

2018 Stewardship of Mission ~ devotions for leaders

As we begin our Lenten journey, many consider the question of what they can *give up* for the season. Eliminating chocolate, our special coffee drinks, desserts and the like are in keeping with the sacrificial traditions for these coming weeks. They are a reminder of (albeit majorly unequal to) the sacrifice of Christ. Perhaps we might consider what it would mean instead to *take up* something. The options are numerous.

We are the recipients of God's amazing love, God's grace that surpasses our ability to comprehend, and the privilege of being God's co-workers in the kingdom. We have been blessed with diverse and gifted communities. We have been given opportunities for ministries far beyond the walls of our church buildings...and right next door.

How can we take up the mantle of faithful stewards of all these gifts and make that a focus for our Lenten journey...and beyond?

During the coming year, the Stewardship Discipling Team will be offering monthly devotions that will challenge us all to be faithful stewards of all that we have (this means more than just *Stewardship!*) We will have the opportunity to focus on our roles as stewards of the Good News in and around our communities. We will lift up Synodical & ELCA funded missions (new & renewing) to learn about the work being done, and offer an opportunity for councils, clergy, everyone to reflect on the ways in which we all are called to support these ministries as they seek to serve the diversity of communities within this synod and share God's invitation to faith.

Read Mark 8:2-9. As we come down from the Mount of Transfiguration to the valleys where we are called to serve, we follow Christ on the journey to the cross, ministering along the way just as he did.

Discussion questions:

1. How do you envision the commitment to *take up* instead of *give up* might result in personal or congregational spiritual growth during Lent?
2. Where within your local community might there be opportunities to take up a project (or ministry that might become long term), especially with those who would challenge our comfort zones?
3. Are there congregations in your area who could use your support?

In all these questions, remember that *taking up* will likely also result in *giving up* something of, perhaps, equal or greater value. Therein lies a challenge! Discuss.

Closing Prayer:

Gracious and loving God, you have promised that Christ will be with us as we descend the mountain into the valleys below. As we move forward during Lent as faithful followers of Christ, empower us to discern your will in our lives and guide us in our ministry with you in your kingdom. Amen.