



The
EPISCOPAL CHURCH *in*
CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA

STEWARDSHIP IN TIMES OF CRISIS

Dear Clergy and Vestries:

The challenges created by the current COVID-19 pandemic continue to reshape how we do many things. Clergy and church leadership have embraced these challenges with passion and faith as they provide new ways to worship, gather, and serve God.

Churches are also trying to gauge how stewardship in this climate will be impacted. Many of you have taken steps to reduce operating costs and apply for funding through programs like the Payroll Protection Program. The Diocese has put together this guide as a resource to help parishes navigate stewardship during this crisis. Regardless if your parish utilizes these resources or others, it is imperative that clergy and church leadership take specific action to sustain and hopefully grow annual support.

WHERE TO BEGIN:

If your parish does not already have a stewardship team/committee, now is the time to put one together. The size of this team frequently depends on the size of your parish but, at a minimum, should consist of three members, including clergy (if your parish is not operating on supply), the Senior and/or Junior Warden, and another member of the vestry. You should also reach out to anyone in the parish that has fundraising experience, or anyone who you think would be effective in communicating with parishioners. Members of this team should be consistent donors to the parish.

Another consideration related to the size of the team is the number of parishioners you want to contact. You do not want to overwhelm team members with unrealistic expectations about the level of effort to run a stewardship program.

TEAM MEETING #1:

In the first meeting, several important questions need to be answered. These questions include:

1. What stewardship approach(s) do we want to utilize?
2. What is the parish's current financial condition? If stewardship is down the past couple of months, determine by how much. Are parishioners donating less and/or have you seen a significant decline in the number of donors?



The
EPISCOPAL CHURCH *in*
CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA

3. Who will be contacted? Have a list of parishioner families that includes their donation/pledge history and contact information.
4. What numerical goals are you trying to achieve? Determine the number of parishioners you want to contact and how frequently. Set a monthly financial goal for the level of monthly giving.
5. Establish a system of accountability and reporting. Have team members report their efforts periodically to a designated team member that will record the outreach that has been conducted.

STEWARDSHIP APPROACHES:

There are several approaches to stewardship. Ideally, a parish will utilize more than one strategy for the best results.

- **PERSON-TO-PERSON (PHONE)** – this method is not only the most effective solicitation approach, but it is also the most important. Without the option of traditional, in-church worship, parishes need to be contacting parishioners regularly. Based on the typical demographics of our parishes, a phone conversation will be most effective.
- **DIRECT MAIL** – direct mail is a common way to appeal for giving for churches. It is much less effective than direct personal contact but still can play an important role, primarily when used in conjunction with **PERSON-TO-PERSON**.
- **EMAIL** – provides an efficient way to reach a large number of parishioners, but can be easily overlooked or deleted.
- **NEWSLETTERS & WEBSITE** – these are useful resources to serve as reminders to the parish but is perhaps the least effective way for the initial appeal.

PERSON-TO-PERSON

The current COVID-19 crisis continues to severely limit the face to face contact that parishioners have always enjoyed. While online services provide a limited form of contact, the importance of reaching out to the parish family is profound.

The phone conversation should consist of two parts:



The
EPISCOPAL CHURCH *in*
CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA

- 1) A general check-in with the family. Find out how they are doing spiritually and physically. Ask numerous questions about well being and if there is anything they need that the church may be able to help with. Ask if they have been able to visit any online services or prayer groups
- 2) Discuss topics related to stewardship. Express to them the importance of support and how it relates to the activities of the church and its mission. Provide details on the different ways one can make donations. If part of an annual appeal, ask for their pledge and commitment to the parish.

Appendix A provides some sample scripts to help team members to navigate a call.

DIRECT MAIL

Direct mail can be used effectively before and/or after a phone appeal. If you send out an appeal first, you can use the letter as a starting point for a discussion about the individual's stewardship. If a letter is sent out after a phone call, it is an excellent way to thank the parishioner for the conversation and serve as a reminder for them to either make a gift or perhaps engage online giving.

You can also use these letters, though less effective, as the primary appeal for financial support.

Appendix B provides a couple of sample letters that you can modify to fit your specific needs.

EMAIL

Emails can be very similar to your direct mail literature. They can be either focused on an individual basis or sent more broadly as a general appeal. If using in conjunction with phone calls, I recommend you send the email after the phone conversation. Email is a great method to provide parishioners with your contact information and instructions/links on how to give online or via the mail.

If using email for a general appeal, you can use the script examples for direct mail as a resource to help guide the language in the email.

NEWSLETTERS



The
EPISCOPAL CHURCH *in*
CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA

Newsletters can be an excellent way to remind parishioners of the importance of annual giving and the numerous ways gifts can be made. It also provides a way to convey details on how yearly support helps the church conduct important mission work.

WEBSITE

On your website, either create and utilize a giving portal or link to the existing Stewardship Giving Tools platform provided by the Diocese found at the following link <https://diocesecpa.org/stewardship/>. A giving platform should include information regarding ways that people can give as well as choices as to what project or funds the gift is going to.

The giving platform should provide the option of a “one-time” gift or an ongoing pledge amount with a continued frequency or ongoing basis. Since people choose to donate different ways, a choice should be provided to give either via credit card or ACH transaction out of a checking or savings account. Most importantly, an email confirmation should be sent after the pledge or donation is received.

FOLLOW UP

Please be sure to send a hand-written thank you note whenever possible.

If making contact via phone, make a note on when you plan to reach out to the parishioner again. It is essential to check in on your parish family at least once or twice a month.

“Thank You” Letter Template:

Dear **Name**,

Thank you for your support of _____ **Episcopal Church** and your faithful gift of **\$1234.56**. Your response to God’s generosity will help to transform lives in our church, our community, and around the globe.



The
EPISCOPAL CHURCH *in*
CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA

I have been inspired by the stories I've heard about how God has been active in your lives...even in quarantine! Thank you for being a part of this. Your walk with Christ and your commitment at **Name** Episcopal Church allows us to continue and to increase our impact in **Town Name** and beyond.

Personally, your continued support of our faith community is a source of renewal and hope for me. Please accept my abundant thanks.

TEAM MEETING #2, #3, #4, ...

Set periodic times when the team can get together (via Zoom or another online platform) to review progress. It is also an excellent opportunity to share success and challenges.

APPENDIX A: SAMPLE PHONE SCRIPTS

THE SUGGESTIONS BELOW CAN BE USED AS WAYS TO ENTER A DISCUSSION ABOUT STEWARDSHIP **ONLY AFTER** YOU HAVE TAKEN THE OPPORTUNITY TO HAVE A GENERAL CONVERSATION ABOUT HOW THE PARISHIONER IS DOING. THE FIRST PRIORITY OF THESE CALLS **MUST BE** FOCUSED ON THE WELLBEING AND SPIRITUAL NEEDS OF THE PARISHIONER.

Special Appeal Conversation Starter

As you know, we've been unable to meet together for several weeks, and we are not sure about when we'll be able to meet again. In the meantime, life and ministry have continued in new ways and with new challenges. I'm reaching out in response to the **email/letter** that we sent out **[Date]** asking for a special offering in support of the church during this crisis. I know this is a difficult financial time for many right now. If you are not struggling financially, I hope that we can continue to count on you for support during this time.

Continued Regular Support for Pledgers:

As you know, we've been unable to meet together for several weeks, and we are not sure about when we'll be able to meet again. In the meantime, life and ministry have continued in new ways and with new challenges. I'm reaching out in response to the **email/letter** that we sent out **[Date]**, reminding people about the support of the church during this crisis. I know this



The
EPISCOPAL CHURCH *in*
CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA

is a difficult financial time for many right now. If you are not struggling financially, I hope that we can continue to count on you for support during this time.

New Givers:

As you know, we've been unable to meet together for several weeks, and we are not sure about when we'll be able to meet again. In the meantime, life and ministry have continued in new ways and with new challenges. I'm reaching out in response to the **email/letter** that we sent out **[Date]** asking for a special offering in support of the church during this crisis. I know this is a difficult financial time for many right now. If you are not struggling financially, I hope that we can continue to count on you for support during this time.

APPENDIX B: SAMPLE GIFT LETTER

Dear XXXXXXXXX,

Dear **[Personalized Salutation]**

God is always at work in our lives, in the world around us, in and through the church. During these unprecedented and downright scary times, I've been moved by the selfless care shown by so many. The courage and faithfulness shown by essential workers and the gratitude shown towards them are but a couple of the signs of God's good work.

The disruption in our weekly gatherings has had an adverse effect on our finances. The ministries that we all hold dear, such as **[youth ministry, choir, food ministry, pastoral care]**, all depend on the generous gifts offered to God and God's church. I believe that this unprecedented challenge can and will be met by the unparalleled generosity and goodness of God's people.

While we have not been able to gather in person, your continued financial support is critical in helping us continue to extend our reach, sharing God's love with even more people, and making a positive difference in the lives of everyone in our community and beyond. Your support is also vital in helping us maintain our gathering spaces for when we are able to rejoin with each other in the future.



The
EPISCOPAL CHURCH *in*
CENTRAL PENNSYLVANIA

WAYS TO GIVE IN TIMES OF COVID-19

Even though we are unable to receive the traditional plate collections we all have used for decades, there are several ways you can continue to give.

- You can always mail your contribution or pledge payments to XXXXX Episcopal Church, 100 Main Street, Parishville, PA 17438
- You can make a secure payment online by visiting our website at www.parishchurch.org
- You can also make a secure payment online by visiting www.diocesecpa.org/stewardship. Our giving platform provides you with the choice to make either a one-time contribution via credit card or bank account or to set up recurring payments to your parish, also using either a credit card or bank account.
- Electronic bill pay is an option many banks offer with checking accounts. You can set up both one-time and recurring payments that can be mailed automatically to the parish at the address above. Electronic bill pay is an option that you can choose to do directly through your financial institution.

These are uncharted times and, while we don't know what the future holds, we are blessed to continue to serve God together. Your continued support of [**YOUR PARISH NAME HERE**] will carry us through, until that day when we can gather again in "physical community." What a joyous occasion that will be, gathering once more with friends in the All Saints Church we love.

APPENDIX C: THANK YOU LETTER TEMPLATE

Dear **Name**,

Thank you for your support of _____ **Episcopal Church** and for your faithful gift of **\$1234.56**. Your response to God's generosity will help to transform lives in our church, our community, and around the globe.

I have been inspired by the stories I've heard about how God has been active in your lives...even in quarantine! Thank you for being a part of this. Your walk with Christ and your commitment at **Name** Episcopal Church allows us to continue and to increase our impact in **Town Name** and beyond.

Personally, your continued support of our faith community is a source of renewal and hope for me. Please accept my abundant thanks.