



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

STEWARDSHIP SPARKLERS

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NIMBLE, NOT RESILIENT

For years this church has sought to be resilient in the face of challenging times. We have endeavored to “bounce back” when faced with disappointment or limitation. There is a decided sturdiness to our resolve to capture ground that has been lost in times of a lagging economy. I have watched congregations plan for a rebound in giving and attendance, even when there are no indicators or changed behaviors which would support such predictions. Still, we strive to be resilient. The problem with resilience is that it calls us to return to a former state, to recreate a past time or a former way of behaving.

I would suggest that the context in which we conduct the ministry of this church has changed so rapidly, that resilience which captures our original ways and behaviors may no longer be helpful. In this ever changing world, we are well served by the core values of this Synod:

Faithfulness

Respect

Diversity

Generosity

Interdependence

Change

These are the values which keep us upright in the storm. These are the values which allow us to be nimble, adaptive, and creative while we hold to our intentions for a godly life and strong missional orientation. I encourage our congregations to be nimble in this time of change and to claim a new missional posture in which we find the freedom for honest assessments and the courage to say “yes” to the essential things that create a hope-filled future.

Rev. Scott Schantzenbach,

Assistant to the Bishop ~ Stewardship Specialist

14 Spring Meadow ~ Oxford, NJ 07863 ~ 908-892-8299 ~ sschantzenbach@njsynod.org ~ www.njsynod.org

Congregations magazine (Alban Institute Vol 37, No.4) identified seven gifts to be discovered in critical times.

1. Crisis can be clarifying. In scarcity, there is little time for distraction, trivia, and foolishness.
2. Scarcity makes it harder to live in denial. Truth telling about needs and resources is the beginning of wisdom.
3. Scarcity forces us away from sloppiness and laziness. Everything we do must be considered in relation to multiple values to our mission.
4. The demands are many and varied, and they call upon us to use our gifts more fully. It places a premium on imagination, inspiration, and creativity—interior resources without material cost that are fostered by prayer, Scripture and Christian community.
5. The triage we are forced to practice is a form of discernment.
6. Brings us closer to the front lines of being human. Addressing life and death issues and seeing our positive impact is intensely satisfying.
7. Vulnerability is closer to our real situation before God. When we acknowledge our needs, it opens the way for Grace and love to flow forth, and for the church to be church in powerful ways.

Congregational leaders who can claim a “BOLD, NIMBLE, HOPEFUL” posture during these early years of the 21st century will be able to reap the benefits of abundant living, even in the most challenging of circumstances. Identify your next stewardship steps on the following “Missional Stewardship” matrix and chart a course toward a nimble recreation of discipleship.

MISSIONAL STEWARDSHIP

Renewing Principles	Be who you are.	See what you have.	Do what matters to God.
Stewardship Lifestyle	Generous Living Personal and Corporate Stewardship	Abundant Living Valuing “ENOUGH” more highly than “MORE”	Missional Living Spending Plan as a Mission Document
Stewardship and Missional Behaviors	First Fruits Sharing Percentage Giving	Focus on Sufficiency, Capability and Relationships	Accompany Jesus Introduce Jesus Follow Jesus Serve Jesus