

**Project Resource:
The Stewardship Commission of the Diocese of New Jersey
Report to the 239th Diocesan Convention
Rev. Bob Fitzpatrick, Co-Chair
March 4, 2023**

Outline

- God Loves a Cheerful Giver
- 2022 Review
- 2023 Look Ahead
- The Team

God Loves a Cheerful Giver

“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.” (2 Corinthians 9)

Paul writes to the Corinthians, 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 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.

2022 Review

In 2022, Project Resource offered five minicourse on stewardship and reconnecting with Church members after covid. We worked with congregations one on one to support your efforts, typically in response to a follow up request from you following a minicourse.

During each of the past few years, we have served more than half the congregations in our Diocese, and 2022 was similar.

In the past few years, our focus has been on sustaining congregations through the covid pandemic, reconnecting “after” covid, and annual giving. This past year, largely in response to your requests, we expanded into planned giving and capital campaigns.

2022 Minicourses

Mini courses were online live and interactive. These are one to three sessions each. Videos and printed material from each minicourse were distributed to attendees and posted to the Diocese website on the Project Resource page.

- **Keeping in Touch During and Beyond Covid**
March 15, 22 and 29
- **Year Round Stewardship: Using the Summer Well**
May 25
- **Annual Stewardship: Reconnect, Build Your Team, Engage**
August 3, 10, 17
- **Planned Giving**
Led by CCS Fundraising planned giving group
November 2022
- **Stewardship Overview: Spiritual Foundations and Practical Tools for Clergy**
Special presentation to Fresh Start
March 10, 2022

Web Library

Project Resource offers a growing library of material on Project Resource page of the Diocese website – videos, teaching material, sample letters,

timelines and pamphlets. Increasingly, this material is coming from congregations who are using and then expanding on our teaching material. See link below.

2023 Look Ahead

In response to requests from congregations, we are introducing new material to support planned giving and capital campaigns. The spiritual foundations share much with annual pledge campaigns but have their own tools and timelines.

Our next offering is a **Planned Giving minicourse on Wednesdays March 15 and March 22, 7:00-8:30pm on Zoom.**

- Why do I need a will?
- Founding or renewing a legacy society in your congregation
- The Church's role in encouraging people to "have their house in order"

This features teaching material from the Project Resource team and stories and panel discussions with congregations doing it. Come to one or both dates. Different content each date.

Register here: bit.ly/DNJPlannedGiving

Planning for the remainder of 2023 is in progress. Current plans are to revisit annual pledging, and continue to explore planned giving. At some point, we will build on recent conversations about capital campaigns. We hope to continue the collaboration with congregations by gathering and sharing your stories, questions and insights.

The Team

The Project Resource team is lay and clergy members of the Diocese Community. In addition to the Bishop's canonical appointments, a Project Resource community is arising from these workshops and ministry in your congregations as we share stories, insights and tools.



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