

## THANKING SIX TIMES

Rev. Philip Reitz  
Stewardship Specialist Region 1

It goes without saying that donors and congregations benefit from heartfelt expressions of gratitude. Unfortunately, our gratitude sometimes does go without saying, and donors are left with a feeling that their congregation does not appreciate their generosity. Here are some ideas on thanking from *Stewardshop 103* (skill-based stewardship workshop available through ELCA stewardship staff).

- **Thank donors continually:** Don't wait until "the end" of a program, event or process to thank donors. Express your gratitude often and promptly. Fund raising etiquette requires that thanks be expressed within 24 to 48 hours after a gift is received. Also, another rule of thumb is to thank every donor seven times, in seven different ways. Check all details for accuracy.
- **Thank donors personally:** Formal and generalized public expressions of gratitude are necessary. So are informal, individualized words of thanks. Use every face-to-face encounter with members to thank them. Use telephone conversations and handwritten notes as opportunities for personalized thanks. Be specific about the reasons for your gratitude.
- **Expand the circle of thanks-givers:** Those who do the asking are most likely the best individuals to do the thanking. But also consider the impact of the congregation's thanks when it comes from several different sources.
- **Keep your expression of gratitude fresh and lively:** Check the language of thank-you letters, consider new and engaging methods, and ask congregation members how they prefer to be thanked. See where "delight" occurs among givers who are thanked.
- **Add "appreciation" to "thanks":** Simple acknowledgment of a gift is a kind of thanking. So are simple words of thanks. But when you add a measure of donor appreciation – i.e., affirmation for the qualities of the donor, the donor's motivation, or the donor's

hopes – the expressed thanks encourage and bless donors.

- **Pray thankfully:** During corporate worship, devotional time in meetings or in your own private prayer, bring your gratitude to God's throne of grace.
- **Be ready to accept thanks:** Be prepared to receive back the gratitude of givers for the opportunities you have provided for them to live their lives in God's services. Accept their thanks on behalf of the congregation, and acknowledge the love and appreciation of those who thank you!

Check with Philip Reitz if you'd like further information on STEWARDSHOPS and "Thanking Six Times: Donor Appreciation"

## Knowing When to Tear Up Your Pledge Card

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Brian K. Bauknight, Senior Pastor of Christ United Methodist Church in Bethel Park, Pennsylvania preached a sermon with this title that included the following three points.

It is probably time to tear up your card if you believe that the church no longer offers what the world needs! You should probably tear up your pledge card if giving is a chore and not a joy. You should probably tear up your pledge card when the reality of God no longer has a claim upon your life.

He also tells the story of two men who are stranded on a desert island. One seems cheerful and upbeat, the other nervous and dispirited. The second man

speaks first: “Why are you so happy? Don’t you know we’ll never be found? We’ll both surely die on this forsaken island.”

“Cheer up,” replies the first man. “We’ll be just fine. My church pledge is due next week, and I know the finance committee will find me!”

Has the ‘pledge card’ process become a formality in your congregation that everyone takes for granted? How does using a ‘plan for giving’ card give you reason to talk and teach about discipleship, mission and investing in Kingdom work?

Brian Bauknight explores this and other stewardship themes in his book, **Right On The Money: Messages for Spiritual Growth Through Giving.** ©1993, ISBN 0-88177-122-8