [video presentations](#) captured at the ELCA's recent stewardCast 2020 event.
- ELCA Caring for Creation Ambassador Training is for people who are concerned about the environment and want to lead, learn and serve on climate-related issues. Virtual, ecumenically organized training is available now. Register [here](#) to get started.
- The ELCA Region 9 Stewardship Symposium, featuring the Rev. Craig A. Satterlee, bishop of the North/West Lower Michigan Synod, was held at Lutheran Theological Southern Seminary in Columbia, S.C., on Jan. 31. You can watch the presentations [here](#).
- The ELCA is offering a limited number of FREE subscriptions to the digital library of the Ecumenical Stewardship Center as well as a special discussion guide that complements the ESC's conference in Atlanta last fall. For more information, please contact [Neil Bullock](#). The guide highlights selected video segments in each of four presentations, including one on generational influences and another on the impact of electronic giving.

### Sayings, quotes, thoughts

— Martin Luther

*"The secret of contentment is the realization that life is a gift, not a right. Next to faith, this is the highest art — to be content with the calling in which God has placed you."*

### Biblical foundations

— John 15:16-17

*"You did not choose me but I chose you. And I appointed you to go and bear fruit, fruit that will last, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask him in my name. I am giving you these commands so that you may love one another."*

## UPCOMING EVENTS (CALENDAR)

### Stewardship Kaleidoscope

Sept. 21-23  
Covington, Ky.  
<https://stewardshipkaleidoscope.org>

### Generosity365 Academy

Oct. 2-3  
West Hartford, Conn.  
<https://stewardshipresources.org/generosity-365-academy/>

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Email [stewardnet@elca.org](mailto:stewardnet@elca.org).

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