

A General Outline for a Successful Stewardship Appeal

Pick a theme

- *'Created for Generosity'*
- *'Where our Treasure is (Matt 6:21)'*
- *'We who are many, are one body in Christ (Romans 12:5a)'*
- Take a recent passage from the lectionary that has spoken to you. For example, on July 25th we hear a story of generosity, thanksgiving and sufficiency as found in John 6:5-11

Select four sequential Sundays to message your annual appeal

Make the final Sunday the goal date for all commitment cards to be returned (remember: this 'goal date' is the end of the appeal, but the beginning of follow up with those whom you've not heard from so try to set this date for no later than mid November; earlier if possible).

Prepare a letter that may be mailed and circulated digitally announcing:

- your theme
- to expect inspirational 'Temple Talks' during the four selected weeks (2-3 minutes maximum)
- to inform folks that commitment cards will be distributed in a follow up mailing [note: if possible, include that this may be done digitally through the use, for example, of a google document]
- that the fourth Sunday of the appeal is the date by which you're asking people to return those commitment cards.

Think of four focused messages (i.e., something motivational that will resonate with the congregation).

An example may be:

- Week #1: Pastor or Congregational Leader announcing the four-week appeal and then speaking about where they saw generosity that inspired them to practice generosity. This may be a time to touch on the joy they have found in giving to the church.
- Week #2: Have a guest from a local organization, like a food pantry you support, share a brief story or anecdote about the impact that feeding ministry you support is having. Connect that story to the ongoing mission of the church with the congregation's offerings being one of the ingredients that makes this 'Kingdom of Heaven' ministry possible.
- Week #3: Share an inspiring section of one of the stories from the ELCA's *Stories of Faith in Action* (<https://www.livinglutheran.org/StoriesofFaith/>), or, go to the NJ Synod's website and look at it's *Generosity in Motion* stories (<https://www.njsynod.org/generosity>). These are resource that highlight the impact your congregational offerings and Mission Support accomplishes.
- Week #4: Have another member of your congregation -that the pastor and/or stewardship committee has helped prepare- to give a final 'Temple Talk' that lasts 2-3 minutes. Thank people on this Sunday for returning their commitment cards. Thank them for continuing to pray about what their commitment may be. Let the congregation know that if they have not yet returned their commitment card, assure them they won't be left out, that they may continue to

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return their commitment card (or do this virtually), and that congregational leaders will be following up.

For each of these weeks, you will want to include an announcement in your source for announcements highlighting that there will be a 'Temple Talk,' by whom it shall be given, as part of your stewardship appeal, and highlighting the impact cited in that 'Temple Talk' of what our giving achieves. This is a good time to remind folks of the date you are asking everyone to return their commitment cards.

If possible, circulate through your various communication avenues (i.e., Facebook/social media, e-announcements, a second stewardship mailing) the inspirational 'Temple Talk' that was shared.

Communicate-Communicate-Communicate.

On Tuesday prior to Week #3, send out a letter (both virtually and hardcopy) to your congregation reminding them of the theme, a motivational snippet or two from the past Temple Talks, and a commitment card (which also may be responded to digitally by something like a Google Doc). Tell them to pray and discuss within their household what their annual intent may be, and to return/respond by Week #4.

Prior to the completion of your appeal, recruit your stewardship team and members of council, to be ready for friendly follow up (which will be inevitable no matter how good you announce the commitment card return date). **For maximum impact, follow up is key!** Follow up also mitigates against shame that folks will feel if you leave them out of participating in this self-discerned stewardship response (which again, is not just an appeal, but an element of living out our baptisms...being led by Jesus).

Make Week #4 in worship (whether virtual or not) a time of weaving a sense of **celebration and thanks** in the Temple Talk, and wherever else is appropriate (perhaps especially at the time of offering). Even though everyone will not have yet responded, we thank one another trusting in God's promise of generosity and abundance, even if all of it is not yet apparent. This is a bold testament to what faith looks like. This is what it means -or one example- of walking by faith and not purely by sight.

In Weeks #5-#8, while the active part of the campaign has concluded:

- Update people about how many commitments have been returned
- Remind them to respond according to those ways you have facilitated a response
- Inform the congregation that your leadership will be following up
- Remind that generosity is not what God wants from us, but for us.
- And for those who have responded...thank them, thank them, thank them.
- Multiple occasions of thanks should be sought out and communicated (weekly announcements, newsletter, e-announcements, social media).

Prepare a postcard with the Pastor's and Stewardship Chair's signature that as the commitment cards come in, you may send out an acknowledgment of receipt and, most importantly, to thank them!

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Three final thoughts:

- 1) Don't forget to order offering envelopes as that remains a primary way of returning offerings for many.
- 2) Try to begin exploring -if not implementing- some form of electronic giving. One way is to simply remind folks about their 'bill pay' feature in their bank account. Also seek out Tithe.ly or Vanco for help with electronic giving through social media/internet.
- 3) Communication is key. One thing to focus on is not just the content of the 'Temple Talk' but its impact. For an example of discovering the difference between relaying information versus supplying inspiration, watch this short video from GSB Fundraising:
<https://gsbfundraising.com/how-to-tell-outcome-stories/>

For more help, do not hesitate to reach out to Rev. Dean R. Brown, Assistant to the Bishop, NJ Synod at 732-747-1050 or dbrown@njsynod.org