

Enter into the
JOY!

*A Synod-wide Stewardship Emphasis
to Deepen People's Journey with Christ*
2014



Metropolitan New York Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
God's work. Our hands.

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Introduction

Enter into the Joy!

We live in a world filled with fear and anxiety. Concerns about the economy, war, politics, children's education, and the state of our churches abound. It's easy to feel overwhelmed by it all and lose hope. Or at the very least—to allow despair to creep into our lives. Is that what God wants for us?

The psalmist counters our culture of gloom: "You have turned my mourning into dancing; you have taken off my sackcloth and clothed me with joy!" (Psalm 30:11)

And Jesus said to his disciples: "I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete." (John 15:11)

A little background information is in order: In 2010, the MNYS Stewardship and Mission Support Table developed a stewardship commitment emphasis to train stewardship committees, mobilize spiritual formation groups for lay people, and involve pastors in a synod-wide pulpit exchange. This was to be a three-year project. We began our first year using the gospel according to Luke (Luke 23:33-43), and we focused on St. Paul's letter to the Colossians, using as our theme: "...that Christ might come to have first place in everything" (Colossians 1:18c). The second year, we focused on the lectionary for Matthew, adopting the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) on November 13, the Sunday before Christ the King. The theme was "Enter into the Joy!" The third year, in 2012, we focused on the gospel according to Mark (Mark 12: 38-44) featuring the widow's offering. We named that project "The Widow's Might."

This year, we are recycling the three year project and, following the format used in prior years, have designated Sunday, November 16, 2014 as Stewardship Sunday. The gospel lesson is again Matthew 25:14-30. Our focus will be on the joy and discipline of stewardship. Spiritual formation small groups will center themselves in the Word, in conversation, and in prayer for three sessions. The purpose is not a Bible study per se, but an opportunity to interact with God and others in spiritual conversation. Leading up to Stewardship Commitment Sunday on the 23rd Sunday after Pentecost (November 16), mission interpreters and/or others will deliver mission moments celebrating the congregation's ministries. Again, following the format of prior years, a week or two before the event, congregational leaders of the partnered congregations will meet. The pastors will thank leaders and offer biblical grounding about our interconnectedness within the Body of Christ in mission. The stewardship emphasis culminates in a celebration service where pastors minister to each other's congregations with a stewardship message and a time of commitment.

Materials contained in the booklet may also be downloaded in electronic form at www.mnys.org/giving/stewardship.

All parts of this booklet may be duplicated for use in congregations of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. God bless you!



Timeline

October	Send first letter Organize and publicize spiritual formation groups Begin to develop narrative budget Spiritual Formation Groups begin to meet Coordinate with worship committees
Week of November 2nd	Send second letter with narrative budget
Week of November 9th	Leadership of both congregations meet together at which pastors offer words of encouragement and prayer Pastors meet together for homiletic study
November 16th	Stewardship Commitment Sunday with pulpit exchange
Week of November 16th	Send Thank You Letter or Follow Up Letter

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A Practice for Letting the Word Dwell in You Richly

The following straightforward method of devotionally engaging scriptural texts is intended to take you deeper into God's Word, carried on the winds of the Holy Spirit speaking through the Word, that we in the church may be further formed, informed, reformed and transformed for our mission in the world, and also that we might be still more faithful stewards of the gifts and ministries entrusted to us. Each of the following movements, taking place over the course of a 60 to 90 minute session, takes us into the very presence of God known in the gift of the living Word.

Movement One: Preparation

As the group gathers, engage in conversation (for about ten minutes) about what is on the hearts and minds of participants, ranging from personal to world events, especially that which we would have God address during this hour. Spend some time in prayer, silently and/or aloud, seeking the Spirit's guidance for giving a living Word to us at this time.

Movement Two: Reading

Have a volunteer read the appointed scriptural passage aloud slowly and deliberately. As it is read and during a period of five minute's silence following, pay close attention to what the passage actually says. What are the key words and ideas and points of the passage? After this silent consideration, members of the group, as they are moved, name aloud what they think are the most important points of the reading (for about five minutes).

Movement Three: Meditation

Read the biblical text a second time aloud. In the five minutes of silence following this reading, meditate on what the passage might mean for you, and for us now in our own day. While the first reading sought the text's objective meaning, now we turn to more subjective meanings based on and emerging from the insights of the first time of reading. After the silent meditation, have a conversation for about ten to twenty minutes during which you share reflections, especially attempting to discern what the Spirit may be saying to you, as the Spirit guides us into all truth through dwelling with God's Word. Please note that specific reflection questions pertaining to stewardship are also provided for each appointed passage.

Movement Four: Prayer

Read the passage a third time aloud. In the five minute silent period following this reading, pray the prayers that well up in you, especially the ones that emerge from the previous silent periods and conversations. After time for silent prayer, members of the group may pray petitions and thanksgivings aloud as they are moved.

Movement Five: Contemplation

Read the passage a fourth and final time aloud. During this last five minute silent time, simply dwell with each other in God's presence in the power of the Spirit as that presence has been made known in the Word. This is a time to claim the leisure to really let the living Word soak in you for your ongoing formation, reformation, and transformation in Christ.

Movement Six: Mission

After the period of silent contemplation, have a conversation for about ten to fifteen minutes about what our insights in this whole experience may mean for our mission in the world. Particularly, what living Word will we take with us into the world that will make us better stewards in our ministry in daily life for the sake of the church's mission in the world?

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Week One Spiritual Formation Group

Zephaniah 1:7, 12-18

⁷Be silent before the Lord GOD!
For the day of the LORD is at hand;
the LORD has prepared a sacrifice,
he has consecrated his guests.
¹²At that time I will search Jerusalem with lamps,
and I will punish the people
who rest complacently on their dregs,
those who say in their hearts,
“The LORD will not do good,
nor will he do harm.”
¹³Their wealth shall be plundered,
and their houses laid waste.
Though they build houses,
they shall not inhabit them;
though they plant vineyards,
they shall not drink wine from them.
¹⁴The great day of the LORD is near,
near and hastening fast;
the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter,
the warrior cries aloud there.
¹⁵That day will be a day of wrath,
a day of distress and anguish,
a day of ruin and devastation,
a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and thick darkness,
¹⁶a day of trumpet blast and battle cry
against the fortified cities
and against the lofty battlements.
¹⁷I will bring such distress upon people
that they shall walk like the blind;
because they have sinned against the LORD,
their blood shall be poured out like dust,
and their flesh like dung.
¹⁸Neither their silver nor their gold
will be able to save them
on the day of the LORD’s wrath;
in the fire of his passion
the whole earth shall be consumed;
for a full, a terrible end
he will make of all the inhabitants of the earth.

1) Preparation

- What is on your heart and mind, ranging from personal to world events, especially that which you would have God address in the Word during this hour? Discuss, and pray silently and aloud for 10 minutes.

2) Reading

- What are the key words and ideas and points of the passage? Consider this silently for 5 minutes, then discuss for 5 minutes.

3) Meditation

Reflect on personal meanings of this passage for you and your congregation. Especially consider the following questions silently for 5 minutes, then discuss for 10 to 20 minutes:

- In our present circumstances, at home and/or abroad, who are those who “complacently rest on their dregs” having no regard for what God might do?
- In what ways do we act as though we believe that “our silver and gold will save us on the day of the Lord’s wrath?”

4) Prayer

- What are the prayers emerging from our dwelling with the Word that the Holy Spirit is moving you to pray? Pray silently for 5 minutes and then aloud as you are moved for a few more minutes.

5) Contemplation

Now for 5 minutes simply dwell silently with each other in the presence of the living God made known in the Word.

6) Mission

- What living Word will we take with us into the world that will change our “to do” lists and make us better stewards in our ministry in daily life for the sake of the church’s mission in the world? Discuss for 10 to 15 minutes.



Week Two

Spiritual Formation Group

1 Thessalonians 5:1-11

Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers and sisters, you do not need to have anything written to you. ²For you yourselves know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. ³When they say, “There is peace and security,” then sudden destruction will come upon them, as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and there will be no escape! ⁴But you, beloved, are not in darkness, for that day to surprise you like a thief; ⁵for you are all children of light and children of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. ⁶So then let us not fall asleep as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober; ⁷for those who sleep sleep at night, and those who are drunk get drunk at night. ⁸But since we belong to the day, let us be sober, and put on the breastplate of faith and love, and for a helmet the hope of salvation. ⁹For God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, ¹⁰who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. ¹¹Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.

1) Preparation

- What is on your heart and mind, ranging from personal to world events, especially that which you would have God address in the Word during this hour? Discuss, and pray silently and aloud for 10 minutes.

2) Reading

- What are the key words and ideas and points of the passage? Consider this silently for 5 minutes, then discuss for 5 minutes.

3) Meditation

Reflect on personal meanings of this passage for you and your congregation. Especially consider the following questions silently for 5 minutes, then discuss for 10 to 20 minutes:

- What are the messages you see, read, and hear that suggest there is “peace and security,” when our world seems so troubled?
- How do “children of the light” live as good stewards of their time, talents and treasures, in contrast to those who are “of the night”? In what ways does our good stewardship share the light of Christ?

4) Prayer

- What are the prayers emerging from our dwelling with the Word that the Holy Spirit is moving you to pray? Pray silently for 5 minutes and then aloud as you are moved for a few more minutes.

5) Contemplation

Now for 5 minutes simply dwell silently with each other in the presence of the living God made known in the Word.

6) Mission

- What living Word will we take with us into the world that will change our “to do” lists and make us better stewards in our ministry in daily life for the sake of the church’s mission in the world? Discuss for 10 to 15 minutes.

Matthew 25:14-30

¹⁴For it is as if a man, going on a journey, summoned his slaves and entrusted his property to them; ¹⁵to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. ¹⁶The one who had received the five talents went off at once and traded with them, and made five more talents. ¹⁷In the same way, the one who had the two talents made two more talents. ¹⁸But the one who had received the one talent went off and dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. ¹⁹After a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. ²⁰Then the one who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five more talents, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me five talents; see, I have made five more talents.' ²¹His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' ²²And the one with the two talents also came forward, saying, 'Master, you handed over to me two talents; see, I have made two more talents.' ²³His master said to him, 'Well done, good and trustworthy slave; you have been trustworthy in a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.' ²⁴Then the one who had received the one talent also came forward, saying, 'Master, I knew that you were a harsh man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter seed; ²⁵so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' ²⁶But his master replied, 'You wicked and lazy slave! You knew, did you, that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I did not scatter? ²⁷Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and on my return I would have received what was my own with interest. ²⁸So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. ²⁹For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. ³⁰As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

1) Preparation

- What is on your heart and mind, ranging from personal to world events, especially that which you would have God address in the Word during this hour? Discuss, and pray silently and aloud for 10 minutes.

2) Reading

- What are the key words and ideas and points of the passage? Consider this silently for 5 minutes, then discuss for 5 minutes.

3) Meditation

Reflect on personal meanings of this passage for you and your congregation. Especially consider the following questions silently for 5 minutes, then discuss for 10 to 20 minutes:

- In what ways do you "hide your talents in the ground" out of fear?
- In what ways do you courageously and in faith use your talents for the advancement and for the good of God's reign?

4) Prayer

- What are the prayers emerging from our dwelling with the Word that the Holy Spirit is moving you to pray? Pray silently for 5 minutes and then aloud as you are moved for a few more minutes.



5) Contemplation

Now for 5 minutes simply dwell silently with each other in the presence of the living God made known in the Word.

6) Mission

- What living Word will we take with us into the world that will change our “to do” lists and make us better stewards in our ministry in daily life for the sake of the church’s mission in the world? Discuss for 10 to 15 minutes.

Tips for Leaders of Spiritual Formation Groups

- In leading spiritual formation groups, “less is more.” Your job is not to “run the show,” but to allow the freedom for rich and meaningful reflection, conversation and prayer.
- Leaders of spiritual formation groups do well to set a prayerful tone for the whole group.
- The true leader of spiritual formation groups is the Holy Spirit. Our job is to get out of the way of ourselves to let the Spirit take the lead.
- It is an important aspect of the job of spiritual formation group leader to be “time keeper,” that is to say, to create enough time, space and a spirit of leisure to really allow participants to dwell with the passages and each other, slowing down the pace of discourse to really savor what the Spirit is up to in forming us.
- If certain participants dominate conversation, gently call forth responses from others in the group who may not have had occasion to speak.
- Spiritual formation groups are not debate societies about right and wrong interpretations of scripture. Rather, such groups give people the freedom to offer reflections without fear of judgment or argument or “setting others straight” in the group.
- Spiritual formation groups are not the occasion for a kind of group psychotherapy, that is to say, people are not there to attempt to fix each other’s problems.
- It is important for the leader to remind participants that confidences of the group are strictly kept. What is said during spiritual formation time stays there and is not repeated anywhere else.
- Leaders of spiritual formation groups do well to model the kind of thoughtful reflection and prayer that this spiritual discipline calls for. This modeling will help other participants respond in kind.
- Each movement of this exercise represents different ways of being present to the biblical passages and each other. It is important for the leader to model and to remind people of the distinctiveness of each movement. That is to say, the prayer time is not meant for sharing new exegetical insights. The time for contemplation is the time for silence and not additional spoken reflections. The time following the first reading is meant for listing main points and not yet for sharing personal reflections.



Mission Moment Guidelines

As part of Enter into the Joy, congregations are encouraged to schedule three mission moments during the stewardship commitment emphasis. Mission moments can be given during worship, and work particularly well preceding the offering.

Why do we give mission moments?

We give mission moments to help people understand where their offerings are going. Sometimes people don't realize how integral their offerings are to the life of the church. It is your giving that makes the ministries of your congregation possible. Mission interpretation is all about telling stories of what God is doing through our giving.

We give mission moments to connect people to the wider church. Did you know that when you give an offering, your congregation gives a portion of that offering to the synod? In addition, our synod sends 50% of all mission support to our churchwide organization, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America. Through your offering, you are making mission possible locally, regionally, and nationally!

Finally, we give mission moments to thank people. We are so grateful for their generosity and we want them to know it.

What should a mission moment include?

Though mission moments are flexible, try to keep it between three to five minutes so that you don't lose members' attention. Short and sweet is best!

Even if you have lots of facts and figures, the most effective mission moment tells a story. Choose one story (the time the soup kitchen patron brought in his own donation; the meaningful lesson a teacher learned from a Sunday School student) and focus on that. Make sure that you include *why* this story made an impression on you. It's your personal testimony that makes the story compelling. Your enthusiasm is more inspiring than statistics.

Lastly and most importantly, mission moments should always thank everyone for their generosity. Help people understand that these ministries would not be possible without generous gifts of time and service as well as financial support. (It's important to note that mission moments are not fundraising opportunities. This is *not* a time to ask the congregation for anything.)

What makes an effective mission moment?

Choose stories or topics that are most interesting to the speakers. If your congregation would like to lift up the story of its food pantry, ask a food pantry volunteer to share a story. You can reinforce the message of your mission moment in several ways: include the same story in the Sunday bulletin; expand upon the presentations in the church newsletter; display pictures, story summaries, quotes and graphics on a bulletin board; and use mission interpretation stories on your congregation's website. You can even vary your presentations to show how our offerings support ministries at congregational, synodical and churchwide levels.

Public speaking has always made me nervous. Do you have any tips?

Yes! Practice beforehand—rehearsing will help you sound more prepared and help you identify any trouble areas. Know your time limit and stick to it. And lastly, be positive and upbeat.

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Mission Moment Outline

Here's a brief outline of a mission moment. Make it your own!

- 1) Give an introduction: "One way that Your Lutheran Church enters into the joy is through our afterschool program."
- 2) Provide a little bit of background: "We started Bible Explorers three years ago and since then, 20 kids join us every Wednesday afternoon for Bible stories and snacks."
- 3) Tell one story and include your personal reaction to it: "I wanted to share a story about the difference this is making in the community. Two months ago, Megan brought her neighbor along... [tell story]...I was really touched by how gracious the kids were to the new student. They really imitated Jesus and welcomed the stranger."
- 4) Thank everyone: "The witness of Bible Explorers wouldn't be possible without your generous offerings! Thank you so much for your giving."



Worship Resources

Hymn & Song Suggestions

<i>Joyful, joyful we adore thee</i>	ELW836/LBW551
<i>I'm so glad Jesus lifted me</i>	ELW860/WOV673
<i>What a fellowship, what a joy divine</i>	ELW774/WOV780
<i>Lord, I lift your name on high</i>	ELW857
<i>Let the whole creation cry</i>	ELW876/LBW242
<i>Cantad al Señor/Oh, sing to the Lord</i>	ELW822/WOV795

Confession and Forgiveness

In the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Lord, you have been our refuge from one generation to another.
Before the mountains were brought forth, or the land and the earth were born,
from age to age you are God.

O Lord,

**Turn us back to you. Forgive our sins, those known and unknown, and lead us into your light.
Restore in us the joy of your salvation and sustain in us a generous spirit. Amen.**

God has destined us not for wrath but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him. Happy are those whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered. The angels in heaven rejoice over the one who repents and returns to the Lord. Almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit grant you forgiveness of all your sins and strengthen you in his service. **Amen.**

Prayer of the Day (ELW)

Righteous God, our merciful master,
you own the earth and all its peoples,
and you give us all that we have.
Inspire us to serve you with justice and wisdom,
and prepare us for the joy of the day of your coming,
through Jesus Christ, our Savior and Lord. **Amen.**

Post Communion Prayer

Gracious God, you give us rains from heaven and fruitful seasons. You fill us with food and our hearts are filled with joy. Thank you for your abundance and give us what we need to be your faithful servants. In Jesus' name we pray. **Amen.**

Benediction (from Colossians 1)

May you be made strong with all the strength that comes from his glorious power, and may you be prepared to endure everything with patience, while joyfully giving thanks to the Father, who has enabled you to share in the inheritance of the saints in the light. And may almighty God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit bless you and fill you with joy now and forever. **Amen.**

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Sermon Notes by Bishop Rimbo

Sermon Notes for Pentecost 26, Proper 28, Cycle A St. Matthew 25:14-30

In one sense, this parable is easy for contemporary readers to understand. It is about investments and high yields. Those who play the stock market will immediately recognize the value of risk and high reward. The slave who is fearful of the market is likewise easy to understand. There are many stories from Wall Street that prove how prudent the fearful or cautious approach can be.

But this parable is *far* more disturbing than that. We are drawn along to have appreciation for a master who is gracious with his servants. In response to the first two slaves and their success in doubling the master's money, they are praised and rewarded with both a share in the joy of the master *and* a promotion to greater responsibility. This seems appropriate and fair. To this point the story makes sense. We are accustomed to this sort of thing.

But, when we hear of the master's harsh response to the *third* slave, the parable turns sour. The master responds in what seems to be a cruel manner to the slave who pursued the path of prudence. This one chose not to run any risk with his master's money. He played it safe. He hid and preserved it. This is what a *careful* person would typically have done with a great treasure. The treasure given this servant was one talent, an exorbitant sum of money worth a lifetime's wages. So there is no surprise in the servant's motive: it is fear. Who would *dare* to risk such a treasure in the marketplace, especially when the owner is known to be shrewd and demanding? The slave here was merely being judicious in choosing not to risk the master's money. Sadly, it did not increase. But, neither did it *decrease*. In the end, the master received back no more than what was properly due him. And yet, the third slave is severely punished. The listener is left to wonder about this fickle master who is *both* gracious and ruthless.

Matthew's Jesus does not present the story with a morally acceptable climax, in my opinion. His purpose is not to speak of human justice, but the reign of God which will *not* be as we expect it to be. It is not simply about justice and morality. It also has to do with shrewd, even *risky* action.

A little context might help. This parable is the sixth in a series of seven. Together, they constitute Matthew's picture of the end of the world. They provide warnings about the imminence of the coming of God's Son and exhortations about the need to remain vigilant. This parable suggests that diligence in discipleship is expected in the kingdom of heaven. A follower of Christ does not simply wait in fearful anticipation of the coming of the end. The kinds of activity expected of a disciple are spelled out in the surrounding parables. The message in the preceding story of the ten virgins is that a disciple should remain awake and alert. And the story that follows this one, the parable of the last judgment, indicates that works of love and mercy are signs of true discipleship.

This is a disturbing parable. It does not deliver what the audience wants. But, while it alarms the listener, it also brings the listener into contemplation of discipleship. And, as Matthew's gospel makes clear repeatedly, it shows that discipleship is not easy.

The parable is disturbing in another way, especially to Lutheran ears. On its surface, this story seems to suggest that favor in the kingdom of heaven is something to be earned. “Well done, good and faithful servant,” is the praise given only to the slaves who, at great risk, invested the money and received 100 percent interest. The successful slaves are the ones who enter into the joy of their master. The one who did nothing with his money was rebuked and punished. It appears that the parable supports the notion that one must earn favor with God. In other words, it might seem to suggest that the diligent will be saved and the lazy or fearful condemned. It’s clear that Matthew did not read Luther’s Works.

But...look again. Never take the Bible or Jesus at face value. The parable is not about what must be done in order to be saved. It’s not about making up for one’s sinfulness by a sufficient amount of good works. The thrust of this parable is not on repaying a debt. It’s about responsible action in light of the master’s eventual return. The grace in this story comes up front, in the form of the giving of talents to all of the servants in the first place. The exhortation in the story is the call to faithful use of what the master has so graciously given.

Which makes it a great story for this stewardship emphasis. I could ask, “Are you investing what God has entrusted you with in the work of the Kingdom? Or are you burying it under a rock?” I know many, including leaders of our synod, are making such godly investments. But I think the point of the parable is much bigger than just finances. I think it’s about entering into the joy.

It is sometimes suggested that the best way of avoiding all mistakes is to do nothing at all. Nothing ventured, nothing lost. If we don’t speak our mind, we’ll never be wrong. If we don’t try anything new, we’ll never fail. If we don’t reach out to anyone, we’ll never be rejected. If we never step out of our own little world, our own comfort zone, we’ll never look foolish. The parable makes the point that sometimes to do nothing at all can be the biggest of all mistakes.

This Gospel reminds us that we are all talented, that we are all of great value to God, that we know and feel the joy already. When we hear and taste and see that Christ’s body and blood were given and shed for us, we are reminded of just how valuable we are. In the cross and resurrection, God gives us the greatest of all talents—the vision to see new life in a world full of death...the joy of our Lord Jesus Christ. So, today I ask: What are we doing with this talent, this gift we receive today in the Holy Eucharist, this reality that is the center of our lives? We are called to use all the gifts God has given us and especially the greatest gift we have: this amazing relationship with God in Jesus, crucified and risen from the dead. That’s the heart of stewardship. Enter into this joy.

Bishop Robert Alan Rimbo

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Young Disciples Message

Joyful Noise Makers

Here is a great way to celebrate God's joy!

If your children make these the Sunday before, you can incorporate their joy into the Sunday worship.

1. Take two paper plates and decorate the bottoms of the plates! You can include the design below! Just remember to be joyful!
2. Hold the plates together with the bottom of each plate facing towards the outside and punch six holes evenly spaced around the rim of both plates.
3. Place one of the plates on a table like you would put food in it. Pour a tablespoon of dried beans into the center of the plate.
4. Spread a bead of glue around the rim of this plate. Line up the second plate so that the holes match and press the second plate carefully down onto the first one. Hold the plates for a few minutes so that the glue can set.
5. Sew the plates together with yarn. Continue until all the holes have been stitched. Feel free to add beads or bells as you sew. You can also add streamers and ribbons using glue or staples.
6. Make a joyful noise to God!

**Note: Joyful Noise Makers can also be made with bowls and cups.*

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Commitment Card & Handout

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So that we may enter into the joy
I/we pledge
_____ % or \$ _____
per week / month / year (*circle one*)
of my/our entrusted financial resources
to God's mission in 2015.
Name _____
Please return this pledge to the church
office, via mail or the offering plate by
_____.

Annual Income	Weekly Income	15%	12%	Tithe 10%	8%	7%	5%	3%	1%
5,200	100.00	15.00	12.00	10.00	8.00	7.00	5.00	3.00	1.00
6,500	125.00	18.75	15.00	12.50	10.00	8.75	6.25	3.75	1.25
7,800	150.00	22.50	18.00	15.00	12.00	10.50	7.50	4.50	1.50
9,100	175.00	26.25	21.00	17.50	14.00	12.25	8.75	5.25	1.75
10,400	200.00	30.00	24.00	20.00	16.00	14.00	10.00	6.00	2.00
11,700	225.00	33.75	27.00	22.50	18.00	15.75	11.25	6.75	2.25
13,000	250.00	37.50	30.00	25.00	20.00	17.50	12.50	7.50	2.50
14,300	275.00	41.25	33.00	27.50	22.00	19.25	13.75	8.25	2.75
15,600	300.00	45.00	36.00	30.00	24.00	21.00	15.00	9.00	3.00
18,200	350.00	52.50	42.00	35.00	28.00	24.50	17.50	10.50	3.50
20,800	400.00	60.00	48.00	40.00	32.00	28.00	20.00	12.00	4.00
23,400	450.00	67.50	54.00	45.00	36.00	31.50	22.50	13.50	4.50
26,000	500.00	75.00	60.00	50.00	40.00	35.00	25.00	15.00	5.00
28,600	550.00	82.50	66.00	55.00	44.00	38.50	27.50	16.50	5.50
31,200	600.00	90.00	72.00	60.00	48.00	42.00	30.00	18.00	6.00
36,400	700.00	105.00	84.00	70.00	56.00	49.00	35.00	21.00	7.00
41,600	800.00	120.00	96.00	80.00	64.00	56.00	40.00	24.00	8.00
46,800	900.00	135.00	108.00	90.00	72.00	63.00	45.00	27.00	9.00
52,000	1000.00	150.00	120.00	100.00	80.00	70.00	50.00	30.00	10.00
65,000	1250.00	187.50	150.00	125.00	100.00	87.50	62.50	37.50	12.50
78,000	1500.00	225.00	180.00	150.00	120.00	105.00	75.00	45.00	15.00
91,000	1750.00	262.50	210.00	175.00	140.00	122.50	87.50	52.50	17.50
104,000	2000.00	300.00	240.00	200.00	160.00	140.00	100.00	60.00	20.00

What is your percentage of giving right now? Challenge yourself to increase your giving by 1% of your weekly income, and to consider similar growth at least annually, moving toward and beyond a tithe (10%).



Sample Narrative Budget

A narrative budget of ministries is a great tool to explore the fruits of the stewardship of church disciples. While the church’s budget is focused on the amount of money necessary to keep the ministry, a Narrative Budget of Ministry instead highlights the ministries the church provides.

The Narrative Budget of Ministries serves to lift up all the ministries of your church. This includes every ministry provided to the church family, the community, the nation and the world. Each ministry should include the number of people involved or being served.

The purpose is to help your church family understand how their support is translated into God’s work. See the example below:

God’s Lutheran Church: 2014 Budget of Ministry

Ministry of Pastoral Staff

Number of Events

Morning Worship Services	52
Average Attendance	80
Special Services	12
Hospital and Home Visits	50
Weddings/Funerals	10
Baptisms	15
Pastoral Counseling Sessions	60

Ministries for Young Disciples

Number of Participants

Vacation Bible School	20
Sunday School	35
Kid’s Fellowship Group	20
Children’s Bell Choir	10
Acting Out–Young Disciples Theater Group	12
Retreat Ministry (S’Mores and More)	10

Ministries for Teenage Disciples

Number of Participants

Confirmation Class	15
Youth Group Gatherings	25
Fellowship Ministry Events	30
Lock-In Retreats	20
Transition Ministry	7
LYO/National Youth Involvement	8
Young Women’s Group	10
Mission and Service Trips	14
Adopt-A-Grandparent Visitation	15

Ministries for Adults

Bible Study/Faith Exploration Groups	50
Women's Circle	20
Fellowship Ministry Events	100
Prayer Gatherings	25
Visitation Card Ministry	150
Hospitality Team	10
Retreat Ministry (Koinonia)	40

Number of Participants**Ministries in Worship**

Church Choir	12
Worship Psalm Leaders	10
Ushers	25
Proclaimers of the Word	20
Assisting Ministers	18
Light Bearers	15
Altar Guild	8
Communion Bread Bakers	12 families
REJOICE Dance Ministry	10
Proclamation Theater Group	10

Number of Participants**Ministries for Our Community**

Interfaith Nutritional Network	8 servants 200 lives touched
Collecting Food for Pantries	<1,300 lbs donated
Family Promise	10 servants 14 lives touched/week
Interfaith Council	300 lives touched
Hunger Education Ministries	100 lives touched
God's Garden	15 servants < 200 lbs veggies donated
Offering of Letters	80 letters sent
Prayer Shawls	15 lives touched
Community Meeting Space	200 lives touched
Koinonia	40 servants \$1,000 collected + 5% tithe
Local Council of Churches Meal Program	5% tithe

Number of Participants**Ministries to Our Nation and World**

Mission Support for wider church (ELCA and the Metropolitan New York Synod)	\$10,000 donated
Lutheran World Relief Team	51 quilts 32 layettes 18 sewing kits 20 health kits
World Hunger Fund	\$1,800 donated
Fair Trade Support	\$2,500 donated

Annual Investment



Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

We live in a world filled with fear and anxiety. Concerns about the economy, war, politics, our children’s education, and the state of our church abound. It’s easy to feel overwhelmed by it all and lose hope. Or at the very least—to allow despair to creep into our lives. Is that what God wants for us?

Jesus said to his disciples, “I have said these things to you so that my **joy** may be in you, and that your **joy** may be complete” (John 15:11). Joy is God’s gift and our response to a faithful living as his people. In the Parable of the Talents in Matthew’s gospel, the servants that make good use of gifts they have been given are welcomed into the abundant joy of their master.

To help us grow in our faith and commitment to Jesus, we are participating with other congregations in a stewardship emphasis the month of November. Each week, for three weeks, we invite you to gather with others around God’s word and conversation in a spiritual formation group for one hour. Sign up at the church or by emailing _____. Each Sunday a member of our congregation will share a mission moment, explaining what God is doing in his or her life through the ministry of our congregation. On November 16th, Pastor _____ will be our preacher and worship leader in a pulpit exchange with _____ Church. Together we hope to share a message of the joy of God’s abundance and our commitment to greater service and generosity to Christ and his church.

I hope you will be a part of this opportunity to pray, talk, worship, and give.

Yours in Christ,



Reformation Day
October 31, 2014

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

November 16th is our Stewardship Commitment Sunday. This year we are participating in a synod-wide stewardship emphasis and working with _____ Church. On that Sunday we will have as our worship leader and preacher Pastor _____ as I lead worship and preach at *his/her* congregation. Together we hope to share a message of the joy of God's abundance and our commitment to greater service and generosity to Christ and his church.

To prepare us for that Sunday I have included information to help you in your discernment leading up to November 16th. The first is a narrative budget that gives you a sense of what we do with the money that is given each and every Sunday and the impact that it has on lives. The second is the tool for reflecting on your own level of giving and an invitation to grow as we seek to serve Christ in mission.

Please be sure to welcome Pastor _____ and thank *him/her* for *his/her* partnership in the gospel with us.

Yours in Christ,

Att: Narrative Budget
Giving Worksheet



November 16, 2014

Dear _____,

Thank you very much for your participation in our Stewardship Commitment Sunday Service. Thank you for your commitment to the ministry and mission of _____ Church. We hope to accomplish a lot this year and we are blessed by dedicated followers of Jesus like you.

If at any time you need to change your commitment during the year just let me know.

Again, thank you so much.

Yours in Christ,

Financial Secretary

Commitment for 2015:

_____ % \$ _____ per week / per month / yearly

Transfer into the
JOY!



Join us on November 16th for Stewardship Commitment Sunday!