

**Project Resource:  
The Stewardship Commission of the Diocese of New Jersey  
Report to the 238<sup>th</sup> Diocesan Convention**

“God loves a cheerful giver.”

This is not a charming quote from Benjamin Franklin in *Poor Richard’s Almanac*. The assertion is from Scripture, from St. Paul. “God loves a cheerful giver.”

Paul writes to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 9), not just about the fundraising he hopes they will do, but the spirit in which he hopes they will do it: “Cheerful.”

Cheerful, not as in obedient, or conveniently compliant to earthly leaders, but rather the asking and giving being themselves as gifts from God.

If this cheerfulness is not part of your stewardship program, you are missing a blessing God has already given. As the Church, we are called to share God’s blessings, including cheerfulness in asking and giving money.

Based on Paul’s letter, it is easy to picture the Corinthians facing the prospect of fundraising, and finding reasons to be reluctant - fear, embarrassment, acedia, a theology of scarcity. Maybe you or some people in your congregation do too.

Paul called on all to give generously. “Each of you must give as you have made up your mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion.” (2 Corinthians 9:6). Paul called on them to give freely, “cheerfully.”

Paul preached that money follows ministry. Funds follow faith. Through a faith-based approach to asking and giving, the Church is called to replace fear with hope, embarrassment with shared purpose, acedia with thankfulness, a theology of scarcity with a theology of abundance. To act in faith.

Project Resource’s ministry is to walk with you in the space between fear and fearlessness, between scarcity and abundance, to fund the ministry of the Church. We want to walk with you in these in-between places, listening for the Good News. We share spiritual foundations and practical tools. We listen to stories of what you have learned and then help share those stories of successes and struggles with our Diocese community for the benefit of the Church.

Yes, Paul had a purse to fill. Ministry needs funding. The Good News includes the truth that our asking and giving can be done from inside the Good News. When asking and giving come from inside faith, we receive the gift of the asking and the giving being “cheerful.”

And, have you heard? God loves a cheerful giver.

## 2021

In 2021, Project Resource delivered:

### 17 biweekly workshops

- 150 participants
- 60-70 congregations (half the diocese)
- 17 dates, with a daytime and nighttime session each, for 34 sessions total

### Annual Giving mini-course

- 4 sessions, Tuesday nights in August on Zoom
- 90 people attended the first session on a Tuesday night in August
- Retention was pretty good - 60-80 typical for the following weeks
- Topic was preparing for the fall stewardship campaign
  - Goals
  - Plans
  - Tools
  - Follow Up
  - Reporting results and celebrating
- September-December, we packaged short video clips and key document as biweekly emails to further support congregations during stewardship season.

### One on One Support

- Met with individuals and congregations one on one – stewardship chairs, finance committees, vestries, clergy.

## 2022

Our spring offering will be *Keeping in Touch with Parishioners During Covid*, a mini-course on Zoom, Tuesdays March 15, 22 and 29.

How is your congregation keeping in touch during covid? What's working, what's not? Who is still in touch, and who seems to have fallen off the face of the earth? Who needs to hear that God still loves them and their Church misses them? Video helped lots of people; who does it skip over? How do you know? We'll share ways to move beyond anecdotal information to prioritize and improve connection. We'll also help gather and share your stories of keeping in touch.

Submitted by,  
Rev. Bob Fitzpatrick  
March 5, 2022