

# Outline of a Pledge Program Using Mailings and Witnesses

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## General Principles to Follow With Mailings:

### **Individualize all letters.**

Each letter should include an inside address to the addressee and an individualized greeting. Doing this requires your database to be current with all parties to be addressed included. The greeting should be the one you use when you greet them in person.

### **Personalize the letters from the Rector to the top 10% of givers.**

While the Rector's letter may be computer-generated and mail merged, the letters to the top 10% of givers in the parish should be personalized in some manner. Acknowledge their generosity and thank them for the very special ways in which their contributions to the parish make a difference.

### **Include a P.S. at the bottom of the letter.**

Research tells us that recipients tend to read a letter in the following sequence: the inside address, the greeting, the signature (who signed it,) and then the P.S. They read those parts **before** returning to read the first sentence of the first paragraph. So include a P.S. **Then, to all the folks with whom you have a personal relationship**, add a handwritten P.S.S.

### **Schedule the mailings to arrive on Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday.**

I don't know why this works, but mass-marketers tell us that recipients tend to handle and read mail received on these days of the week differently from mail they receive on Monday, Friday or Saturday.

### **Custom design your stationery using your annual theme.**

Letters should be mailed in oversized envelopes so that they will attract attention and look different from any other mailings from the church office. I recommend using either an A8-sized envelope (7 $\frac{3}{4}$ " x 5 $\frac{3}{4}$ " -- I believe this is the size of most wedding invitations) or 9" x 6" envelopes (the largest size permitted for basic first class postage that does not weigh more than one ounce.) Size the letterhead paper you create so that it fits with the envelope you have selected.

### **Use bright, regular first-class postage.**

Don't use metered and/or bulk mail postage. Yes, this will cost more. The chances that your mail will be opened on arrival and responded to promptly will increase as well. That is what you want, isn't it?

### **Witnesses should be invited to tell their stories based on: (1) what they believe; (2) what they do in response to what they believe; and (3) what difference it makes in their lives.**

### **And they should be asked to include an invitation for others to join them in their journey.**

A witness can be offered in either verbal or written form. A good thing about written form is that the pieces can be shorter for use as a bulletin insert (do include a picture.) Written stories can be collected for publication in other ways as well. Recruit enough witnesses to create a series of bulletin inserts and perhaps articles in your parish newsletter during the 4 - 6 weeks prior to "Pledge Sunday."

## **Include Six (6) mailings, minimum.**

### **Mailing #1– from the Chairperson of the pledge program.**

The main purpose of this letter is to offer an introduction to the pledge program so that the congregation knows what to expect in the upcoming weeks and what dates are important. If you have persons in your congregation who are usually traveling during the time when you will be distributing pledge cards and asking for their return, include information for them so that they know whom they should contact in order to receive their pledge card before it is mailed or otherwise distributed.

### **Mailing #2 – from the Rector.**

This letter is the “theological piece” – that is, it unpacks the theology behind the annual theme. It includes the Rector’s personal witness and the Rector’s invitation to parishioners to join the journey.

### **Mailings #3 and #4 – witness letters from selected members of the congregation.**

Recruit parishioners who are held in high regard and have a high level of commitment to the mission of the parish. In making your selections, remember who you are trying to reach. Find representatives of those particular age groups/demographic segments of the congregation.

### **Mailing #5 – a communication piece that includes the response instrument (pledge card).**

This mailing might include a short letter from the committee Chairperson recapping some of the highlights of the various messages (letters, bulletin inserts, sermons, newsletter articles, etc.) from the 4 - 6 week period immediately preceding this mailing. Include a reminder of the date of the ingathering and consecration of pledges and perhaps a brochure proclaiming the congregation’s “Vision of Ministry” or “Vision of Mission.” Insert the pledge card with a return envelope. If such items have been distributed at some type of festive meal event, there will be some variations in the mailing. For example, only those who did not attend the event will receive the entire package; those who did attend, but who have not yet returned their pledge cards, will receive a different kind of letter and another pledge card.

### **Mailing #5a – follow-up.**

After the formal ingathering and consecration of the pledges, follow up on persons who have not yet responded. The tenor of the message should be “We’ve not yet heard from you, and we want you to have every opportunity to participate fully in the ministry of \_\_\_(parish)\_\_\_.”

### **Mailing #6 – the thank you.**

In an ideal world, everyone who pledges would receive a thank-you letter signed by the Rector and the Chairperson of the committee. Such a letter would not only say “Thank you for your support of the ministries of \_\_\_,” but also would confirm the amount and terms of the pledge and invite correction if there has been any mistake in recording that information. Those who constitute the top 10% (+/-) of pledging units in the parish should have a letter that is personalized by the Rector in a way that relates to the passions of the donor.

### **Mailing #7 -- \*\*\*NEW OPPORTUNITY\*\*\***

To all persons who have not responded to the invitation to pledge for an entire 12-month period, send a letter inviting them to pledge for three months. Three months later, invite them to consider whether the spiritual practice of regular offerings for God’s work in the world through the ministry of \_\_\_(parish)\_\_\_ has been helpful in strengthening their sense of relationship with God, and invite them to continue the practice.