Increased Offertory Program

"..and he who sows bountifully shall reap also bountifully."

2 Corinthians 9:6,6
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**FOR ADDITIONAL INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT:**
Department of Stewardship & Development
Diocese of Marquette, 1004 Harbor Hills Drive, Marquette, MI 49855
(906) 227-9108, or visit: [www.dioceseofmarquette.org/stewardshipdevelopment](http://www.dioceseofmarquette.org/stewardshipdevelopment)
The Increased Offertory Program is designed to assist a parish wanting to increase its weekly collections. The program focuses on helping a parish meet its short and mid-term budgetary needs, and speaks very directly about the budgetary needs of the parish. It should not be used in place of an overall Stewardship initiative (i.e. recruitment of time, talent and treasure) and is not usually an acceptable substitute for a parish capital campaign.

The offertory program is conducted over a three-week period and includes homily presentations by the pastor/pastoral leader and selected parish leaders, and segmented, personalized letters to all registered households in the parish.

In addition to providing this step-by-step plan for conducting an increased offertory campaign in your faith community, the Diocese will also:

- Customize your planning guide and response card.
- Provide you with additional sample letters to use with your printed materials, if needed.
- Provide advice on how to integrate this program with your overall Stewardship efforts.
- Provide advice and counsel to your ongoing stewardship efforts.
On the first weekend, one or two parishioners are introduced by the pastor and they give short presentations on the financial strengths and needs of the parish (these should not replace the homily and take place after the Communion Rite). The presentation should begin with some personal observations about the vitality and strength of the parish. Begin this presentation by talking about what we (as a parish) are doing to help others. This should be a brief summary - only taking a minute or so. It is better to focus on just one or two ministries as examples of what the parish does rather than a “long list” of program titles. This message can be supplemented by bulletin articles, in parish emails to parishioners, on the parish Facebook page, website and more.

The presentation then discusses the financial needs and goals of the parish. The speaker should be someone who is knowledgeable about these needs and goals. He/she can be a member of the Parish Pastoral or Finance Councils, or a key ministry leader. The emphasis on this portion of the program needs to be on the parish’s desire to better serve its community. For example, “our parish realizes that it needs several new catechesis and sacramental preparation programs to help keep our young people active in their faith.” (or) “Our parish needs to have additional revenue for the maintenance and repair of our parish facilities. We have serious responsibility to keep these buildings in good shape, and we cannot manage that with our current parish income.”

The presentations cannot be simply appeals for people to “give more.” They must discuss in a frank and forthright manner the needs of the parish and why the parish is appealing for additional funds. Specific attention needs to be paid to those items that the parish desires to undertake, but cannot afford to do with its current budget.

After the initial presentation, every registered family should receive a personalized letter which restates the message and makes a specific request for increased, regular offertory support. The mailing is segmented for at least three different groups within the parish: a) consistent, regular givers, b) occasional givers; and c) the non-givers. The letter will identify the amount that a given household has contributed over the past year - both the total amount and the weekly average that this amount represents. Samples of these letters are included in the appendix of this document.
The Increased Offertory Program is introduced on the second weekend with a homily presentation by the pastor at all Masses. The presentation should begin with some general observations about the parish and its health. If the pastor typically does a “state of the parish” address on a regular (usually annual) basis, this is the optimal time to review the progress that has been made since the last such address.

The general remarks should include both the strengths of the parish and any significant challenges that it is facing. Secondly, the pastor should speak briefly about the important ministries and programs of the parish. These comments should highlight the impact that these ministries and programs make on the parish community.

Finally, the pastor needs to firmly establish the link between the Sunday collection and the parish ministries.

It may seem elementary for anyone involved in parish programs, but the fact is that many of the parishioners are not conscious of the relationship between their contribution to the Sunday collection and the parish’s ability to continue its various programs and ministries. This link between offertory and ministry has to be made crystal clear.

While this presentation is not the place for a detailed examination or debate of the parish budget, an overview of significant budget items can be included. It may also be helpful to place a summary of the parish budget in the bulletin (either as a separate sheet or in the pastor’s weekly column) and post it on the website. Having this written summary available at the time of the homily presentation may also be helpful.

Weekend #2:

During the second week, every registered family will receive another letter from the pastoral leader which again makes reference to the needs that were discussed during the past weekend. Also, this letter will again make a specific request for increased, regular offertory support. However, with this mailing every household will receive the same letter - this is not a segmented mailing. The letters should still be personalized. Again, a sample letter is included in the appendix.

Included with this letter is an offertory response brochure that allows each parishioner to outline their annual commitment (some parishes will combine this with a request for commitments of time and talent as well).

In the letter, the pastoral leader will ask each registered family of the parish to review the materials and determine a reasonable, regular, offertory contribution. The parishioners are also told that there will be a collection of the response cards at Mass next Sunday. If they are not going to be attending Mass at the parish next Sunday, parishioners are urged to mail or drop off the cards at the parish office.
First, the pastoral leader will want to thank everyone for listening to the material that has been presented over the past two weeks. This is a matter of great importance to the health and vitality of the entire parish.

Second, you will also want to thank those parishioners that have already turned in their response card - even if there are not many. There is a tremendous fear of standing out from the crowd, and if people realize that others have already turned in responses, they will be more likely to turn theirs in as well.

Third, the pastoral leader will want to briefly review the instructions for filling out the Offertory Response Card. Mention that stewardship teaches us that our gifts should be prayerful, planned and proportionate to what we have.

Each family will have to determine what an appropriate level of offertory support is for them. Begin by making a commitment to give regularly. This is the first, and most important step. At least annually, each family should prayerfully assess their offertory amount. Are they giving what they think they should be giving? Is their offertory support an appropriate response to God? Can they “take a step” in the amount they are offering to help close the gap between what they are currently giving and where they would like to be?

Finally, give parishioners time to fill out the cards and then collect them. They can either be included in the regular offertory or collected in a special fashion. Once the cards have been collected, thank everyone for their support and continue with the Mass.
There are several follow-up activities that are important to a successful conclusion of an increased offertory campaign. They are:

1. **An after-Mass sign-up/drop-off of commitment cards** should be conducted for those parishioners who did not attend Mass or take part in the commitment activities on the previous weekend. This may need to be conducted on more than one weekend to include as many members as possible.

2. **Thank you letters** are to be sent to all who return commitment cards, regardless of amount committed or number of steps taken. This includes all of those parishioners that indicated no increase. We still have to thank them for taking part in the process.

3. **Follow-up letters** should be sent to all parish families who did not respond. This can also be done by telephone contact. This should be a gentle reminder that their decision is important to the parish.

4. **As soon as possible after the campaign, a summary of the results** should appear in the bulletin as well as being discussed from the pulpit. Documentation should include the number of families that took a step to increase their offertory, anticipated or actual increase in the weekly offertory, number of families returning a commitment card, etc. Follow-up efforts will also need to be outlined.
Dear (Parishioner Name):

I hope that you were able to hear the presentations by list names of presenters that were made at the Masses last weekend. They shared with us their love for and commitment to name of parish. They explained that the Sunday offertory collection is our parish’s primary source of income, and that this income is absolutely essential to our parish’s ability to provide programs and ministries to our community.

While my primary concern is the spiritual health of our parish and its ministries, I also have the final responsibility for our parish’s material and financial health. We are blessed with many generous parishioners who offer their time, talents and financial resources for the good of the parish. To insure our financial strength and expand our programs in order to continue serving our families will require regular financial support from all of our parish families. Financial giving is a faithful response to God’s provision for each of us and recognition that everything we have comes from Him.

Did you know that XXX% of our annual budget comes from our weekly offertory collection? Your weekly gifts help our parish engage our children, teens and adults. They provide help to those in need, pastoral care to the faithful, and outreach to the surrounding community. Hundreds of lives are touched through the ministry of this parish every year.

Our records show that your family is one of name of parish consistent, regular financial supporters, and I am grateful for that support. During the past year, our records show that you contributed a total of ($X,XXX) to our Sunday Offertory. This total does not include your Easter or Christmas contributions or gifts to any of the Special Collections that we took up as a parish community. Your gifts represent an average Sunday offering of ($XX) per week. Thank you for this generous support.

I have no way of knowing your current financial situation. Only you can make a determination about what level of offertory support is most appropriate for your family. My hope is that you’ll be willing to examine your giving to our offertory and make a decision about your future support. I realize any increase in your giving will involve both a sharing of your blessings and a sacrifice. I appeal to your generosity, and I will be grateful for whatever gift you decide is appropriate.

Sincerely,

Pastor / Pastoral Administrator

Note: Portions of this letter written in Bold Face type will have to be customized to fit your parish situation. Portions in parentheses will have to be customized on each individual letter. Print letters on your parish letterhead.
Letter B – Occasional Givers

(Addressee)
(Address)
(City, State) (ZIP)

Dear (Parishioner Name):

I hope that you were able to hear the presentations by list names of presenters that were made at the Masses last weekend. They shared with us their love for and commitment to name of parish. They explained that the Sunday offertory collection is our parish's primary source of income, and that this income is absolutely essential to our parish's ability to provide programs and ministries to our community.

While my primary concern is the spiritual health of our parish and its ministries, I also have the final responsibility for our parish’s material and financial health. We are blessed with many generous parishioners who offer their time, talents and financial resources for the good of the parish. To insure our financial strength and expand our programs in order to continue serving our families will require regular financial support from all of our parish families. Financial giving is a faithful response to God’s provision for each of us and recognition that everything we have comes from Him.

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I know that you are a loyal and faith-filled parishioner of name of parish. As part of our program to educate our parishioners about the importance of the Sunday offertory, I am asking every family of the parish to consider contributing to the offertory on a regular basis. Whether this means that you make a gift to the offertory on a weekly or monthly basis is up to you. What I am asking is that you consider giving on a regular basis.

I have no way of knowing your current financial situation. Only you can make a determination about what level of offertory support is most appropriate for your family. My hope is that you’ll be willing to examine your giving to our offertory and make a decision about your future support. I realize any increase in your giving will involve both a sharing of your blessings and a sacrifice. I appeal to your generosity, and I will be grateful for whatever gift you decide is appropriate.

Sincerely,

Pastor / Pastoral Administrator
Letter C – Non Givers

(Addressee)
(Address)
(City, State) (ZIP)

Dear (Parishioner Name):

I hope that you were able to hear the presentations by list names of presenters that were made at the Masses last weekend. They shared with us their love for and commitment to name of parish. They explained that the Sunday offertory collection is our parish’s primary source of income, and that this income is absolutely essential to our parish’s ability to provide programs and ministries to our community.

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Our records show that your family is registered here at name of parish. If name of parish is going to continue to serve the needs of our community, we will need every parishioner’s active and personal support. I would encourage you to become more active with our parish. Your participation in our worship at Holy Mass, the Eucharistic Sacrifice, is essential and would also encourage your assistance with supporting our parish programs and ministries.

I have no way of knowing your current financial situation. Only you can make a determination about what level of offertory support is most appropriate for your family. My hope is that you’ll be willing to examine your giving to our offertory and make a decision about your future support. I realize any increase in your giving will involve both a sharing of your blessings and a sacrifice. I appeal to your generosity, and I will be grateful for whatever gift you decide is appropriate.

Sincerely,

Pastor / Pastoral Administrator
Dear (Parishioner Name):

This past weekend at all of our Masses we announced the beginning of our parish’s Increased Offertory Program. We shared with everyone how proud we are of...**here you should list several of the recent accomplishments of the parish or other positive comments that were made during the weekend homily about the health of the parish.** There is a wonderful spirit of cooperation here at name of parish that enables us to meet the challenges that we face.

I know of no pastoral leader who enjoys raising financial issues. However, the reality of the matter is that when I was appointed to **name of parish**, I was put in charge of the financial as well as spiritual health of the parish. **Name of parish** is a Catholic community of faith that serves the needs of hundreds of people every year. We have an important role to play in Christ’s ministry to the people of name of town or city. Because of this role, we must continue to support our ministries and programs so we can continue to serve our community.

Trust in your understanding, I am now asking all of name of parish families to reflect on their offertory contribution. The brochure I’ve enclosed with this letter provides a tool for you to examine your offertory support. That level of support will vary, based on what is appropriate for your individual situation. No one else can tell you what you can or should be giving. Only you can determine what level of support is best for your family.

Please take a few minutes and read over this brochure. It recommends that every family make a conscious decision to provide regular, consistent support to their parish offertory. This support should be planned out in advance and it should be appropriate to the importance of your parish and your faith. The information in this brochure is intended as a guide for your decision making. It should be helpful as you make decisions about your support of our parish.

I ask you to think about this matter, pray over it, and discuss it with your family. Once you have determined what an appropriate level of support is for you at the present time, please fill out the response card and bring it to Mass with you next weekend. We will collect the cards then.

**Name of parish** has a rich history of service to our community and a hopeful future. Your planned, consistent, and regular support of our parish offertory will help us to continue the programs and ministries that we offer. I thank you for taking the time to consider this matter and I appreciate your decision - whatever it will be. Please also be assured that you will be welcome at **name of parish** no matter what decision you make in this matter.

Sincerely,

Pastor / Pastoral Administrator
APPENDIX #3A

Sample Planning Guide & Response Card
(front and back panels of 6-panel brochure)

Parish Name

TAKING A STEP TOWARD SACRIFICIAL GIVING

Sacrificial giving is one way we follow in the footsteps of the Lord.

Jesus sacrificed everything so that we might have life.

By making our support of our parish a priority in our lives, we can give up something of ourselves in order that our faith might continue to grow

{Parish Crest / Mission Statement}

Parish Name
Address
City, State ZIP
Phone Number
Website

...No one shall appear before the Lord empty-handed, but each of you with as much as he can give, in proportion to the blessings which the Lord, your God, has bestowed on you.

Dt. 16:16-17
Sample Planning Guide & Response Card (inside 2 panels of 6-panel brochure)

How to use the Planning Guide

In thanksgiving for our blessings, each household is asked to work toward giving a planned percentage of income and assets to our parish.

- Find your household income on the left side of the chart.
- Move across the line until you find the average amount that you contribute to the weekly parish offering.
- Move up to the top of the column to find the percentage of your income that you currently are giving to your parish.
- Talk with your family and decide how many progress steps you will be able to take at this time.
- You may also want to set up an eventual goal, like the biblical standard of a tithe (10%) for your giving.
- You can also make some decisions about the other charitable programs you want to support at this time.
- It may take a number of years to reach this goal – but by making steady progress steps each year, it should be possible.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Household Income</th>
<th>Weekly Gift to Parish</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hourly</td>
<td>Weekly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.20</td>
<td>290</td>
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<tr>
<td>9.60</td>
<td>385</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.50</td>
<td>575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19.25</td>
<td>770</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24.00</td>
<td>960</td>
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<td>29.00</td>
<td>1,115</td>
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<td>48.00</td>
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<td>57.70</td>
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<tr>
<td>72.12</td>
<td>2,885</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>96.15</td>
<td>3,846</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>120.19</td>
<td>4,808</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
## APPENDIX #3C

### Sample Planning Guide & Response Card
*(front and back of Response Card panels of 6-panel brochure)*

### Discerning How & What to Give

**PRAYERFUL**
The spirituality of stewardship should be the foundation of your discernment on what and how to give. We are not just created by God, but for God.

**PLANNED**
Stewardship of your time, talent and treasure requires thought, planning and commitment. Stewardship will help you arrive at the right use of money for your family. Your commitment to your parish needs to be integrated into other financial decisions and incorporated into the regular family budget.

**PROPORTIONATE**
Consider tithe your prayer time as well as financial gifts to the parish. Start assessing what you are giving now and reflect on how you are sharing those gifts.

**WEEKLY GIVING**
In thanksgiving for God’s gifts, each household is asked to budget a weekly gift to the parish of 5% of the household income. Use the chart to determine your level of giving. If you are unable to commit to the full 5% at this time, please work toward a periodic giving increase of one or two percent until you reach the scriptural tithe.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>How much should I be giving?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>That's a question that people ask every day. There is not a “magic” formula that would give every family of our parish the right amount. The way to start is with an evaluation of what you’re giving right now.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most of us are a little surprised when we evaluate our giving. Prayerfully reflect on the question, “Does what I’m giving adequately reflect my gratitude to God?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Although many people use the biblical tithe (or tenth) as the norm for giving to charitable causes, this can often be a goal that takes several years to work up to. Don’t get discouraged. By taking a series of small “progress steps” over a period of time, almost everyone can increase the amount they give back to God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many plan their giving so that half of their donations go directly to their parish and the rest go to support other worthy programs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>You must determine which different organizations you will support and to what extent. There is not a single “right answer” for everyone.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Making a Consistent Offertory Gift

Your decision is a commitment made with God. However, to help the parish plan its’ annual budget, please consider filling out and returning this response card.

First & Last Name (use one per household)

City  State  ZIP

Telephone  Email

Offertory
Weekly $___ (or) Monthly $___ (=) Annual $___

Please Check One:

{ } I would like to have my/our gift automatically drafted from my bank account beginning __________ (date).

"Enclosed is a voided check with this commitment card. I understand that the automatic draft will continue monthly until I request otherwise.

{ } I currently use automatic transfer. Please revise the amount of my/our monthly gift to $__________.

{ } Go to website link to set up online giving.

{ } I prefer giving by cash/check

{ } I would like to give stock or from my IRA. Please contact me.

Signature  Date