Tip of the Month

# March: Those other stewardship topics

Year-round stewardship enables us to lift up consistent themes about generosity and stewardship as a management function for the gifts and blessings entrusted to us by God.

Two of the important areas of stewardship will be highlighted by our country in April and it is a good way for our congregations to be in the forefront of these events. First is EARTH DAY.

Earth Day was thought up by United States Senator Gaylord Nelson, who organized the first celebration in 1970, drawing over 20 million participants. In 2009, the United Nations adopted a consensus resolution designating April 22nd as International Mother Earth Day, recognizing the Earth and its ecosystems as our home. What better way to relate to an important topic than to observe this day in a serious, enjoyable and mission-focused celebration.

* Plan for a special Sunday celebration on the day closest to Earth Day – advertise it in the community, have some ecology projects for all ages, and invite community members to join you. Be sure to give thanks to our generous and loving God for this good earth.
* Develop an eco-ministry so members who have this passion can work throughout the year to lift up this important area of stewardship
* Go to ELCA.org and under resources, find a variety of ecology resources for seminars, workdays, and more.
* What ecological issues challenge our nation – can we sponsor a good discussion and make suggestions to our elected leaders?

The second important day is VOLUNTEEER APPRECIATION WEEK (April 23-29). Yes, it is right on the heels of Earth Day, but the last Sunday of April could be your Volunteer Appreciation Sunday.

* Celebrate your volunteers - list them for every group you can think of – choir, Sunday School teachers, VBS teachers, youth group workers, ushers, altar guild, committee members, mission trip workers – you get the idea. Yes, there is a danger of missing some – but the bigger danger is not recognizing them.
* Have a reception after services – consider a catered event so volunteers don’t have to prepare it!
* Calculate what it would cost if we had to pay all those volunteers for their vital work (the Federal Government has a scale for the value of volunteer labor). What would our budget be if we had to add that amount to it? Volunteers who generously give their time are the heart of ministry.

Get creative and use these two events to lift up these two important dimensions of stewardship and the lessons we learn from them:

* God will give me enough time for family and work and to share with the needs of others.
* Time management is an important dimension of my personal stewardship.
* God has provided this good earth and all of its resources and we need to thank God for it.We are stewards of this earth and need to make sure we care for the earth for future generations.