



## Stewardship of All God's Gifts

The Bible provides a vision of our identity as stewards and shows us many ways to live out that identity.

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Scripture calls us to a life of stewardship. The life of stewardship to which scripture calls us is not singularly focused on our financial or material wealth, although that is certainly included. Nor is the Biblical concept of stewardship merely inclusive of our care of the environment, although that is often considered the first piece of our relationship with God. The life of stewardship to which God calls us through scripture is inclusive of all that God has created, all that we claim as ours – including our relationships with one another, and our very concept of self.

From the very beginning of creation, the human relationship with God has been defined by our stewardship of all that God has provided. While Genesis 1:26 is often cited as the first example of how God establishes our identity as stewards, Genesis 2:15 perhaps more clearly translates the concept of stewardship in the phrase where God charges the first humans to care for the creation, which is translated “till and keep” in the New Revised Standard Version, or “take care of it and look after it” in the Contemporary English Version.

Psalm 8 reinforces our relationship with God as trusted and beloved stewards: “When I look at your heavens, the work of your fingers, the moon and the stars that you have

established; what are human beings that you are mindful of them, mortals that you care for them? Yet you have made them a little lower than God, and crowned them with glory and honor. You have given them dominion over the works of your hands, you have put all things under their feet.” Many other Psalms also undergird and enlarge on our identity as stewards of all that God has made, and on our very identity as stewards.

Jesus commented repeatedly regarding the connection between God's ownership and our stewardship. Perhaps the most pointed of all of his comments is when he tells the parable of the rich fool in Luke 12. In that text it is clear that the landowner failed to honor the stewardship relationship.

Scripture is also clear: this concept of stewardship is not limited to care of the environment or management of material wealth. When God blessed Abram (Genesis 12:1-3), God noted that this blessing was not for Abram and his descendants alone, but that Abram was “blessed to be a blessing” (Genesis 12:2), and that this blessing would extend to “all the families of the earth” (Genesis 12:3). Stewardship is placed squarely in our

*Stewardship is everything we do after we say, “I believe.”*

–Clarence Stoughton

relationships with one another, not only of creation, material wealth and our relationship with God.

The concept of stewardship for the sake of and within relationships was broadened to include specific populations – not merely individuals.

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An example is when God rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt and set them in the "promised land." The Israelites were charged to take care of and provide for the needs of the orphans, the widows and the "aliens" or "foreigners" – from the institution of the law beginning in Exodus through the proclamation of all of the prophets.

The scope of stewardship broadened to include relationships between the Israelites and all the nations. The Israelites were called out from among the nations to be a witness of the glory, power, mercy and love of God so that all the nations might come to worship God and know God's salvation.

Jesus continues this concept of stewardship in relationship to God and with one another. Time and again Jesus tells the crowds, the disciples, his opponents, and other individuals, that who they are and what they have is all for the sake of the reign of God. This is true in many texts throughout the Bible, such as the healing of the blind man in John 9. When the disciples ask "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?" Jesus responds, "Neither this man nor his parents sinned; he was born blind so that God's works might

be revealed in him." So it is with many other healing stories in all of the gospels. Often, Jesus tells those who were healed to "go and tell others what God has done for you."

Jesus further sets our relationships with God and others in the context of stewardship when he washes the disciples' feet in John 13, and further commands the disciples, "Love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

Perhaps the most definitive example of the concept of a life of stewardship

can be found in Jesus' own life, death and resurrection. His abandonment of the entitlements of the divine relationship between the Father and the Son is the starkest and most shocking demonstration of the stewardship of all that God has given. From Jesus' example we see more clearly what Clarence Stoughton meant by his now famous quote, "Stewardship is everything we do after we say, 'I believe.'"



## Growing Stewards in Your Church



The ELCA's newest resource, "Make It Simple," helps congregations and families grow stewards with a focus on simplicity, generous living and faithful use of God's abundant blessings. This educational program includes an assessment, handouts, and a collection of nine videos that share the personal witness of faithful Christians trying to live simply, be generous and serve God.

To download the "Make It Simple" program or to find other stewardship resources, visit [www.elca.org/stewardship](http://www.elca.org/stewardship). To learn more about stewardship, contact Pr. Nancy Larson at the Synod Office, 319-352-1414.

## Assembly Offering

A total of \$8,055.03 was received in 2009 Assembly offerings for the Synod Fund for Leaders in Mission and the Namibian school children hostels. Gifts are still being accepted. Please make checks payable to the Northeastern Iowa Synod.

## Christian Education Directors to Meet

Directors of Christian Education/Spiritual Formation programs in their congregations are invited to attend a gathering of like-minded individuals on Thursday, Sept. 10, 2009, from 10 a.m. -1 p.m., at the Synod office in Waverly. The meeting agenda includes devotions, introductions, networking, and sharing ideas and support, followed by lunch. To attend or for more information, contact Elayne Werges at St. John Lutheran Church, Nashua, 641-435-2396.

# Thank God Through Stewardship

*"There are three conversions a person needs to experience: The conversion of the head, the conversion of the heart, and the conversion of the pocketbook."*

—Martin Luther

The founder of our reformation movement had it exactly right. I wonder, in our current culture, if the conversion of the pocketbook is the most challenging and difficult.

We are bombarded by television ads and internet popups to believe that the only thing that matters is what will please me right now. Friends and family alike tell us to put ourselves, our family and our retirement above anything else. There is no question that God wants us to live responsible lives of self-care, support of family and financial planning for our lives. It is also true that God invites us and calls us into lives of generosity as the "life that is life indeed" (I Timothy 6).

Lutherans do not give offerings to gain God's favor, prove meritorious faith or pay the bills for the congregation. Our faith calls us to respond to the saving grace of God in Christ with gifts of thanksgiving. In the same way that children do not owe their mother a phone call and a greeting card on Mother's Day but rather give those gifts in gratitude, so, too, Christians offer gifts of thanksgiving to God for all that God has done for us now and eternally.

As you contemplate the stewardship "program" for your congregation, I challenge you to never mention the budget of the congregation. Rather, consider sharing repeatedly the gifts of God that have been showered

upon each member and every congregation.

Remind people of the healing power of God, the gifts of talents that have been given to each child of God, and the promise of the resurrection of the dead in Jesus Christ. Then offer the invitation to say, "Thank you."

My mother taught me to write a thank you note within two weeks of receiving a gift. Let's challenge our members to say "Thank you" every day of our lives and with an offering each Sunday.

— Steven L. Ullestad  
Bishop, Northeastern Iowa Synod



## CNA Students Graduate in Postville

Six students made up the first class to graduate from the Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA) Training Program in Postville. The training was offered through the Help4Health Program of the Barnabas Uplift network to help low-income Iowans enter jobs in the healthcare industry.

The students were honored at a July 30 graduation ceremony at St. Paul Lutheran Church in Postville where representatives from some of the Barnabas Uplift sponsoring organizations spoke. They commended the students on how far

they had come and encouraged the students to be life-long learners.

One student spoke on behalf of the class, "We want to thank you for this opportunity and thank you for helping us. We feel that we have already made a difference and will continue to make a difference in people's lives."

Barnabas Uplift is an interfaith social ministry network that offers programs to help individuals, families

and communities in Iowa move beyond poverty. Federal funding from Senator Tom Harkin's office helped bring the program's CNA training to more rural communities, including Oelwein, Postville, Roland and Iowa Falls. [www.barnabasuplift.org](http://www.barnabasuplift.org)



# Youth Gathering Concert Tour Opens Sept. 12 at Wartburg

The 2009 Youth Gathering may be over, but the music lives on through “Jesus, Justice, Jazz: The Tour,” set to kick off Saturday, Sept. 12, at Wartburg College’s Neumann Auditorium in Waverly. The tour features music by ELCA Youth Gathering artists Agape, LOST AND FOUND, and Rachel Kurtz, along with youth testimonies, storytelling and encouragement for people of all ages in their journey of faith.

All three performers have been on stages around the world to share their unique music styles and passion for justice. Agape (David Scherer) performs rap music as part of his hip hop outreach ministry. LOST AND FOUND is made up of Michael Bridges and George Baum

who combine their music with humorous storytelling to connect with listeners. Singer/songwriter Rachel Kurtz uses her music ministry to share personal testimonies of tragedy and triumph.

The Tour is scheduled for 12 concerts, including a performance Oct. 11 at Luther College at Decorah. The Sept. 12 event is sponsored by the Northeastern Iowa Synod Lutheran Youth Organization and Wartburg College.

Two ticket prices are available: The \$10 ticket includes a 2 p.m. service project, tour of Wartburg College,



and dinner, followed by the 7 p.m. concert. Cost for the concert only is \$15. Half of the ticket sales will directly support the ELCA World Hunger program.

Tickets can be ordered online at [www.neiasynod.org/youth](http://www.neiasynod.org/youth) or by calling Wartburg College at 319-352-8691.

## Register Your Congregation’s Global Ministry

ELCA members are invited to take the Global Engagement Survey to share how they are involved in God’s work around the world. Involvement can include travel, studies, service, advocacy, education, and refugee resettlement. It can also include providing funds, mission offerings or materials for programs, such as Lutheran World Relief or the ONE Campaign. The survey is intended for global engagement outside the Companion Synod Program.

The ELCA Global Mission unit will use information from the survey to map the extent of ELCA involvement around the world. Survey participants will receive information on resources to enhance their global connections, as well as the survey’s results in the summer of 2010. The short survey can be completed online at [www.elca.org/globalsurvey](http://www.elca.org/globalsurvey), or a pdf can be downloaded and mailed to ELCA Global Mission.



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*The STAR is published 11 times a year by the Northeastern Iowa Synod, 201 20th Street SW, PO Box 804, Waverly, IA 50677-0804; [www.neiasynod.org](http://www.neiasynod.org), phone 319-352-1414, FAX 319-352-1416.*

*Send news for the October issue to Marcia Hahn by September 2.*

# Northeastern Iowa Well Represented at ELCA Youth Gathering

Some 37,000 youth and adults participated in the 2009 ELCA Youth Gathering “Jesus, Justice, Jazz” in New Orleans July 22-26. More than 700 of the participants were from congregations in the Northeastern Iowa Synod.

On the first evening, the Northeastern Iowa participants met at the New Orleans Super Dome for a large group photo and photo opportunities with Bishop Steven Ullestad, who thanked them for their leadership in the synod in service and Bible study.

During the five-day gathering, youth participated in worship, Bible study, workshops and service projects. The combined service of all participants exceeded 200,000 person hours. In addition, participants donated some 100,000 books, gave 1,023 units of blood during a blood drive, and overwhelmed hairstylists by donating their hair to “locks of love.”

To view more photos from the event, visit [www.neiasynod.org](http://www.neiasynod.org).

## SERVANTLIFE FACTS

During each day of the ELCA Youth Gathering in New Orleans, 300 buses took 12,000 Gathering servants – led by 360 young adult volunteers – for service in the community:

- 13 churches
- 11 organizations building homes
- 7 public parks
- 82 schools (a school supply kit for every K-3rd grade student in New Orleans)
- 21 community centers
- 2 major public events
- 5 reading fairs



## Workshop Teaches Energy Savings



The Northeastern Iowa Synod’s Care of Creation Work Group invites congregations to learn how they can reduce climate change at home and save money on energy bills through the “Cool Congregations” stewardship program. Zion Lutheran of Clear Lake will host a training workshop Saturday, Sept. 19, from 9 a.m. to 12 noon, to teach participants how they can organize the Cool Congregations program in their own churches and communities.

The three-hour training, developed by the Iowa Interfaith Power & Light organization, will teach what climate change is and why

a religious response is needed to help solve climate change. Churches are encouraged to send teams of three to four to train as presenters of the Cool Congregations program to their congregations.

Cost for the workshop is \$20 per person or \$50 per team of three or more, per congregation. The fee includes a training manual, CD resources, and computer program to calculate individual greenhouse emissions. To register, contact Karen Harthan, 641-357-4451, email to [lrc@netins.net](mailto:lrc@netins.net) or visit [www.iowaip.org](http://www.iowaip.org).

## Tri-State Forum

***Love Your Enemies...Expect  
Nothing in Return, Luke 6***  
**Thursday, Sept. 17, 2009**

Luke 6 challenges twice within a few verses to "Love your enemies..." and "...expect nothing in return." What does this challenge mean for us? What does "loving your enemies" look like? How does this relate to issues of forgiveness, justice and reconciliation?

Kathryn Koob presents case studies on this subject and leads discussion on meeting the challenges and how others have done the same.

***Redeeming Christian Language***  
**Thursday, Oct. 15, 2009**

Much of Christian language is poorly misunderstood by many people in our time, both within the church and outside. This includes words such as salvation, sacrifice, righteousness and repentance, along with collections of words like the Creed and Eucharistic liturgies.

Dr. Marcus J. Borg leads discussion to reclaim the rich meanings of these words for Christians today.

To register or for more information, call  
 563-589-0327 or email:  
[lifelonglearners@wartburgseminary.edu](mailto:lifelonglearners@wartburgseminary.edu).  
 Download a brochure at  
[www.wartburgseminary.edu](http://www.wartburgseminary.edu)

## Tri-State Forum 2009-2010 Lecture Calendar

**Sept. 17, 2009**

*Love Your Enemies...Expect Nothing in Return" Luke 6*  
 Kathryn Koob

**Oct. 15, 2009**

*Redeeming Christian Language*  
 Dr. Marcus J. Borg

**Nov. 12, 2009**

*Preaching Advent and Christmas*  
 Dr. Thomas Long

**Jan. 28, 2010**

*Preaching Lent and Easter*  
 Dr. David J. Lull

**April 15, 2010**

*Forgiveness and Healing*  
 Dr. Janet L. Ramsey

Wartburg Seminary Campus, Dubuque, Iowa  
 10:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. Chapel services 9:30 a.m.

\$50 per lecture, \$35 for retirees.  
 \$130 for all five events, \$110 for retirees.

To register, visit [www.wartburgseminary.edu](http://www.wartburgseminary.edu),  
 e-mail [lifelonglearners@wartburgseminary.edu](mailto:lifelonglearners@wartburgseminary.edu)  
 or call 563-589-0327.

## Announcing a Celebration of the Joint Declaration on the Doctrine of Justification (JDDJ)

**Sunday, October 25, 2009**  
**3-5 p.m.**

St. Mary's Catholic Church  
 Waverly, Iowa

Presentation by Dr. H. George Anderson, former Presiding Bishop of the ELCA and Signatory of the JDDJ

Small Group Conversations

Worship Service led by Archbishop Jerome Hanus and Bishop Steven Ullestad