

# stay with raise up send out

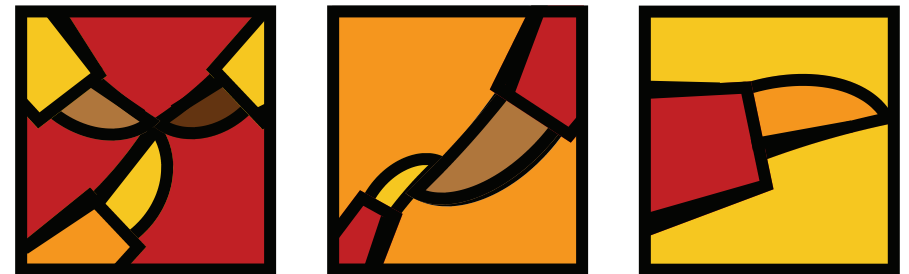
Stay With, Raise Up, Send Out:  
A Stewardship Resource for Congregations  
of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA

Produced by the SWPA synod Director For Evangelical Mission  
(*deployed staff for the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America*)  
and the SWPA synod Stewardship and Financial Support Committee.

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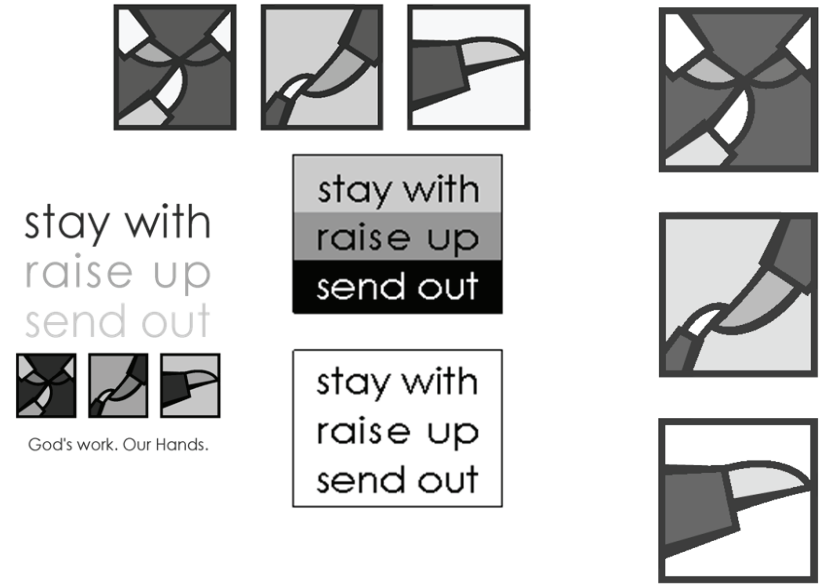
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A Stewardship Resource for  
Congregations of the  
Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod,  
ELCA

God's work. Our Hands.

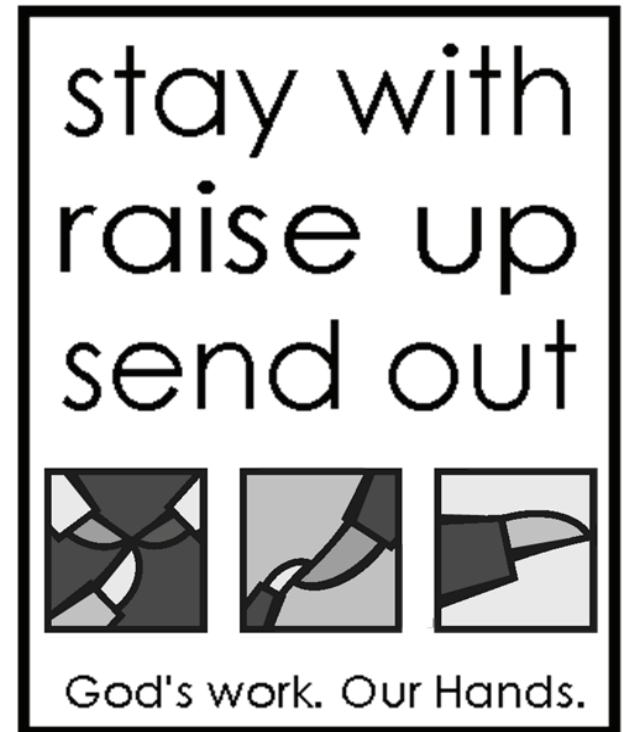
These graphics can be cut and pasted to create your own designs. They can also be downloaded at [www.southwesternpasynod.org](http://www.southwesternpasynod.org)



**To Make A Banner** →

The letters are in Century Gothic type. An easy way to make a stencil for the letters is to have someone with a computer print them at the desired size. You can then cut them out and use them for a pattern.

Use a copier to enlarge the three images to the desired size. Choose your own color scheme or use the colors on the cover of this booklet.



**All or parts of this booklet may be duplicated for use in congregations of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA.**

## Sample Time and Talent Form

Create a form that fits your congregation and your ministries. Invite committees to brainstorm about all the different ways people can share their time and talents.

What activities are most fulfilling for you?

Where is it that your heart finds deep joy and satisfaction?

Those are the places where you are using the gifts and talents God has given you,

Think about your time and talents and the needs of our congregation's mission and ministry. Where do they intersect? Where will you serve in the coming year? Circle your choices.

### Worship Leadership

Lector	Usher	Lay Assistant
Altar Guild	Acolyte	Communion Assistant
Choir	Greeter	Worship and Music Committee

### Discipleship and Education

Adult Sunday School Teacher	Participant
Children's Sunday School Teacher	Participant
Weekday Bible Study Participant	
Christian Education Committee	
Plan Special Sunday School Programs	
Children's or Youth Group Leader	Participant

### Hospitality, Fellowship and Evangelism

Coffee Hour	New Member Sponsor
Fellowship Committee	Evangelism Committee
Advertising	Website Manager

### Property

Lawn Mowing	Gardening
Small Repairs	Woodworking
Property Committee	Clean-up Day

### Social Ministry

Crop Walk	Meals for Households in Need
Social Ministry Committee	Work Camp Participant

### Administration and Organization

Help with Bulk Mailings	Volunteer in Office
Cradle Roll Mailings	Long Range Planning

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## A Letter from Bishop Kurt F. Kusserow



*Belonging to each other in Jesus Christ,  
we are people of hope.*

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

It is with great joy that I commend this resource to you. As you first read through this booklet, your eyes may be drawn to the creative artwork that so perfectly reflects our synod's priorities. Your hands may be

pleased with the quality of its presentation and the care with which it was completed.

But then, as you take more time to consider how best to use it in your congregation, I trust that you will also find here a strong Biblical basis for its invitation to exercise good stewardship. Our understanding of what it means to be Church, our ecclesiology, fills these pages as well, along with our synod's priorities for mission. And on top of it all, there are practical resources waiting for you to lift out of this booklet and put right to use in your congregation.

In every respect, this booklet represents the best of who we are together. But that is still not the end of the story. All of these good things come to nothing if they are not translated into your ministry in your specific location. Take the treasures of the Church found in these pages, stand firmly on the Biblical foundation presented here, pick up and use the charts and plans, and be renewed in your ministry. The saving Gospel of Jesus Christ is proclaimed in word and deed in the lives of all the baptized, in and through the congregations of this synod.

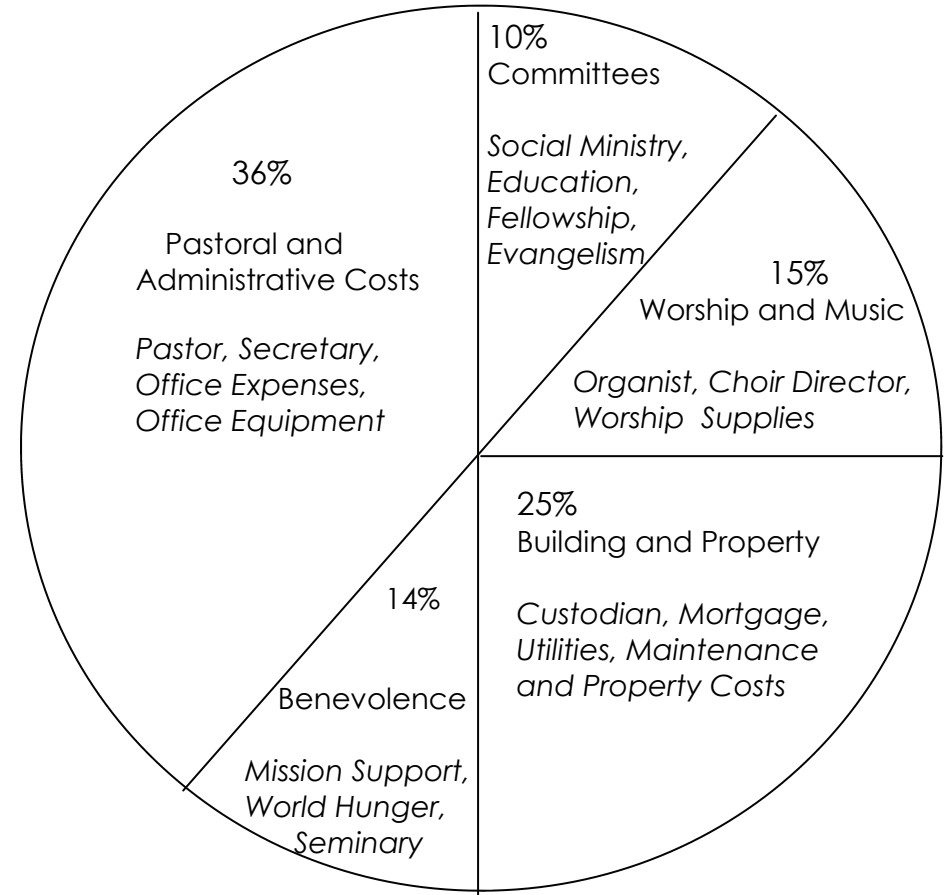
Thank you for your partnership in the ministry we share. Belonging to each other in Christ Jesus, we are people of hope.

With you in Christ,

Kurt F. Kusserow, Bishop

## Sample Narrative Budget 2

### Ministry Plan for 2010



**Total Budget \$260,000**

## Sample Narrative Budget 1

### Ministry Plan for 2010

Our congregation's Proposed Budget for 2010 is \$182,000. As you'll notice, most of our costs are related to people and our building. That's because most of our ministry happens through words and visits, teaching and preaching, spending time together, and going out into our community and the world.

Learning	10%	<i>This includes Sunday School curriculum, cradle roll materials, catechism supplies, videos and DVDs, the Lutheran, Bibles, youth group supplies and Lutherlyn camperships.</i>
Worship	10%	<i>Choir music, fair linens, flowers, communion wafers, wine, copyright licenses, candles, bulletins, hymnals and piano tuning—everything we use during our worship is included in this category.</i>
Service	8%	<i>Support for the food pantry, our mission partner, and other outreach ministries comes from this part of the budget.</i>
Witness	5%	<i>Newspaper ads and mailings to new community members, signs, as well as the equipment for recording our services for broadcast on the cable channel are part of this category.</i>
Support	5%	<i>Welcome baskets for families with new babies, fellowship events like the church picnic, and wellness resources come from this area.</i>
Synodical Mission Support	12%	<i>Through this support we share in the ministry of our synod and the ELCA, making a difference in people's lives throughout the world.</i>
The people, building, utilities, and office supplies we need to carry out all these ministries	50%	<i>Our Pastor, Secretary, Custodian, Youth Worker and Music Director are included in this category.</i>

## Introduction

In the small catechism, Martin Luther wrote,

*"The Holy Spirit has called me through the gospel,  
enlightened me with his gifts,  
made me holy,  
and kept me in the true faith,  
just as he calls, gathers, enlightens  
and makes holy the whole Christian church on earth  
and keeps it with Jesus Christ  
in the one common, true faith."<sup>1</sup>*

What does it mean for us as Lutheran Christians and as congregational members to be intentionally called and gathered into our congregations by the action of the Holy Spirit? And what gifts does the Holy Spirit give us for life in our congregations and in the larger Church?

If we believe that the Holy Spirit does indeed draw us into life together in congregations, then we need to trust that the Spirit will also provide all the gifts that are needed for the mission and ministry of our congregation and the whole Christian church. That's why we can say "belonging to each other in Jesus Christ, we are people of hope."

This stewardship resource begins with an understanding that our congregations are made up of people who have been called and gathered and gifted by the Holy Spirit. Our challenge is to identify those gifts and discern the mission and ministry that God is calling us to. As we do so, we will discover who we are, who we are being called to be, and who we are called to serve.

The Biblical foundation for *Stay With, Raise Up, Send Out: A Stewardship Resource for Congregations* is Romans 12. The Bible studies included in this resource provide a Biblical foundation and theological perspective for congregational stewardship that includes our gifts of time, talent and money. This booklet contains resources for an annual stewardship program or fall stewardship emphasis, though some of the resources could appropriately be used throughout the year.

1. Apostles' Creed, Third Article, p. 23 in: A Contemporary Translation of Luther's Small Catechism, Timothy J. Wengert, trans (Augsburg Fortress: 1996) p. 23

## Stay With, Raise Up, Send Out

The theme for this stewardship resource is taken from the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod Priorities adopted by our synod at its annual assembly in 2009: *Stay With, Raise Up, Send Out*.

**Stay With** is the first priority that we are using to help provide direction for the ministries of our synod. It carries many aspects of the essential meaning of *synod* – being on the way together. Our synod's staff and ministries are committed to staying with our congregations, pastors, and other rostered leaders to partner in the living out of their missions and ministries. We see the importance of being a synod where we stay with each other as congregations united in mission for the work to which God calls us in our communities and beyond. Within each congregation we see the value of how we stay with each other – accomplishing much more together than we could ever do as individuals. *Stay With* relates to stewardship as we realize the importance of the investment of our time, talent and treasure as support for ministries we accomplish together.

**Raise Up** is the second important mission phrase for our synod. It moves us into thoughts about growth in faith. While in *Stay With* we learn about who we are, in *Raise Up* we learn about who we are called to be through our baptisms. We look to the needs of our children to learn the stories of the faith and to grow into the call of God upon their lives. We look to the challenges our young adults face as they grow in life and grow in grace and must move into a world that does not value having faith in God. Finally, *Raise Up* looks to the daily lives of all faithful adults as they seek to grow in their discipleship of the Lord. *Raise Up* relates to stewardship as we nurture the understanding at each of these ages that all that we are and have comes from the Lord. This perspective moves us from the world's ownership mentality that all that we have is ours to do with as we please.

**Send Out** is the final priority. It moves us outward into the lives of our neighbors. As disciples of Jesus we must ask: To whom are we called as we live out our daily lives? Where are the needs? How might we use our gifts for ministry? Every disciple of Jesus Christ is on a mission. Sent out into the world from the Christian community we go to serve – sometimes as individuals, sometimes two by two, and sometimes in large groups. We *Send Out* disciples that we might be faithful to Jesus' summary commandment to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. This sending out is the living out of our best understanding of stewardship.

stay with, raise up, send out



### Together we are the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

Through Mission Support dollars and other gifts, and through participation in ministry opportunities, congregations support the mission and ministry of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Together we...

#### Live among God's faithful people

The ELCA has 4,930,429 baptized members in 10,585 congregations. We are organized into 65 synods in 9 regions in the United States and Puerto Rico. We also support 260 missionaries in 49 countries.

#### Hear the word of God

In addition to congregational settings, the word of God is taught and shared in educational and retreat settings. Our mission dollars help support 1,500 Lutheran early education centers, 300 elementary schools, 14 high schools, 185 campus ministries, 8 seminaries and 2 seminary extensions, and 145 camps and retreat centers. The ELCA also has 28 colleges and universities.

#### Proclaim the good news of God in Christ through word and deed

52 new congregations were started in 2007. Over 200 congregations are under development. 150 existing congregations are intentionally focused on outreach, for which funds or services are being provided by the Churchwide budget. Ministries and projects are supported in over 90 countries.

#### Serve all people following the example of Jesus

We have 280 parent corporations, providing service to 6 million people in 3,000 communities, and serving 1 out of every 50 people in the United States and the Caribbean every year. Chances are that you know someone who has been served through a Lutheran Social Ministry Organization.

#### Strive for justice and peace in all the earth

We support long-term community development and advocacy ministries, locally and around the world.

(All figures are for 2008 except where noted.)

God's work. Our Hands.



stay with, raise up, send out



### Together we are the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod

Through Mission Support dollars and other gifts, and through participation in ministry opportunities, congregations support the mission and ministry of the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod, ELCA.

#### New Resource Center

In the fall of 2009, a Resource Center will be created in the area formerly occupied by the florist's shop on the lower level of the synod office building. It will serve local congregations and agencies by providing access to ELCA-produced curricula and other print and video materials consistent with Lutheran theology, by providing links to people and organizations, and by making locally produced resources available to others.

#### Creative, Cooperative Ministries

Throughout our synod, congregations are discovering creative ways to partner with each other for mission and ministry. Neighboring congregations share Vacation Bible School or confirmation programs. Some clusters of congregations are served by groups of pastors, interns and/or lay leaders. People from one congregation participate in another congregation's outreach ministry.

#### Synod Statistics

201 Congregations • 82,672 Members • Annual Congregational Receipts \$31,916,385  
267 Pastors (99 retired) • 2 Deaconesses • 1 Diaconal Minister • 12 Associates in Ministry

#### 2010 Synod Budget **\$2,671,445**

Live among God's faithful people <i>Staff and resources to support for congregations; ecumenical ministry</i>	37.1%
Hear the word of God and share in the Lord's Supper <i>Support for seminaries, colleges, rostered leaders, camps and campus ministry</i>	19.7%
Proclaim the good news of Christ through word and deed <i>Renewal of existing congregations and new congregation starts</i>	8.9%
Serve all people following the example of Jesus <i>Support of global ministry and social ministry organizations</i>	12.7%
Strive for justice and peace in all the earth <i>Support of organizations devoted to public advocacy</i>	3.8%
Ministries of Administration, Services and Support	17.8%

#### Synod Priorities

Belonging to each other in Jesus Christ, we are people of hope:

**Stay With, Raise Up, Send Out**

God's work. Our Hands.

# Chapter 1: Bible Study

Stewardship is not about paying the congregation's bills.

Stewardship is about using all that God has given us faithfully, generously and wisely.

We are stewards,  
caretakers of God's creation,  
each other  
and all that we have and are.

Stewardship begins with going back to the Bible, to understand who we are, who we are called to be, and to whom we are called.

## Stay With, Raise Up, Send Out

A Three-Week Stewardship Bible Study on Romans 12

Romans 12 provides powerful insight into how a disciple of Jesus Christ can live the life of a faithful steward. As we consider this text in the Southwestern Pennsylvania Synod of the ELCA, we want to use our three priorities as a structure for this study. Each week, the *Stay With* questions center on identity. They help us understand who we are - together, through baptism, we are the Body of Christ. The *Raise Up* questions help us to think how we might grow deeper in our discipleship no matter what our age. The *Send Out* questions will help us to clarify where and to whom we are to go.

### Week One – Romans 12:1-2

1. Read Romans, chapter 12, verses 1-2. Paul includes the word "therefore" in the first verse. This implies a transition from what has been discussed to something new. It will be helpful to think a bit about what has already been covered in those first 11 chapters of Romans. (Weeks of study would be one way to do that, but we will try to provide just a brief reminder here.)

Romans 1:16, 17 Do we ever experience shame, awkwardness or embarrassment because of our faith? If so, what situations bring about those feelings? What are ways we might face that discomfort?

Romans 3:10-18 Paul pulls out numerous Old Testament passages to emphasize what? This would be a good time to invite everyone who is in the room and without sin to raise their hand! Any hands up? "All have sinned."

Romans 3:21-25a What is justification? How does one experience this amazing gift of God? How is this good news to those facing the previous reality that "all have sinned?"

Romans 6:3-8 There is dying and rising connected to our baptisms. What is this dying and this rising? What is it that we want to die in ourselves? What is it that we want to come more alive? How does it affect our daily lives?

Romans 8:31-39 Have we ever felt separated from God? What does this passage have to say to us in those moments?

Now look again at Romans 12:1. With all of the background from the verses above, Paul says "Therefore..." What has God done for us that we might respond with such thankfulness,

### Sample Letter 2

Dear Friends,

In Romans 12, St. Paul writes, "I appeal to you, therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship."

Paul had just finished writing about the gift of love that God gave them in Jesus Christ. He reminded his readers that, in baptism, they had died to sin and risen to new life in Christ. Now, nothing could separate them from the love of God in Christ Jesus. In response to what God had done, Paul appealed to his readers to respond with thanksgiving, offering themselves wholly and wholeheartedly to God - offering every aspect of their being as a living sacrifice.

Paul's words still speak to us today. We, too, have been the recipients and beneficiaries of God's great love. All that we have and all that we are comes from God. How do we respond to the gifts of life and love, forgiveness and eternal life? We respond with thanksgiving, offering ourselves and all that we have to God.

For each of us, the gifts of time, talent and money that we have to offer are different. But for all of us, the need to give is the same. In grateful thanks we can do no less than generously use the gifts God has entrusted to us. Our offering of time, talent, and treasure is one of the clearest ways we worship God. Letting go of our money is an act of faith - putting our trust in God instead of ourselves. Sharing our time and talents is the way God has always intended us to use those gifts - to strengthen the whole church and serve our neighbor.

Here at \_\_\_\_\_ we have the opportunity to be part of so much good ministry. (Name some examples. If appropriate, include new ministries and future plans.) But this ministry is only possible through your gifts of time, talent and treasure. I encourage you to prayerfully consider what God has given you to use in this ministry we share. How will you offer yourself wholly and wholeheartedly to God in the coming year?

(Include details of how Time and Talent Forms and Estimate of Giving Forms will be distributed and collected.)

Thank you for your faithful stewardship that has supported and strengthened our congregation's ministry in the past.

In Christ,

(This letter could come from the pastor, congregation president, or the Stewardship Committee)



stay with, raise up, send out

## Sample Letter 1

stay with, raise up, send out



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

This year the theme of our annual Stewardship Program is **Stay With, Raise Up, Send Out**.

Over the next \_\_\_ weeks, our congregation will be looking at what it means for us to **Stay With** each other, carrying out more ministry together than we ever could as individuals. The same is true on the synod and national church level. As we freely share our gifts of time, talent and treasure, we are part of a mission and ministry that touches lives locally and around the world.

A key part of every congregation's ministry is to **Raise Up** people of faith. Through *(name some of the education and discipleship ministries of your congregation)*, both children and adults are nurtured in faith here.

As we grow in faith, we come to understand that all we have comes from God. The gifts, talents, time and money we have is given to us to use for the good of God's world. We **Send Out** disciples into our community and beyond to serve the neighbor in need. We **Send Out** our money through the synod and ELCA to respond to disasters, feed the hungry, care for sick, and meet every sort of human need. And we do it all the name of our Lord, out of thankfulness for all we have been given.

Please take some time during our Stewardship Program to prayerfully consider what God has entrusted to you and what you have to offer through our congregation.

*(At this point you can add details about the program, especially if you have planned events outside of worship. Let people know how and when Estimate of Giving Cards and Time and Talent forms will be distributed and collected.)*

Thank you for your faithful stewardship in the past. I/We look forward to mission and ministry we will share in the coming year.

In Christ,  
*(This letter could come from the pastor, congregation president, or the Stewardship Committee)*

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presenting our "bodies," our whole selves, "as a living sacrifice?" What does it mean to offer God every aspect of our whole being?

- Continuing in verse 1, our "spiritual worship" involves the investment or offering of ourselves. How does this color the comment sometimes heard, "I just don't get anything out of worship"? Which is more important in worship – what comes from us to God or what comes from God to us?
- Where do wealth and money fit into verses 1 and 2? Paul does not mention them specifically and yet we so often think of stewardship as particularly money related. Does only what we give belong to God, or everything that are and have? If it is everything, then does that mean that it does not matter that we give anything? Is giving to the mission of the church an important part of worship of God? If so, why?
- J.B. Phillips paraphrases the opening of verse 2 in this way: Don't let the world around you squeeze you into its own mold." How is this a good caution as we seek to *Raise Up* disciples ready to carry the Gospel into the world in word and action? How does the world try to squeeze us into its own mold, its own values and priorities? Does the church get caught up in this? How does a commitment to tithing or generous giving shape our priorities?
- How does the "renewing" of our minds take place? Who is at work in us to accomplish that? (Philippians 2:13 may be helpful here also.)
- Have you ever thought about what is the will of God for you? Is it something that you pray about from time to time? How do we discern such an amazing thing? Are there large questions regarding God's will for our lives, as well as daily questions regarding God's will for our lives? Could there be differences of opinion on this?



**Stay With:** How have we learned more about who we are in Christ through these verses?



**Raise Up:** How have we learned about who we are called to be through these verses?



**Send Out:** How have we learned about to whom we are called through these verses?

## Week Two – Romans 12:3-8

In Week Two we cover the key verses that tie the three priorities of our synod together for us. They help us to see the powerful way that solid discipleship leads us to committed stewardship. This happens as we learn more about who we are, who we are called to be, and then, how that combination leads us into the needs of our neighbors. Read Romans chapter 12, verses 3-8.

1. As we *Stay With* each other, we must keep a clear sense of how we are connected and in need of each others' gifts. In verse 3, what is Paul's caution to us regarding how we see ourselves fitting into life and ministry? As we minister with others, can selfishness and haughtiness become a problem? If so, how?
2. Continuing in verse 3, Paul tries to provide some advice on how to keep from getting caught up in one's own importance. The NRSV states, "Think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned." J. B. Phillips paraphrased it this way, "Have a sane estimate of your capabilities by the light of the faith God has given you." Learning to do this could provide a helpful perspective regarding who you are AND who you are called to be! Is this something we do privately? Can other people help us to understand what our gifts might be? (*A Spiritual Gifts Assessment Form can be a helpful tool in discerning your gifts. One such form can be accessed through the ELCA's website. Go to elca.org. Type into the search box the words Spiritual Gifts Assessment Form. Choose the first thing on the list that comes up and you will be taken to an excellent resource.*)
3. Verses 4 and 5 share a powerful statement regarding the importance of staying with each other as Christians. How do you participate in the Body of Christ? How do you fit into the body? How do you use your gifts in the ministries of your church?
4. Verses 6-8 provide a list of some of the gifts available to us through the work of the Holy Spirit. (Other lists are available in I Corinthians 12, Ephesians 4 and I Peter 4.) As we *Raise Up* disciples in the life of the church it is essential that we come to learn what gifts we have for ministry. Take some time to think about this list of seven gifts. Different authors have different definitions for these and you can add your own insights. The following may be helpful:

Prophecy Think here more about speaking and proclamation and not in some predictive approach to the future. Do you have a sense of the Holy Spirit at work in you to proclaim the Gospel to others? Is there an energy and excitement about doing that so that you look for those opportunities?

## Giving Chart


### HOW MUCH SHALL I GIVE?

Take a step of faith. Earnestly consider your offering to maintain God's house and sustain all our ministries. Think prayerfully about what you will give. You may want to find your weekly, monthly or annual income and current offering in the chart below. Then take a step to the right to the next higher percentage. And try to grow into a tithe.

INCOME find your weekly, monthly or annual income	2%	3%	4%	5%	6%	7%	8%	9%	10% TITHE
<b>\$200</b>	\$4	\$6	\$8	\$10	\$12	\$14	\$16	\$18	\$20
<b>\$300</b>	\$6	\$9	\$12	\$15	\$18	\$21	\$24	\$27	\$30
<b>\$400</b>	\$8	\$12	\$16	\$20	\$24	\$28	\$32	\$36	\$40
<b>\$500</b>	\$10	\$15	\$20	\$25	\$30	\$35	\$40	\$45	\$50
<b>\$700</b>	\$14	\$21	\$28	\$35	\$42	\$49	\$56	\$63	\$70
<b>\$1,000</b>	\$20	\$30	\$40	\$50	\$60	\$70	\$80	\$90	\$100
<b>\$1,500</b>	\$30	\$45	\$60	\$75	\$90	\$105	\$120	\$135	\$150
<b>\$2,000</b>	\$40	\$60	\$80	\$100	\$120	\$140	\$160	\$180	\$200
<b>\$2,500</b>	\$50	\$75	\$100	\$125	\$150	\$175	\$200	\$225	\$250
<b>\$3,000</b>	\$60	\$90	\$120	\$150	\$180	\$210	\$240	\$270	\$300
<b>\$5,000</b>	\$100	\$150	\$200	\$250	\$300	\$350	\$400	\$450	\$500
<b>\$10,000</b>	\$200	\$300	\$400	\$500	\$600	\$700	\$800	\$900	\$1000
<b>\$12,000</b>	\$240	\$360	\$480	\$600	\$720	\$840	\$960	\$1080	\$1200
<b>\$15,000</b>	\$300	\$450	\$600	\$750	\$900	\$1050	\$1200	\$1350	\$1500
<b>\$20,000</b>	\$400	\$600	\$800	\$1000	\$1200	\$1400	\$1600	\$1800	\$2000

God's Work. Our Hands.

**Pattern of Giving Chart**

<p><b>The Giving Pattern at</b> <u>name of congregation</u></p> <p>Where are you?</p> <p>Can you move one level higher this year?</p> 	__ households give above \$150 per week
	__ households give \$100.01-\$150 per week
	__ households give \$75.01-\$100 per week
	__ households give \$50.01-\$75 per week
	__ households give \$40.01-\$50 per week
	__ households give \$30.01-\$40 per week
	__ households give \$20.01-\$30 per week
	__ households give \$10.01-\$20 per week
	__ households give \$5.01-\$10 per week
	__ households give 0-\$5 per week

**Estimate of Giving Card/ Pledge Card**

stay with, raise up, send out

In grateful thanks to God,  
we give generously of our time, talents and treasures.

Using the form below, please indicate your financial commitment for 20\_\_.

**Please return this form to the church office, via mail or the offering plate  
by \_\_\_\_\_.**





**My/our Financial Commitment for 20\_\_ will be:**  
Name \_\_\_\_\_

Amount \_\_\_\_\_ week/month/year

Ministry This is a gift that focuses on a willingness, an energy, to serve. It could fall into many categories from administrative service to working with one's hands on building projects to cooking and baking in a kitchen. Those with this gift are the hands and legs of God's work. They fill out the committees and the mission teams with involved enthusiasm.

Teacher This gift's definition is more obvious. It involves having the ability, interest and energy to help others learn about the Lord and the Gospel. When this gift is in full use people become excited to learn, feel that they are growing in their faith, and want to come back for more.




Exhortation This gift has a positive sense of encouragement. The picture of what is behind it is the ability to come along side another and give them support that enables them to accomplish what God is calling to them to do and be. The root of this word is related to the word used in John for the Holy Spirit as the Counselor and the Comforter.

Giving This gift goes beyond the calling that we all have to give to the mission and ministry of the Gospel in the life of the Church. This spiritual gift brings an inspiration and energy to sharing one's wealth for the work of ministry with impact. It has the flavor and "foolhardiness" of the sharing of the widow's mite. Giving with a certain faithful abandon is a ministry because it can have a powerful affect upon God's work through the Church.

Leading This, like teaching, has a more obvious definition. Some are blessed with the gift to be out front guiding others in ministry work. Having a vision for what God is seeking to accomplish and the ability to bring people together and take them into the accomplishment of that vision is part of this gift.

Compassion This gift sees the hungry, the lonely, the lost, the broken, the cold and the imprisoned and reaches out to them with love and grace. It is a deep gut emotion. Needs are met. Hurts are healed. Despair finds hope. This gift brings an energy to meeting the needs of the most challenged.

5. As you work through these gifts, how might they be essential in living out our third priority, to *Send Out*?

-  **Stay With:** How have we learned more about who we are in Christ through these verses?
-  **Raise Up:** How have we learned about who we are called to be through these verses?
-  **Send Out:** How have we learned about to whom we are called through these verses?

### Week Three – Romans 12:9-21

In Week Three we are reminded by Paul of the behaviors to which we are called as disciples who have been *Raised Up* and *Sent Out*. Who we are together, as we *Stay With* each other, truly matters for the work of the Gospel. Read Romans , chapter 12, verses 9-21.

1. From verse 9, what is the difference between love that is "genuine" and love that is less than genuine? How and where do we learn more about what is "evil" and what is "good?" We *Stay With* each other in genuine love.
2. Paul is looking for the church at Rome to have a sense of "mutual affection" in verse 10. Is this something that just comes naturally or something that must be worked at? How do we best arrive at mutual affection? Would the encouragement to "outdo one another in showing honor" be a part of the answer to the previous question? We *Stay With* each other in mutual affection.
3. In verse 11, Paul implies that the people might lose their zeal. How is the zeal in your congregation? If it is lagging, if there is less ardency in spirit, how might that zeal and ardency be recaptured? Would the encouragement to "serve the Lord" be a part of the answer to the previous question? We *Stay With* each other with an ardent spirit.
4. The phrase that leads into our synod priorities is: "Belonging to each other in Jesus Christ, we are people of hope." Hope is mentioned in Romans 5:1-5 and Romans 8:18-25 as an important ingredient in facing suffering. In Romans 12:12 we are encouraged to "rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering." Again, there is a connection between the two. How do you understand the connection between suffering and hope? Does hope make it possible to know joy even in the midst of suffering? Would the encouragement to "persevere in prayer" be a part of how we might be strengthened in our hope so that we might be more patient in suffering? If so, how?
5. Verse 13 encourages us to "contribute to the needs of the saints." Giving always seems to come up as we talk about our life as disciples. Why is it that the giving of our treasure for the needs of ministry in the life of the church is often resisted? Why is it that peoples' response is often "all the church ever wants is our

### Send Out

If I sent you to the back of the church, would you go? If your Mom or Dad sent you to go and get something out of the kitchen, would you? Of course you would, because you know me, and you know your Mom and Dad, and you know that you can trust us. We're not going to tell you to do something that is bad for you. Who else can you trust?

When some child says that they can trust God or Jesus, continue: That's right. We can trust Jesus. And in the Bible Jesus tells us to go out into all the world. He sends us out to take care of people and tell them about God's love. And we do it, because we trust Jesus. We know that if Jesus tells us to do something, it is a good thing to do.

*Name some places where people in the congregation have gone on service trips or work camps; talk about services in the community where members work or volunteer such as Meals-on-Wheels or a food pantry; tell the children about congregational members who visit the homebound or hospitalized. Say a prayer asking Jesus to send us out to wherever he wants us to go, so that we can help other people and show them his love.*

### God's Work. Our Hands.

What have your hands done so far today? Have any of your hands done God's work? No? Well, let's think about that. Did any of you do anything to help someone else on the way into church? Did any of you fold your hands in prayer? Did you give someone a hug? Did you put money in the offering plate? Did you share the peace? Whenever we do things that are kind and loving, whenever we pray or give our offering, whenever we reach out in welcome or with God's peace, we are doing God's work. So let me ask you again, have any of you done God's work today? Sure you have! Let's fold our hands and say a prayer asking God to use our hands today and every day.

## Children's Sermon Ideas

### Stay With

*Bring in a handful of wooden skewers or slender sticks. Ask the children to break one. That's easy. Now bundle the sticks together by putting rubber bands tightly around each end. Make sure you have a bundle large enough that a small child cannot break it. Ask one of the children to try to break the bundle.*

All those sticks together are stronger than they are by themselves. That's the way people are, too. That's how God made us. Some of us live together in families, where we can take care of each other. When you were born, were you able to take care of yourself? Some people have friends who they count on to help them out or take care of them if they get sick. We also have our church family here. Together we can worship, and teach more people about Jesus, and help more people than any of us can do alone.

### Raise Up

Does anybody here know a prayer? (Be ready to prompt with "Now I lay me down to sleep..." or "God is great, God is good...") Who taught you that prayer? Can anybody tell me anything about Jesus? Who taught you about Jesus? How did they do that?

One of the very important things we do here in church is teach each other about how to follow Jesus. And that's not just a grown-up job. It's your job, too. When you say the Lord's Prayer with everyone else, the littler kids are watching you. When you sing in the children's choir, worship, your little sisters and brothers are watching you. You are teaching them how to be a follower of Jesus. And when you come up for the children's sermon, even the grown-ups listen to what you say. They are learning from you also.

In the Bible, Jesus told all of us to teach other people about him. That's a big job. But that's why we have Sunday School and Vacation Bible School and Bible studies, etc. Say a prayer thanking God for those who teach us about Jesus.

or

*Bring in a plant. Talk about what it takes to help a plant grow. What does it take to help people grow? What does it take to help us grow as friends of Jesus? There is a special word for friends of Jesus—it's disciple. One of the jobs God has given us is to help each other grow as disciples. Have the children fold their hands and say a prayer for everyone in the church who helps them grow as disciples... parents, relatives, Sunday School teachers, youth leaders, pastors, Vacation Bible School coordinators, etc.*

money?" Interestingly enough, it seems that Romans 12 is saying even more than that – that what God, and therefore the Church, really want is everything that we are and have! So, how do you contribute to the needs of the saints?

6. Verse 13 continues with an encouragement to "extend hospitality to strangers." As you are sent out into your every day life experiences, do you prayerfully consider who you might invite into the ministry of your church? If that person would come in response to your invitation, how does your congregation welcome strangers? Is your church building "user-friendly" for people who are visiting (all levels, rooms, especially rest rooms accessible even for people with special needs; signs that show where to go to worship, to find the church office, rest rooms, Sunday school classes, etc.; people who reach out when they encounter someone new)? Are there new people in your community that your church could help to welcome? Are there people in your community who are not welcome and your church could be people that provide a welcome?
7. Verse 14 provides guidance in times of persecution. Christians in our communities do not experience much persecution. Yet, how is this a good reminder to us in our behavior with those who might not accept us or with whom we might not get along?
8. Verses 15-21 could be summarized with the encouragement of verse 21: "Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good." We are encouraged to be in harmony. Why is this necessary in the life of the church? What gets in the way of feeling joy with those who are joyful, or weeping with those who are in tears over some challenge in their lives? Why do we avoid being with people whom we think are "below us" in some way? How does the life of Jesus model an alternative? How does the cross bring focus to this section?



**Stay With:** How have we learned more about who we are in Christ through these verses?



**Raise Up:** How have we learned about who we are called to be through these verses?



**Send Out:** How have we learned about to whom we are called through these verses?

## Summary

Solid discipleship of our Lord leads us into being good stewards of all that we are and all with which we have been blessed. When God begins to matter more and more in our lives than we ourselves, then how God would have us share who we are and all that we have with the world ALSO begins to matter more and more. Discipleship moves us from being owners to being stewards, from being accumulators to being distributors, and from being self-centered to being Christ-centered.

## Offertory Prayer

Accept the gifts that we offer, O Lord, as tokens of our worship and love. Fill us with your Spirit of generosity and abundance, that we may freely share all that we have received from you, just as you have freely given your abundant love to us, through your Son, Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.

## Benediction

May the Almighty God, Father, + Son, and Holy Spirit, stay with you always, raise you up as an inheritor of the Kingdom, and send you out into all the world with power and love. Amen.

## Temple Talk Ideas

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"Stay With, Raise Up Send Out." As you know by now, this is the theme of our Stewardship Program this year. These six words summarize the priorities of our synod. They also do a good job of summing up what our ministry here at \_\_\_\_\_ is all about. *Name some specific ways people are supported, taught and nurtured, and outreach opportunities that are available through your congregation.* Today I want to ask you to join me in prayerfully considering how you are going to use your gifts of time, talent and money to support and carry out these ministries in the coming year. There is so much we can do in God's name if we generously share the gifts that God has given us.

Have someone videotape members talking about the theme "Stay With, Raise Up, Send Out" For example, have someone who has been supported through a difficult time talk about what it means to have the congregation stay with them. Ask that Super Sunday School teacher that every congregation has to share why he or she keeps teaching the children year after year. Have someone who is generous in giving their time and energy to serve others talk about the joy and fulfillment they find in serving.

Use the Giving Chart or the Pattern of Giving Chart to talk about being intentional about growing in our giving. We plan and budget for things we care about. Should we do any less when it comes to financially supporting the mission and ministry of our congregation? Perhaps there is a generous giver who is willing to talk about why they give or how they grew into generosity.

### Confession and Forgiveness

Almighty God,

**we confess that we have not stayed with you  
but have wandered from your ways,  
caught up in own desires and designs.**

**We have failed to raise up our eyes  
to see the needs of our neighbors,  
and we have hesitated to raise up our voices  
on behalf of those who are oppressed and forgotten.**

**We have not been open to the movement of your Spirit  
that would send us out into all the world  
in service and witness and love.**

**We have sinned by what we have done  
and by what we have failed to do.**

**In your abundant mercy,  
forgive us, renew us, and restore us  
that we may walk in your ways and serve you  
with our whole heart and mind,  
and with our lives and all that you have given us.**

With generous grace and abundant mercy,  
God forgives you all your sins,  
for the sake of his Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.  
Amen.

### Prayer of the Day

God of creation, by your goodness you have blessed us with all that we need, and have given us the task of caring for all that you have made. Stay with us as we strive to live faithfully, raise us up as trustworthy stewards of your gifts, and send us out to serve all people in the name on your Son, Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

# Chapter 2: Planning Your Stewardship Program

Ideally, stewardship education goes on all year.

It is helpful, though, to have a time each year when people are invited to commit their time, talents and treasures to the carrying out the mission and ministry of the congregation, the synod, and the ELCA.

## How to Get Started

Start by gathering your stewardship committee or a group of people who are interested in stewardship. Read through this booklet (you have permission to make copies of it) and decide which elements best fit your congregation and its needs. Use the Planning Worksheet (pp. 18-19) to tailor the program to your setting.

Delegate Once you decide what you want to do, assign people to be responsible for each part of the program. Check in with each other often to make sure everything is getting done in a timely manner.

Be Creative Invite some of your most imaginative people to be part of your planning team.

Pray Pray for the Holy Spirit, who has called and gathered and gifted your congregation, to inspire you to more faithful stewardship and service as disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## Planning Your Program

There are some questions you need to ask as you plan your program. As you answer them, consider what has worked well in the congregation in the past. Think about the people you can ask to help - what gifts do they have? And challenge yourself to do something new. Remember, "we never did it that way before" is not in the Bible!

### **How long will our program run?**

In many congregations, not everyone is at worship every week. So, if you want to share information and inspiration, you may want to do so over two to four weeks. Or you may choose a one Sunday focus, with one or two mailings to provide information and encourage attendance.

### **How will we lift up the theme and inspire people?**

Your pastor may want to preach one or a series of sermons on stewardship. Or you might consider bringing in a guest preacher or speaker. Are there people in the congregation who are comfortable talking about their stewardship - why and how they use their gifts? Ask them to do a temple talk. Do you have someone who could talk to the children of the congregation either during Sunday School or in a children's sermon (pp. 24-25)?

## Chapter 3:

# Resources

Use and adapt  
these resources  
as best suits your  
congregation's needs.

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their commitments out of faith and not just in response to budgetary needs. You might want to consider a Narrative Budget (pp. 32-33) instead of (or in addition to) a line item budget.

A Pattern of Giving Chart of congregational giving (p. 26) can be a useful tool in encouraging growth in financial giving. It can be used as a temple talk, at a cottage meeting, or in a Sunday School class.

A Giving Chart (p. 27) is very helpful for people who want to grow toward a tithe. It spells out what their current giving level is, and what would be need to grow by a percent or more.

### **Should we use Estimate of Giving Cards (Pledge Cards)?**

Yes. If you want to encourage the greatest growth in financial giving, the answer is "Yes." Whether or not you actually do use Estimate of Giving Cards (p. 26) depends upon your congregation, its history, and its leadership. It is not a requirement that people "pledge" as part of a stewardship program, but overall, those who have made a commitment give more than those who have not. Are there exceptions? Sure...but not many. And remember, if you use Estimate of Giving Cards, people can still choose not to use them. You are not forcing anybody to make a commitment, but you are providing the opportunity for those who do wish to do so.

### **Why are graphics provided with this program?**

There are two reasons for you to think about using graphics as part of your stewardship program.

One is that the graphics create interest and identify the material as being part of your stewardship program.

The other is that people remember some of what they hear, more of what they see, and even more of what they both hear and see. The message you are presenting is important. You want to make sure you do everything you can to get it across.

Several graphic options are provided (p. 35). Choose the ones that work for you. The graphics can be downloaded, if you wish, from the synod website. [www.southwesternpasynod.org](http://www.southwesternpasynod.org)

### **How will we use the Bible studies?**

The Bible studies (pp. 7-14) could be used in adult Sunday School or a weekday Bible study. One or all of them could also be used in small groups or cottage meetings. For example, in a two hour cottage meeting you could do an abbreviated form of the Bible studies, share information about the congregation's mission and ministry, and still have time for refreshments.

### **How will we use the worship resources?**

The Worship Resources (pp. 22-23) relate to the theme of *Stay with, Raise Up, Send Out*. They may be used on Commitment Sunday or every week of your stewardship program.

### **How will we share information?**

Temple Talks (p. 23) are a useful way to share information and inspiration. Bulletin Inserts (pp. 30-31) or announcements at worship can be helpful for sharing specific information. Newsletters or mailings are the best way to be sure that everyone gets all the information they need. You'll probably use of combination of these methods.

### **What information will we share?**

Unless everybody knows everything that is going on in the congregation, consider writing up a brief description of your congregation's mission and ministry. Include future plans and dreams, and your congregation's mission statement.

A Time and Talent Form (p. 34) gives people the opportunity to choose where they will serve in the coming year. Even if the same people always do the same things, a Time and Talent Form might encourage them try something new, or give other people a chance to volunteer. Be sure you list not only committees, but also specific tasks. Some people are very willing to do a job, but aren't interested in sitting in a meeting.

The Sample Letters (pp. 28-29) let the congregation know about your stewardship program and invite their involvement.

Some congregations provide a budget for the upcoming year as part of their stewardship program. This can be a useful tool in understanding what it takes to carry out the ministry of the congregation. However, be careful that you invite people to make

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# Planning Worksheet

Beginning Date \_\_\_\_\_ End Date \_\_\_\_\_

How many Sundays? \_\_\_\_\_  
Use this chart to plan the Sundays.

Date	Worship Resources to use? Special music?	Bulletin Insert, Charts, other info in bulletin	Temple Talk who?	Children's Sermon who?	Emphasis in hymns, preaching	Other: such as Collection of Pledge Cards

What will be mailed to members?

Letter 1      enclosures \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Letter 2      enclosures \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Enclosures could include:

- Giving Chart and/or Pattern of Giving Chart
- Time and Talent Form
- Estimate of Giving Card
- Return Envelope
- Budget

If Estimate of Giving Cards and Time and Talent Forms are not mailed, how will they be distributed?      Date \_\_\_\_\_

When and how will they be collected?

When will the Bible Study be used?

- Adult Sunday School     Weekday Bible Study     Cottage Meeting

Will we use graphics? How?

Is there someone who can make a banner?

How will our Stewardship Program conclude?

Commitment Sunday

- Guest Preacher
- Special Worship Service
- Special Offering of commitments

Congregational Meal

- Speaker
- Program

How will we follow up on unreturned commitments?

- Phone call
- Letter

How and when will we thank people for their commitments?

Now go back through and decide who will be responsible for each part of the Stewardship Program.

And remember: Delegate, Be Creative, and Pray.