

## New Jersey Synod, ELCA

### FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP GIVING EVENT

- Sharing personal stories
- Devotional book preparation
- Response Sunday
- “Dessert First” luncheon

Participants are invited to share personal stories of giving and receiving and of God’s faithfulness.

A this effort involves collecting, publishing, and distributing a devotional booklet written by members.

Disciples are asked to make a commitment at a final worship service.

“Dessert First” reminds us that first fruit giving to God is an expression of faith and cause for celebration.

#### BE EVER MINDFUL...

Keep the conversation and goals rooted in the strengthening of disciples and supporting God’s mission through “first fruits” giving.

This event is more about raising disciples than it is about raising money.

The rate of response is impacted directly by the number of participants engaged by the devotional booklet.

Good communication and personal invitations maximize participation on Response Sunday.

Temple talks by mature stewards are essential to provide perspective and encouragement to participants.

Recruit, train and equip leaders

Thank you and follow-up must be immediate.

# DESSERT FIRST



## AT A GLANCE

### APPROACH

“Dessert First” is a thematic approach to a financial stewardship event which emphasizes giving to God first, trusting God to meet all our needs, expressing faith through generous living and celebrating the joy of giving.

### SCRIPTURAL FOUNDATION

Deuteronomy 8:10-18 “You shall eat your fill and bless the Lord your God for the good land that he has given you.”



## WHY EAT DESSERT FIRST?

As a child we seldom went out to eat. When we did, our meal was usually eaten at a diner, and adding dessert to the menu was always dependent upon my father “having enough money left over to buy dessert.” Yes, buying in to the dessert menu was about using left-over funds to purchase that which was deemed unnecessary and optional.

It is disheartening to count the people who demonstrate the same intentions in giving to God. The world teaches us to be “sensible”. We are conditioned to spend our resources first and then to share with God and others, that which is left-over. We have grown up eating broccoli and potatoes first and save the cake for last.

### BENEFITS

- Allows participants to share personal stories of giving and receiving, and encourages listening and sharing.
- Provides opportunity for education and interpretation.
- Commitments are gathered at a time when the congregation is naturally assembled.
- Provides opportunity for stewardship education and personal integration.
- Reminds us that giving to God is a cause for celebration...as wonderful as eating “dessert first”.

### WORKS BEST IN

Small to mid-size congregations with established relationships.

Giving first to God is a lot like eating dessert first and then selecting the entrée in deference to the sweet treat. It is not a reasonable thing to do. But giving first to God calls us into a life where every decision we make stands in the shadow of our expressed commitment to Jesus.

First fruit percentage giving is at the heart of the extraordinary life, challenging us to share 10%, save 10% and spend 80% of our income and resources.

“Dessert First” behavior invites us to give first to God. To give generously from hearts filled with gratitude for all we have received from God. It calls us to exercise faith that God will take care of all our needs.

# TIMELINE

## PLAN

(8 weeks before Response Sunday)

Planning for “Dessert First” must begin at least 8 weeks before the Response Sunday in order to produce the devotional booklet. The team meets to organize the campaign, and review responsibilities.

## DEVOTIONAL BOOKLET

(6 weeks before Response Sunday)

Ask team members to write devotions for the booklet as well as other members of the congregation. Devotions might include

- A title
- Suggested Bible reading
- The devotion
- A closing prayer.
- A favorite dessert recipe

Topics might include:

- How I have experienced God’s blessings in my life and why I want to share through the church
- How I have been personally blessed by giving to God’s work through the church.
- How financial giving strengthens and relates to my faith in Jesus Christ.
- How another person helped me seem more fully my relationship between spirituality and money.

## PRINT AND DISTRIBUTE BOOKLET

(4 weeks before Response Sunday)

Arrange for temple talks at worship each of the 4 weeks before Response Sunday.

Distribute Devotional books and a cover letter, commitment card with envelope, and invitations to Response Sunday and the Dessert luncheon.

## RESPONSE SUNDAY

Final stewardship speaker at worship. Receive the giving intentions as part of worship. Have additional materials available on Response Sunday. Serve desserts between and following worship services. (Make provision for those with diabetes or other dietary restrictions.) Tally results

## FOLLOW-UP

(1 week after Response Sunday)

Provide another opportunity at worship to share commitment cards. Re-contact all persons who were not able to participate in the response Sunday. Send letters of thanks to who shared a commitment as well as participants and workers.

## PASTOR

Make sure the pastor is on board. The Pastor’s leadership and willingness to explore his or her own first fruits behaviors will be essential if “Dessert First” is to have an impact on the members of the congregation.

## LOOKING FOR LEADERS

The “Dessert First” team does not need to be populated by the stewardship or finance committee members. Invite a diverse team to work on this project. Include people with a passion for witness, publishing, as well as persons with organizational and invitational skills to lead and coordinate segments of the work listed below.

### 1. RESPONSE LEADER

The response leader works with other key leaders to plan and execute the “Dessert First” first fruits financial giving initiative and assure thank-you and appreciation letters are sent.

### 2. DEVOTIONAL BOOKLET COORDINATOR

The coordinator will oversee the development and production of the booklet.

### 3. DISTRIBUTION COORDINATOR

Devotional materials, letters, and commitment cards will be bundled and distributed to congregational membership and participants. This leader will also see that appropriate letters are sent to volunteers and participants.

### 4. DESSERT COORDINATOR

This leader organizes the preparation of desserts to be shared at the Dessert luncheon on Response Sunday. (Be sure to include appropriate desserts for persons looking for healthy alternatives and with special dietary needs.)

### 5. INVITATION COORDINATOR

This role encourages volunteers to use electronic media to ensure that everyone receives a reminder prior to Response Sunday.

### 6. WORSHIP LEADER

Include prayers for the campaigns success in the corporate worship of the congregation. Design and plan the Response Sunday worship

### 7. FINANCIAL SECRETARY

Record the pledges and gifts of participants.

**DESSERT FIRST**  
Adapted from  
**2001 Ecumenical Stewardship Center:**  
“Dessert First: Celebrating God’s Blessings”

**SUPPORT MATERIALS  
WILL SOON BE  
AVAILABLE ON LINE  
[www.njsynod.org](http://www.njsynod.org)**

Temple talk scripts  
Bible Study  
Sermon Starters  
Worship Resources  
Bulletin Inserts  
Commitment Materials  
Sample Letters