



Strengthening charitable causes to change the world through generosity

PETER REUSS
M. DIV., CONSULTANT



98 60th Avenue NW
Rochester, MN 55901



507.696.3309
reuss@gsbfr.com

Stewardship for Unprecedented Times

Bishop Regina Hassanally of the Southeastern Minnesota Synod recently proclaimed, "We are being called to lead in uncharted waters in the midst of great anxiety and fear. Hear me when I say: you have been called for such a time as this."

Scripture abounds with stories of God's work in anxious times. Every time angels appear, they bring one message, "Do not be afraid."

As congregations move away from in-person worship, many have great concern about finances. How can a church survive without the passing of an offering plate? God continues to bring that angelic message, "Do not be afraid."

This isn't simply Pollyanna, pretending all is well when it is not. We proclaim a God of abundance who provides for God's people. We trust in that promise.

We also use the tools and resources that God provides. These core, research based principles will allow your congregation to boldly do ministry in this time of uncertainty.

Focus on mission: People give generously as they see the impact those gifts will have. What is your congregation doing to live out your mission at this time? Tell those stories. Talk about the lives that are impacted because of that work. Boldly be the church and clearly articulate what God does in your midst. Don't ask people to give because you are behind on your budget. People care about ministry, not spreadsheets.

Remain positive: Warning of scarcity do not inspire. People give when there is hope. If you are in dire circumstances (i.e. you can no longer pay staff), be clear about that and have a special appeal to catch up, but otherwise be patient and hopeful. Congregations often push the panic button too early. Projecting confidence goes a long way to encouraging generosity. People still give during difficult times, but to those organizations that are relevant and making a difference. Your congregation can make that difference!

Use creative means for giving: With no offering plate to pass, other means of giving take on prominence. Allow people to give through your website. Enable Text-To-Give options. (see options below) Encourage people to mail checks for those who will not do electronic giving. In your communications, find individuals to tell about how they have started to give in new ways. Providing these examples helps encourage other giving.

Encourage automated giving: If your congregation offers automated giving (i.e. Simply Giving), this is a great time to encourage people to enroll. Again, have someone who already enrolled encourage others to join them.

Ask: Don't be afraid to talk about money (though always tie it to ministry). Research repeatedly shows that the single largest reason people do not give is because they were not asked. Sit down (perhaps virtually) with the top 10% of givers in your congregation, share the ministry that you are doing, and encourage their support. In this time people find themselves in very different situations. For some, the financial anxiety is high as employment becomes uncertain. For others with stable incomes, social distancing will keep them from travel and other recreational activities, giving them greater capacity for generosity. Be sensitive to all, but don't be afraid to invite people to give.

“Do not be afraid.” People of God, this is our time to shine. We proclaim hope in despair and life in death. Let us be the church God calls us to be. Let us boldly encourage people to financially support that ministry, that all may know God's love.

Peace,
Rev. Peter Reuss
Consultant, GSB

Tools for Web or Text Giving:

- Tithe.ly – Provides a wide range of giving options. They have a relationship with the ELCA. <https://get.tithe.ly/elca>
- Vanco – Many congregations currently utilize Vanco services. They offer web and text giving options
- PayPal – For congregations that do not offer giving through your website, PayPal offers a simple link to add to make it possible. <https://www.paypal.com/us/non-profit/fundraising/fundraising-online>