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As part of its mission to reach 100 million uncommitted or unchurched people by 2017, The Lutheran Church – Missouri Synod has launched the largest capital fundraising initiative in its history. *Fan into Flame* is designed to include the mission needs of the Synod and as The Southeastern District partners with the Synod through the *Ablaze! for God's Mission*, locally through circuits and district. Through this combined effort, we have an opportunity to provide our people and the communities we serve with the resources needed to reach those so desperately in need of the message of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Each participating congregation within the District will take part in the *Ablaze! For God's Mission* campaign for approximately 12 weeks. Advance Gift Committee members play a vital role in the success of *Ablaze! For God's Mission* in each congregation. This Advance Gift Committee Manual describes the methods of fundraising that have proven successful in LCMS congregations to invite fellow members to participate. Throughout your fundraising effort, you will receive additional suggestions, memoranda, and publicity materials from the District Campaign Office. Your enthusiasm, leadership, and inspiration will encourage volunteers and fellow members to support this historic effort.

In order to maximize the financial potential in any church campaign, we offer proven plans based on the following solid fundraising principles:

People give to people.

People give because they are asked.

People give in relation to the person who asks.

People are generous.

Giving is contagious.

Previous donors are our best prospects.

Keep your sights high.

Suggest a specific gift plan.

PRINCIPLES OF FUNDRAISING

Advanced Gift logistics are described in detail within this manual, but it is important to remember that a successful campaign relies on the following sound principles of fundraising:

- **Prayer**

Prayer is a vital component of every campaign and is the key to overall success.

As we move forward with this historic endeavor please remember to keep ***Ablaze! For God's Mission*** in your prayers.

- **Phased Approach**

Just as the District campaign is being conducted in phases, so too can each local campaign. The campaign office has developed sound approaches that have been specifically tailored to meet the unique needs of the congregations of The Southeastern District and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

A phased approach encourages larger gifts to be requested first. This approach builds momentum, provides credibility, creates enthusiasm, and ensures the maximum number of gifts are attained.

- **Pledged Commitments**

All gifts to ***Ablaze! For God's Mission*** are encouraged to be paid over a three to five-year period. This allows members in each congregation an opportunity to make a gift that they may not ordinarily be able to consider. Pledges of \$5,000 or more may be paid over a five-year period. All other gifts are asked to be paid within three years.

- **Proportionate Gift Requests**

Each member cannot give at the same level; therefore each will not be asked for the same gift. ***Ablaze! For God's Mission*** subscribes to the ideals of Christian stewardship, which calls for equal sacrifices - not necessarily equal gifts.

- **Person-to-Person Solicitation**

People give to people. What is more, people give to people they know and respect. Personal visits by the pastor, congregation leaders and fellow members provide opportunities to discuss ***Ablaze! For God's Mission*** in detail and request generous and sacrificial support. All those involved in making personal requests will be offered training by ***Ablaze! For God's Mission*** staff and provided with the appropriate materials.

Advance Gifts set the pace for campaign activity. As an Advance Gift Committee member, you play a vital role in the success of your congregation's campaign.

There are specific steps one can take to conduct a successful campaign visit.

We should approach Advance Gifts as professionally as possible. We need to prepare our case very carefully and present it convincingly without apology. There is a step-by-step process for conducting a campaign visit, which, if implemented effectively, will lead to a successful campaign.

Common mistakes include not asking for the gift specifically and leaving it up to the donor to be “inspired” to make a gift. As a result, many well-intentioned volunteers are puzzled when they do not secure the gift they were seeking. With assistance from the campaign office, this and other common mistakes can be avoided.

Keys to a successful campaign visit are:

- Prepare for the campaign visit;
- Present the Case Statement;
- Ask for the gift;
- Listen;
- Respond; and
- Follow-up.

This manual will take you through detailed instruction in each of the above steps. Your congregation's campaign director is always available to answer questions or assist you as you begin your campaign visits.

- As part of your presentation, emphasize the particular aspects of the case you endorse strongly. Your conviction will encourage others.
- It is important that your approach is personal and positive at all times. For instance, it would not be appropriate to say, “*Mr. Jones, you may not be interested in this program,*” but rather, “*Tom, I hope you will be as convinced of the tremendous need for this campaign as I am.*”

Ask for the Gift

After presenting the case, it is important that you remain straightforward and specific, and that you make the request very personal and without apology.

“Joe and Mary, obviously I do not know what your financial situation is, but I do know that this campaign must be successful, and that you are fellow members of our congregation who are totally committed to supporting the Ablaze! goal of reaching 100 million new people with the Gospel. I hope that you will listen to this request made on behalf of our congregation and give it your most serious consideration.”

Be sure to ask for the pledge specifically.

“Joe and Mary, I am here on behalf of our congregation and on behalf of our church to invite you to join with me and support this effort with a gift of \$3,000 this year and \$3,000 for each of the next four years for a total gift of \$15,000. Is this something you might be able to consider?”

Present the request letter from your pastor along with the campaign brochure to the prospect.

Count to 10.

After your request, remain silent and wait for the donor to add to his or her first reaction. Avoid the temptation to jump right in with a response.

If the donor says, “*Gee, that's a lot of money,*” and you respond immediately, you will be dealing from a negative. Wait for ten seconds; the prospect will probably continue and say something positive.

He or she might say, “*Gee, that's a lot of money.*” (pause) “*I know it's important and I do want to help. Can you tell me more about what The Southeastern District plans to do through **Ablaze! For God's Mission.***”

Listen!

The prospect's response can (and will) be varied.

Once again it is important to listen to what the person says. The reply could range from, “*I'd be glad to;*” to “*I don't have that kind of money.*” In most cases however, the prospect will want to take some time to think about it.

The prospect may, by this time, have questions for you. The prospect may ask questions about specific case elements (“*Can you please tell me more about the mission outreach leader project?*”), the prospect may ask questions about ways of giving (“*Does the campaign accept gifts of appreciated securities?*”), or the prospect may want to share general thoughts on the circuit and district. It is important the prospect has an opportunity to ask any or all of these questions.

Respond

Build your case with the prospect's words.

*“I'm glad you want to help and I recognize that this is a very significant request. That's why I came to you early in our campaign. I knew that you would listen, recognize how important this is, and give the request your full consideration. I am confident of your support for **Ablaze!** and **Ablaze! for God's Mission.**”*

decline a gift may eventually commit to the campaign. An effective visitor will respond in a manner that will “keep the door open.” A reply might be, for example, *“I understand your concerns and respect that you are unable to help at this time. Perhaps your situation will change in the future; if so please keep the Ablaze! movement and our campaign in mind and in your prayers.”*

Follow-up

If no gift decision is finalized during the visit, schedule a follow-up visit within 4-6 days before ending the initial meeting. This will allow the family ample time to prayerfully consider their decision and also create urgency and underscore the importance of the timely receipt of their gift. Experience demonstrates that when weeks are allowed to elapse between the request and the decision, the necessity and significance of the effort is lost and the campaign receives a lower gift amount. This may be the most critical step in the request process. Careful, well-timed follow-up helps ensure a gift at the level requested.

Before the end of the meeting, schedule a brief follow-up visit.

“Joe and Mary, may we get together again briefly next Wednesday evening at 7:30 so I may receive your gift? I ask for your decision by then so you may help to provide our campaign critical early momentum while raising the sights of other members who will be asked to join us”

A strategy in scheduling the follow-up timely may be to stress upcoming campaign events/milestones/meetings and holidays that will encourage participation as you requested. Some ideas include:

- Campaign events such as the public launch, next report meeting, campaign newsletter deadline and a goal of raising \$_____ by next week
- Holidays or church events (“I'd love to have your decision before our congregation's Mission Fair this Sunday...”)

If you are unable to schedule a follow-up visit at the end of the request meeting (prospect does not have their schedule handy etc.), ask the prospect if you may call back the following day to schedule your next brief conversation to receive their decision.

“Since you do not have your calendar handy, may I call back tomorrow evening to schedule a time next week? Is it more appropriate to call before or after dinner?”

In conclusion, the positive outcome that any visitor expects as a result of their hard work during the request conversation lies in this strong follow-up strategy.

Weekly Report Meetings

It is also important for all Advance Gift Committee members to attend the weekly committee meeting at their church. All committee members should bring any pledge cards and initial payments they have secured within the prior week. These regular meetings are an opportunity to keep abreast of the progress with the church, hear encouraging words from fellow volunteers and share success stories.

Before the Visit:

- Make your own pledge first.
- Prepare for the visit.
- Think positively. A confident and enthusiastic mental attitude leads to successful results.
- Keep your sights high.
- Make personal visits only. Please refrain from explaining the campaign over the telephone.
- Arrange a meeting in the potential donor's home.

During the Visit:

- Begin with casual conversation.
- Use the brochure as your tool to explain the needs.
- After discussing the needs sufficiently, ask for a specific pledge and refer to the suggested gift plans.
- Always request a specific gift amount.
- Do not ask the potential donor to “give what you can.”
- Stress the opportunity to pledge over five years. Secure the pledge by asking the donor to sign a pledge card.
- Ask for a 10 percent down payment and thank the donor.
- Do not leave the pledge card with the potential donor.
- If no decision is reached, schedule a follow-up meeting after the visit.
- Careful, well-timed follow-up better ensures a gift at the level requested.
- Report success to Advance Phase Chairperson.
- Attend Weekly Report meetings.