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Year-Round Stewardship

What are you doing about your annual stewardship campaign right now? Most of our churches have their annual campaign in the fall. That doesn't mean we shouldn't be doing something now, however. The stewardship house you want to build in the fall will be stronger if you begin to lay the foundation now.

1. Focus on Relationships

Strong stewardship programs are built on vibrant relationships. Take the gift of summer to plan one or two congregational events. Have a picnic at someone's home, bring in some food trucks for Sunday lunch, have an ice cream social. Perhaps someone in the church will host a summer picnic at their home. At the event someone can speak for a few (emphasis on few) minutes about all the wonderful things that are made possible by people's generosity. Do not ask for anything.

2. Thank Your Donors

Donors want to know that their money is being well spent to further the mission of the church. There are two ways you could do this. Send them a card that says thank you and gives them some information on what the church has accomplished. Use pictures with captions or tell a story about a life changed because of the work of your church.

3. Have a Thank You Phone-a-thon

Members of the parish or your stewardship committee call other parishioners and say thank you for their gifts of time, talent and financial resources. Your callers should tell them quickly and simply about something wonderful. Do not ask for anything.

4. Give Your Donors Information

Donors want transparency about the financial workings of the church. Put a quarterly report in your newsletter or bulletin. It doesn't need to be long, but it should give information on income received versus projected and expenditures. Consider including a short story about a life changed, a new program you've been able to start, an update on a program – share some good news!

Show donors that you are a vibrant church. Create a culture of generosity, gratitude and giving in your church. Donors want to be part of a church that is positive, making a difference and helping them to grow in their own faith journey.

5. Map Out the Fall Campaign

Build a strong foundation by starting to plan now for your next campaign. Donors notice good planning. Here are some things to decide now: the dates of the campaign; a theme perhaps; begin work on your case statement; decide how you will make contact with people and ask for their support; decide if data is needed to help you begin to frame your campaign. What is a case statement? What data might be helpful?

Conclusion

By trying some of these ideas now, you will set the stage for life-giving stewardship in the fall. The key, of course, is nurturing relationships and connecting with all who generously support the church's ministry.

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