

# **STEWARDSHIP IN THE WINTER OF 2007-2008**

## **The Winter Solstice**

Over the centuries many interesting traditions have developed to acknowledge and commemorate the winter solstice. In the northern latitudes, midwinter's day has been an important time for celebration. On this shortest day of the year, the sun is at its lowest and weakest, a pivot point from which the light will grow stronger and brighter. This is the turning point of the year. The Romans called it "*Dies Natalis Invicti Solis*," the Birthday of the Unconquered Sun.

It is little wonder then that most Christian denominations have adopted December 25 as the date to celebrate the Birth of Jesus. Jesus is God's "Unconquered Son." The Apostle John in selected verses from the first chapter of his Gospel wrote the following: "*In him was life, and that life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it. The true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world.*"

Jesus, the true Light that lightens every man, is really the reason for any season, but especially as we celebrate Advent, Christmas, Epiphany, Lent and – at the beginning of spring – Easter.

## **A Good Time to Emphasize Christian Stewardship**

Many people think of the fall season as the time to emphasize Christian stewardship since fall is traditionally the time when the fruits of the harvest are gathered and stored and many congregations develop, present and approve their operating budgets. Certainly that time is appropriate, but it is not the only time when Christian stewardship can be emphasized. Actually, the beginning of a new calendar year is an excellent time to emphasize stewardship. God's stewards can make many good resolutions about their response to God for all his undeserved blessings.

On the DCS-Stewardship Ministry Web site ([www.lcms.org/stewardship](http://www.lcms.org/stewardship)) you can find a short "Stewardship Emphasis for 2009." It may be used any time of the year but can be very effective near the beginning of a new year. The emphasis includes the following:

### **Four Bible Studies**

- Corporate stewardship
- Church climate and culture
- Compassion, community, challenge and commitment
- Consistency and celebration

### **Sermon Notes for Two Sundays**

- As Christian stewards we are in this together
- God's banner over us is love

### **Faith Promise Form**

- Designed to help God's stewards reflect prayerfully upon their response to God's love and blessing.

## *-Stewardship continued*

Pastors are free to use these resources as is or to modify and change them as they desire. There is no need to acknowledge the source or to add a “used by permission” line.

### **Consecrated Stewards**

The Lutheran Church Extension Fund through its Capital Funding Services ministry arm has developed “Consecrated Stewards,” a Lutheran adaptation of Herb Miller’s “New Consecration Sunday” program. LCMS congregations that have used “Consecrated Stewards” have seen increases in estimated envelope giving of from 15% to 35% and, in some cases, even more.

Highlights of “Consecrated Stewards” include:

- Ties the commitment process to the Sunday morning act of worship
- Reaches the maximum number of people in the most spiritual setting
- Requires four weeks of preparation and four weeks of emphasis
- Requires a working committee of eight
- Usually requires only four committee meetings
- Does not have members asking other members for financial commitments
- Can be used any time during the year
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“Consecrated Stewards” provides the following:

- Solid LCMS Bible study materials
- Sermon outlines
- Guidance for stewardship witness talks
- A process to celebrate congregation ministries
- Publicity and communication aids

An LCEF trained and certified Guest Leader

Go to [www.lcef.org](http://www.lcef.org) and click on “Services” and then on “Capital Funding” to find information, including an online video introduction, about “Consecrated Stewards.” You can also contact Kurt Fuhr or Rev. Evan Schiller at the District Office for more help.



### **Other Stewardship Helps**

[www.lcms.org/stewardship](http://www.lcms.org/stewardship) lists a variety of free and for sale stewardship resources to help your congregation treat Christian stewardship as a year-round, whole-life process for all ages. Examples of free resources include weekly bulletin sentences and monthly newsletter articles.

[www.healthychurch.com](http://www.healthychurch.com) is the Web site that features stewardship resources developed by Dr. Waldo Werning, a long-time LCMS stewardship leader.

[www.stewardshipadvisors.org](http://www.stewardshipadvisors.org) is the Web site that features stewardship resources developed by Ron Chewning with the help of LCMS pastors and other church leaders.