



**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 friends,

People naturally talk about things. Have you thought about how to tap into that power for the good of your congregation, the church, and the gospel of Jesus Christ? Would it be helpful if people talked more frequently – and with more enthusiasm – about their faith, their stewardship and the role of the church in their life?

Social scientists are trying to better understand why we talk about certain things and less so about others. It turns out that only about 7 percent of what we discuss happens online despite the prevalence of social media and email. Even so, there are distinct themes that emerge that are central to why some things go viral on the Internet, or get discussed more in day-to-day living.

This issue of stewardNet takes a look at this topic, and tries to relate it to our work in the church of growing disciples, nurturing stewards, and multiplying leaders. We hope that the ideas you find here will give you something new to think about and then to talk about with others as you engage in stewardship ministry.

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

In Christ's service,

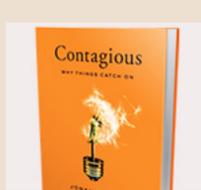
Steve Oelschlager  
Stewardship Program Coordinator  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

P.S. Help us grow our network! Be sure to encourage others who would benefit to subscribe to stewardNet by visiting [www.ELCA.org/growingstewards](http://www.ELCA.org/growingstewards).

### Emotions and sharing

When we care about something

In this [interview \(skip to the 14:30 mark\)](#), Jonah Berger – a marketing professor at the Wharton School – shares his research findings on the science of word of mouth. We will refer to different parts of this video throughout this issue of stewardNet by taking you to the starting point of particular segments of the interview. In this selection Berger talks about the role of emotions in generating conversation, and the idea that some emotions are powerful stimulants in getting us to share, while others cause us to share very little. He also talks about authenticity and suggests that people know when they are being "marketed" to. Berger has written a [book](#) covering the topics in this interview titled, "Contagious: Why Things Catch On."



### The Mother Teresa effect

Rationality vs. emotion

Mother Teresa once said, "If I look at the mass, I will never act. If I look at the one, I will," which highlights the idea that we respond better to individuals than to abstract causes. How might this motivate us to better explain our mission and ministries through real people instead of cold budget categories and statistics that are forgotten almost as quickly as we hear them?



In this [article](#) from the National Post in Canada, read how a study that primed people to think analytically resulted in reduced generosity. Once we put on our analytical hat, we react to emotional appeals differently. We hinder our ability to feel. Do you think focusing on a budget and paying bills could have that effect?

The goal then of making messages "emotional" is to make people care. Feelings inspire people to act. Watch this [video](#) to see a real life example.

### Feeding our spirits

Feeling the power of emotions

Audrey Assad is an American singer-songwriter and contemporary Christian music artist. Feel the emotions in her beautiful [song](#) "I shall not want" as she struggles with the human desires of comfort and contentment, knowing there is an implicit bondage in those pursuits. Do you feel something inspirational about her cry to God for deliverance? As we try to be steward leaders, are we aware of those same tensions in ourselves?



In a second [video](#), Derrick Coleman – a star football player for the Seattle Seahawks – contemplates his life being deaf and how he was never good enough. His coaches and other people gave up on him because of his disability. "They didn't call my name, they told me it was over." How powerful is it for us to know that God calls our name? Is that the real "power within" that we trust? How does hearing that call inspire our game?

### Triggers

Top of mind, tip of tongue

Do you think people talk more about Disney World or the breakfast cereal Cheerios? Even though the former is much more exciting than the latter, it turns out that because we think about breakfast at least one time a day, more conversation is generated about Cheerios. Surprising? [Watch \(skip to the 12:20 mark\)](#) Professor Berger talk about the idea of triggers, those things that cause us to think about things that are "out of sight, out of mind."



How do we trigger people to remember their relationship with God and the call to be good stewards? One study suggests that the biggest predictors of generosity are faith practices like attending worship services (Sunday as a trigger) and saying grace before meals (eating as a trigger). How about the church's presence on [smartphones](#) as a trigger? How does lifting up stewardship "year-round" create more triggers than stewardship as an annual response?

### Power in stories

The narratives that carry our ideas

Stories allow us to encapsulate ideas in a way that can be more easily shared and remembered, and appeals to our emotions without getting into marketing features and benefits. People naturally like to share engaging stories, as opposed to selling, so the goal is to insert the gospel and the work of the church into those places.



In this [last selection \(skip to the 26:50 mark\)](#), Professor Berger talks about stories and recaps the opportunity to better understand how to get people involved in our cause. What then are our stories about God, faith, community, our church, changing the world that would make sharing them seem natural and appealing?

Here is a [story](#) from LivingLutheran.org about how one Lutheran congregation makes a difference through their disaster relief ministry.

### The Lutheran magazine

Stories for and about our church

The Lutheran is a publication of the ELCA. Each month The Lutheran focuses on bringing our 10,000 ELCA congregations together through a shared vision for ministry, by telling stories about religious experiences, congregations, and world perspectives of members of the ELCA. The magazine also covers news of the ELCA's ministry locally, nationally and globally.



Have you thought about how The Lutheran could be an asset (triggers, stories, and emotions) to your members, congregation, and synod? Contact [Curtis Peterson](#) if you would like more information about every-member subscription plans.

### Stewards of God's Love

Growing stewards

This ELCA resource was introduced last fall via a mailing to every ELCA congregation. You can [download a PDF](#) of the booklet here. If you are thinking about triggers, look at the material starting on page 8 regarding year-round stewardship. "Year-round stewardship is a way to get out of the habit of just talking about stewardship in one season, like the fall, and bringing it into the life of the congregation throughout the year."



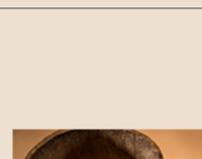
For material on the power of stories, turn to pages 16–18. "Stories are powerful! As disciples of Jesus, we experience God alive in God's story, the Bible. God's gospel story is written on our hearts and alive in us. How might we be good stewards of God's story and our own stories of God's work in our lives? Similarly, how might our congregation together share the gospel?"

Take a look at the "the Shift" on page 7 for a look at how a new approach to stewardship is not about paying the congregation's bills, but instead wrapped up in the stories and emotions of being a disciple of Jesus.

### Findings from the Lilly School of Philanthropy

2013 Congregational Economic Impact Study

Learn from this [free recent study](#) of 3,100 U.S. congregations about their financial trends, how they talk about money, and more. Here are some conclusions from the study:



Those congregations in which clergy are reportedly actively aware of the giving trends among their members were more likely to see positive fundraising results in the first half of 2012. In addition, congregations with a younger average age of the attendees were more likely to see increases in fundraising receipts than congregations with older attendees.

Also, effective congregational fundraising is not about money, it's about:

- **Relationships:** Giving is personal to donors. Giving reflects a donor's interests and passions, commitment to the mission of the congregation, and trust in leadership.
- **Vision:** Clear and repeated articulation of vision helps supporters understand why generous giving is important. Does the congregation have a sense of tomorrow?
- **Trust:** True transparency about how money is received and how it is spent helps build assurance for supporters. Cultivate trust and confidence in supporters, so they can say: "I know what I give makes a difference and is important because I see it."
- **Faith formation:** Generous giving reflects the donor's personal religious values and beliefs.

### Sayings, quotes, thoughts

Jonathan Sacks

Technology gives us power, but it does not and cannot tell us how to use that power. Thanks to technology, we can instantly communicate across the world, but it still doesn't help us know what to say.

### Biblical foundations

And you will say in that day: "Give thanks to the Lord, call on his name; make known his deeds among the nations; proclaim that his name is exalted" (Isaiah 12:4).

**Get connected! Find ELCA stewardship resources online**



We'd love to hear from you! Have a link or idea you want to share in our next issue? Email [stewardnet@elca.org](mailto:stewardnet@elca.org).