



## OFFERING CELEBRATION OF ABUNDANCE AND GENEROSITY:

### A Guide for Creating an Engaging and Impactful Offering During Worship

*Summer 2018*

*In our Delaware-Maryland Synod Generosity Team we acknowledge we are interrelated communities of faith called to Christ centered living, we celebrate God's grace by abundantly sharing our blessings and gifts locally and globally.*

We believe the intersection of stewardship and spirituality is about the need to share blessings, is a response to God's blessings, is an expression of God's grace, is a Spiritual discipline, is personal and transformative, and is Christ Centered.

Welcome to the OFFERING CELEBRATION OF ABUNDANCE AND GENEROSITY guide for creating an engaging and impactful offering during service.

This guide has been created by the Delaware-Maryland Generosity Team. It is our hope that with this guide members and congregations across our synod will engage in a variety of interactive and spirit-driven activities to be used throughout the year that celebrate the offering.

We trust that the activities in this guide will transform worship environments, inspire members, tell stories of the incredible work happening in God's kingdom and push people to consider their giving potential. The guides activities:

- ❖ focus on the joy of giving;
- ❖ share stories of how being generous impacts faith;
- ❖ tell how gifts of time, talent & money accomplish mission;
- ❖ encourage year-round generosity; &
- ❖ reinforce that congregations are places of faith formation and require investment, just like God invests in us.

You will notice that we have arranged the activities to be done each month, following themes of the church season. Please note you do not have to do them monthly; you can do them as a series, only choose a few and do those quarterly or when its best for you; use them as often as you like and then create some of your own - please just make it work for you! Each activity starts with a purpose, has clear directions on how to present, includes scripture, ends with a closing prayer and identifies any necessary supplies. Its all here for you!

We hope this guide will bring a greater sense of generosity, giving, spirituality and abundance to us all!

## OFFERING CELEBRATION

### **January: Revealing Generosity**

Purpose: In January, we celebrate the days of Christmas and Epiphany and move toward our Lenten journey. It is a time of glory, the revealing of Jesus Christ living among us, and a time where we learn and come closer to understanding Christ's life. Understanding the meaning in his stories, his miracles, his everyday tasks, his challenges, and his generosity for us.

Idea to Enhance the Offering this Month: Choose one member who is known in the congregation to be friendly and generous with time and treasure. Start by reading 2 Corinthians 9:11-12 and reading the purpose statement above if appropriate. Then share at least one way you saw or experienced someone being generous in the last week (examples: a friend visited a member in the hospital; youth volunteered at the shelter; at the store a man surprised the woman behind her by paying for her diapers; gave out three homeless bags this week; Sunday school kids collected pennies for world hunger.) Feel free to share a couple REAL examples but not take more than 1-2 minutes.

Then have 3M stickies and pens available to be passed out and ask each person to write on a sticky one way they saw generosity in the last week. Have enough baskets with a variety of colored stickies and pens that will make passing out the stickies go quickly or have the 3M stickies already in the seating area. Give them a minute to write their example.

Tell them to keep the sticky and as they leave the church today, to hang it up on the wall labeled GREAT GENEROSITY (from 2 Corinthians 9:11) OR even better, have folks walk forward to bring offering up themselves (versus plates coming to them) and then have them walk past a wall in the sanctuary where they can stick the examples up as they go back to their seats.

Closing Pray: Finish with a closing pray such as:

*Dear Lord, we give thanks for the grace of God come down from heaven through Christ Jesus among us, for in every way we have been enriched in him, strengthened through our fellowship among him, hopeful that our spiritual gifts and sacrifices will strengthen us and allow generosity to overflow throughout the kingdom of God! Amen*

Supplies if needed: Enough 3M stickies for each attendee in church (any shape/color), pens for writing (best if colorful and bold), plus if needed baskets to pass around the stickies and pens. Ideally have young people or church leaders help pass around the baskets.

## OFFERING CELEBRATION

### **February: Gift of Giving First**

Purpose: In February, we anticipate and plan for Lent. It is a time when Jesus journeys in the wilderness, as well, a time when he begins to walk among the people, gather his disciples, and perform miracles. It is about temptation, relationship building, generosity, and seeking ways to put God and Jesus Christ first.

Idea to Enhance the Offering this Month: Choose a member who is active in the congregations and is the one who volunteers first whenever there is a need for something to get done! Start by reading 2 Corinthians 8:5, then adapt the following into your own words or share:

*As we plan for Lent, we are to remember Jesus journey, how he was tempted and yet always remained, first, God's son, and gathered his disciples to give up worldly goods, and follow him, first, and only. As people of God, we too are tempted daily; to want more, more, more; to compete with the "Jones"; to do more, more, more; till we have little time for God. As you consider entering this time of Lent, think about how getting and doing less, sacrificing like Jesus and his disciples, is really about generosity and a vital faith practice.*

Feel free to add a short 1-minute personal sacrifice that represents a sign of generosity and end by sharing this quote: "Nothing is really ours until we share it." By C.S. Lewis.

Closing Pray: Finish with a closing pray such as:

*Dear Lord, help us to be grateful and generous for what God has first given us. As we plan for our own Lenten journey, help us remember that everything we are, have, and use comes from God, most importantly his gift of Jesus, his disciples and all his followers. Keep our hearts centered on being faithful, generous stewards of your good gifts. In Jesus Name, Amen*

Supplies Needed: None

## OFFERING CELEBRATION

### **March: Generosity and Love Through Sacrifice**

Purpose: In March, we are in the depths of Lent, seeking to believe in eternal life through the love and sacrifice of Jesus. John 3:16-17 reminds us that God gave up his most important gift, for us, his only Son, Jesus Christ, so that the world might be saved and we, the believers, have everlasting life. This is the greatest example of generosity and love and as his followers, we need to do the same!

Idea to Enhance the Offering this Month: Have either the Pastor, a Council Member or a Bible Study Leader in your congregation read the following offering devotion.

*From 1 John 3:16-17*

*16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life."*

*17 "Indeed, God did not send the Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."*

*According to Vocabulary.com, "Generosity is a quality — like honesty and patience — that we all probably wish we had more of. When you show generosity, you might give away things or money or put others before yourself. But generosity is about more than cash and stuff. When you're forgiving and gentle to people, you show generosity of spirit. If you give others help or credit, that shows generosity. The world would certainly be a better place if more people showed generosity [in all ways] to others."*

*Today, as we bring forward our offering to God, consider how you can live generously, sacrifice for the sake of a better more loving world, and give for everyone to know the joy of eternal life. For there is no greater love than how God suffers with us on the cross by giving up his Son, all to express his love for the world. If we believe that ours is a God who loves and gives, and we are made in his image, then loving and giving are in each of us, too.*

Closing Pray: Finish with a closing pray such as:

*Dear Lord, you sent your son, Jesus Christ, to live and die among us. You made this sacrifice, that we might have eternal life. Forgive us when we are selfish, hoarding your generous gifts, and choosing self-interest over compassion and justice. May our journey to the cross inspire us to share your abundance and spread your love in the world through our actions. Amen*

Supplies Needed: None

## OFFERING CELEBRATION

### **April: To Love and Give for the World**

Purpose: In April, we commonly experience the contemplation and loss during Holy Week as well as the excitement and miracle of Jesus resurrection. The season of Easter is a time of faith formation. A time to rejoice and experience "Christ is Risen". During this time we remember our baptism, our salvation, as well as reflect on the beginning of the Church and the generosity in our church.

Idea to Enhance the Offering this Month: Choose a member or congregational team who has worked through a big project or ministry at the church. Start by reading both *Leviticus 27:30 (TLB)*, "A tenth of the produce of the land, whether grain or fruit, is the Lord's, and is holy."; and *2 Corinthians 9:7 (NIV)*, "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."

Continue by saying: *"Tithing is not always easy to understand, live out, and be "cheerful" about. So for the next four weeks, we'd like to help you live out tithing by doing a **Tithing Challenge**. Its not always easy to understand and teach how to give generously and sacrificially. We hope this challenge may help each of our families.*

- *Week One: Each household is asked to count the items in their kitchen pantry and give 10 percent away. The following Sunday, bring the items forward right before offering begins. Give these items to an area food pantry.*
- *Week Two: Households are encouraged to count the number of clothing items in their closets and tithe them (give 10% away). The following Sunday, have the clothes placed in boxes as you enter the sanctuary. Give away.*
- *Week Three: With the focus on sacrificial giving, children are asked to count their toys and give 10 percent away. Adults are encouraged to count books or leisure items. These items were also donated in the local community.*
- *Week Four (the final week): We encourage parents and children, couples, or individuals to tithe a week of income by doing the math together and discussing together the implications of what that would mean. The following Sunday ask all members to bring their offering forward.*

#### Closing Pray:

*Dear God, make us instruments of your love and sacrifice. Motivate us to surrender to your love so that we may share abundantly with those among us and in need throughout the world. Amen*

Supplies if needed: Make a simple handout out of the **Tithing Challenge** instructions for week one-week four. Include in bulletin or handout out at offering.

## OFFERING CELEBRATION

### **May: God created all of us different for a reason**

Purpose: This month lets take time to remember that God created all of us different for a reason. We each are created with different gifts to be able to share with others. The talents that God has given us makes us unique and each of those talents can be shared to make a difference in ours and another person's life.

The idea to Enhance the Offering this month: Go out to the dollar store and purchase some socks that are different colors or images on them. You can have 10 red socks floating around but all the socks can't be one color. Separate all the socks and place in a basket. When people are receiving their bulletin, have the usher give them one sock from the basket.

Announce to the congregation: *Sometimes in our lives, we feel like the lost sock from the drier in our Christian lives. We know that we have been given different talents from God for us to share with others in this world, but we just can't seem to find a match!*

*Some people seem to have an overabundance of talents where some of us think our best talent is that we wake up in the morning! I want you to look at your sock, God created each of us to be a unique creation. So, let your sock represent one of the things that you are good at doing. Do you sing? Like to clean? Draw? Or maybe cook? Do you like to drive?*

*Now, I want you to go out and look for a sock that matches yours! If you have a red sock, go look for another red sock. If you have a white sock, go look for someone that has a white sock. Introduce yourselves and ask that person if they would enjoy experiencing your talent? If the answer is YES then you found your match and you can go back to your seat. If the answer is NO then to keep looking until you find someone. Go! (Let people go and find others and discuss)*

*Did you find the person with your missing sock? Were you surprised to see how people were interested in your talents? Our talents have a place to be used, we just need to go out and look for it occasionally. God does not want us to hide our gifts but to share them with the church, our family, and the world! You can keep your sock as a reminder of the talents that you have been given by God!*

#### Closing Prayer:

*Lord, we thank you that we are all unique creations of yours. You have given talents to everyone to share. Please give us the courage to share those talents and give you credit for what you have given to us in our lives! May you lead us to find the matching sock to our talent so that you may be glorified! Amen*

Supplies if needed: Socks of different colors or images on them, enough so everyone in the congregation can receive one sock. Use the ushers to distribute the socks to the congregation.

## OFFERING CELEBRATION

### **June: Time to make a difference**

Purpose: We serve others because of the love that God has given to us and we want to share that love with the people around us. As churches, we sometimes place too much emphasis that you can serve God only within the church. But in today's society, many people are volunteering and/or making a difference in their communities, at their workplaces and in their homes. We want to take the time this month to recognize all the different places where church members are making a difference in their community.

The idea to Enhance the Offering this month: Set up a mini photo booth in an area of the church where people will see it when they are walking in or out of the church sanctuary. Take a piece of white foam board and cut out a square so it looks like a Polaroid picture. At the bottom, you will write "I serve God by..." then your church's name underneath. Then you will provide a small white board where people can write what they do to serve God in their community. Extra: you can get some fun props for people to use while they are getting their picture taken too! Have someone from the church on hand to take pictures with a camera. Have a person write down on the whiteboard how they serve God in the community and have them hold it up in the picture. Then you can post the pictures to the church's Facebook page or print them out and make a bulletin board.

An extra step you can do is to print out the photo and write and a thank you to that person for serving God in their community and mail the picture and card to them.

*Announce to the congregation: We would like to recognize all the different ways that people in this congregation serve God in our community! We serve others because of the love that God has given to us and we want to share that love with the people around us. As a congregation, we want to celebrate that love we share with others. Do you volunteer at a non-profit in the area? Do you send money to help children in need? Do you pray for certain organizations in the world? If so, then you are serving your community! So, take the time after church today, stop by our mini photo booth. We will be posting the pictures to Facebook and making a bulletin board with all the pictures we take!*

#### Closing Prayer:

*Lord, you have so graciously given us your love even when we do not deserve it. But it is your love that fills our hearts and we have more love than we know what to do with. Thank you for the opportunity to share your love with others as we serve our community. Keep our hearts open to serve you in new and different ways. Amen*

Supplies if needed: white foam board, scissors, black marker, small white board, white board marker, camera, someone to use the camera, Extra: props for a booth, thank you cards, stamps



## OFFERING CELEBRATION

### **July: What do you treasure?**

Purpose: In our lives as Christians we do our best to keep our treasures with God. But sometimes the world makes it hard to make that choice day after day. We want to take the chance to remember the world's treasures do not last but when we place our treasures in God we have them for eternity.

The idea to Enhance the Offering this month: You will be giving out lollipops to members of the congregation. You can use whatever kind of lollipops you would like but try to purchase some sugar-free for those people who would like them. Let the children of the congregation hand out lollipops to everyone when you are ready.

Announce to the congregation: *What are treasures? Treasures are the things that we care about in our lives. As a child when someone gave us a lollipop to eat it was one of the greatest things to happen that day! Some of us just chewed it up right away, or some would lick it until it was nothing and others would just keep it in our mouth until it disappeared. Which of one of these types were you? When we received that lollipop as a kid it was a treasure that we received. We did not want anyone to take it away from us! We would get into arguments with our brothers and sisters who would try to take the lollipop out of our hands...this lollipop was mine! Now look at your lollipop, I know some of you are looking at your neighbor's lollipop and wishing you could switch flavors! However, this Lollipop represents the treasures that you have today. What are your treasures? Is it your car? Your house? Your phone?*

God tells us in Matthew 6:19-20, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; <sup>20</sup> but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal." The treasures that are worth keeping are the ones that we have in our hearts and store in heaven like our family, friends, and God's love, peace, forgiveness, and grace. This lollipop represents those things we treasure where the moth and rust will consume and where thieves break in and steal. Does a lollipop last forever? No, it will be eaten and disappear the same as our homes, cars, electronics, and the "things" in our lives. Let us hand over to God those things in the world that we cling to each day. When the offering plate goes around offer your lollipop to God so that we can remember the things which really matter. It is the things of the heart than the things of the world which matter the most.

#### Closing Prayer:

*Lord, we thank you for the treasures that you have given to us. Some treasures like your love and forgiveness last for eternity. Sometimes we place our treasures in things of the world like what we own. Help us to remember the things of the world do not last like the lollipop we have in our hands. However, the things that you have placed in our hearts will last forever. Amen*

Supplies if needed: Lollipops for everyone in the congregation and an extra bag of sugar-free lollipops for those that would prefer them. Find youth that can help you hand out the lollipops.

## OFFERING CELEBRATION

### **August: Just Because Day**

Purpose: So often we plan out every minute of our lives. We might have a job that takes a lot of time, or we have children that we need to get from one place to another or we are caretakers of our parents. We need to plan out our day to just be able to make it through the next 24 hrs. However, God created this world for us to enjoy it and share that joy with others.

The Idea to Enhance the Offering this month: We need to get out of our routine to see what we have been blessed with and then to bless others. Allow people to use the handout for ideas on what they could do "Just Because".

Announce to the congregation: *This Sunday is "Just Because Day", you have been given the chance to do something without a rhyme or reason. We sometimes need to get out of our old routine to see what we have been blessed with and then to bless others.*

*God created this world for us to enjoy and share that joy with others. Most often in life, we do things because we have to, or we want to, or it's expected of us. None of those reasons apply today. Is there something you'd like to do, but there isn't a reason or logic for doing it? Well, today is the day to go out and do something "just because". It is most enjoyable if it is an uncommon, or unexpected activity or action.*

*"Just because" activities often come from a "whim" or a "what if I" type of thought. We know you will quickly get the hang of this day and have a lot of fun with it. We are passing out a handout where you can find some ideas. Give it a try and see how God will work through you to bring joy to another person!*

#### Closing Prayer:

*Lord, our lives on this earth are short and we need to sometimes take the time out to do something "Just Because". So please allow us to go forth from this church to be able to share the joy of this life with others by doing random acts of kindness. Help us step out of our comfort zone and be able to bring some joy to another person's life. Amen*

Supplies if needed: You can have the youth pass out the "Just Because" handout to the members of the congregation.

## Just Because Things That You Can Do Today

1. Pay for someone's coffee behind you in line.
2. Let the person behind in line you go first.
3. Holding the door for someone.
4. Lend a hand to someone who looks like they're struggling.
5. Offer to do yard work for an elderly person.
6. Visit a nursing home and talk to someone who's lonely.
7. Make an extra lunch for a homeless person.
8. Donate your clothes you no longer wear.
9. Say "thank you" more.
10. Smile at everyone you see.
11. Ask someone how their day is going and genuinely listen to their response.
12. Donate food to a homeless shelter.
13. Send someone some flowers- - "just because"
14. Text someone you know is going through a hard time.
15. Email someone who you haven't talked to in a while who made a difference in your life.
17. Carry someone's groceries.
18. Bake cookies for your local police or fire stations.
19. Compliment a stranger.
20. Text someone good morning or good night.



## OFFERING CELEBRATION

### **ALTERNATE August/September – Back to School!**

Purpose: Going back to school is an exciting time for so many youth and teachers! There are new beginnings, new friends, new subjects to learn! But, going back to school can also be a difficult time for many. School resources like backpacks, pencils, and paper, can be very expensive for some families. This is a time when the church can play an incredible role for those who may need some assistance by providing those resources to agencies, schools, or families and also praying for all those returning to school and the start to this new academic year.

Idea to Enhance the Offering this Month: The amount of resources that are given for children and teachers at this time of year is remarkable. It is powerful for the congregation to be able to see the culmination of their efforts.

Rather than having the blessing of the backpacks at the beginning or end of the service, instead have some youth and other members of the congregation bring their items to the table/altar with the offering plates and gifts of communion.

Then have a teacher (or Sunday School teacher) come forward and speak about the needs of children in schools and how these resources are incredible gifts and this collection is a wonderful ministry for those in need. These are gifts that serve the mission of the church, just like our financial resources and the elements for communion (bread and wine).

Verses that may be read:

Romans 12:2 ESV *“Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.”*

Proverbs 4:13 ESV *“Keep hold of instruction; do not let go; guard her, for she is your life.”*

Then have the blessing of the backpacks/resources and gifts of communion:

Prayer/Blessing:

*Generous God, we give you thanks to you for the resources and gifts that we have that enable us to thrive and do your work in this world. Bless those that are returning to school this year—students, teachers, teacher aids, custodians, principals, and other employees—that they may be inspired and enlightened through their studies and teaching. Bless these backpacks and resources, that those who receive them may be able to thrive in their studies and feel your love and guidance in their use. Amen*

Supplies if needed: Make sure to have enough hands to bring the items forward. You can also have people bring the backpacks and resources up to the table before the service begins so that they are present the whole time. However, there is a special moment in seeing these gifts being called the same as our gifts of communion and offering.

## OFFERING CELEBRATION

### **September – New Beginnings/Welcome Home**

Purpose: September is a month of New Beginnings and a time of returning. After a summer of travel and fun, (going to the beach, to camp, to baseball games, to soccer tournaments, maybe even to new places or other countries), September is often an abrupt reminder of returning to work or school, chores and duties. But as the church, we do not need to toss away that fun or make people feel bad about their time away or travel. Instead we can welcome our parishioners home and lift up their travel and experiences as a part their life in Christ. Going away is healthy. Being with family is a joy. And with those joyous moments carrying us and when we return home, we can begin a new year, with new beginnings, that help us to do God's work in the world.

Idea to Enhance the Offering this Month: Choose a member of your generosity/stewardship team who traveled or took some time away for family or for themselves over the summer. Then have them read, *Psalm 133:1*, "How good and pleasant it is when God's people live together in unity!" Then ask the leader to share their journeys over the summer (showing an example that gives people permission to feel okay that they traveled and were not at church every day that summer). Encourage the leader to talk about returning home to be together with the church and the community of God's people. How will you use that joy for the good of the Church and God's people in this new beginning?

Have three cards (index/postcard size) in your bulletin already or pass them out at this time. Have people write on each card about 3 questions:

1. *What about your summer or travel brought you joy?*
2. *What are you excited about in the upcoming school year or work year?*
3. *How will you use your joy for the good of God's people in this new beginning?*

Give people a few minutes to write these thoughts down. Then have them place them in the offering plate as it is passed around. In the weeks ahead, you can post these cards in the lobby/narthex for people to remember that joy and using it for the good of God's people.

#### Closing Prayer:

*God of Joy, how good and pleasant it is when your people live together in unity! We give thanks to you for all the joys and blessings that you have given us in our travel and activities. We give thanks to you for this community and family that welcome us home when we return. Allow this energy and joy to inspire us to do your work in this church for the good of all God's people! Amen*

Supplies if needed: 3 cards (index card/postcard size) for each person in the congregation, markers for each person. Ideally have ushers holding extra cards in case someone does not have them. Have ushers collect them at the offering.

## OFFERING CELEBRATION

### **October – A Pledge and Promise**

Purpose: October is commonly annual pledge month in congregations. This is the time when individuals of the congregation prayerfully consider what they will give to the church for the upcoming year. By gathering pledges, the church is able to thoughtfully consider the resources available for the upcoming year. This is an opportunity to share a narrative, story, of how their money impacts the mission and ministry of the church.

Idea to Enhance the Offering this Month: Gather information about all the ministry that your congregation gave to and participated in during the past year:

What special events did you have? What ministries in your congregation were reaching out (i.e. Social ministry, Quilt making, Prayer ministries)? What local ministries did you support (i.e. Homeless Shelters, Food pantry, Local community groups, Schools—think back to school offerings)? What world ministries did you support (i.e. Lutheran World Relief, World Hunger, Disaster Relief)? What youth events or other trips did you raise and give toward (i.e. FreeRide, RoadTrip, ELCA Youth Gathering, Mission trips, servant projects)?

After you gather this information, have members of the different groups write up a short description of the impact of these ministries. Have a youth describe their experience at the Youth Gathering with 30,000 other youth. Have a member of Social Ministry describe the families they are helping. Have a quilt maker talk about how many quilts they made and gave out to those in need? How many backpacks and resources were gathered and given to schools?

On the day that you give out pledge cards (although they will probably be turned in a few weeks later), have a member of the generosity/stewardship team speak to the congregation at the time of the offering. Read: 1 Chronicles 29:14, *“But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this? Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand.” (NIV)*. In a document, distribute the stories to the congregation. It can be called “Your gift. Our mission.” Or “How My Offering Makes a Difference” Or anything that helps people see the connection of these ministries and their giving. Speak about how the giving helps to make all these stories possible. Encourage the congregation to prayerfully consider how they can increase their giving to grow the mission of the church.

Closing Prayer:

*Gracious God, we give thanks to you for the generous hearts of your people and the many blessings that you have first given us. Inspire us to continue to give of our time, talent, and treasure to the mission of this church and to you mission in this world. Amen*

Supplies if needed: Collect stories from ministries and others. Compile them into a document to hand out pledge cards. If possible, have pictures of the ministries playing on a projector/screen while the person is speaking to help visualize.

## OFFERING CELEBRATION

### **ALTERNATE October – FreeRide**

Purpose: With mission trips, Youth Gatherings, youth group activities, and camps, there are so many things that your Youth Group fundraises for. And if your youth group is attending multiple events in a year, it may feel like there is one fundraiser after another. But these are incredible formational experiences that give your young leaders a space in which they can express and explore their faith with others around their age. It is a tremendous gift of the church to be able to send our youth to these events. In October, we have the middle school youth gathering of FreeRide. Here they will gather with a ton of other middle school youth to worship, play, learn, serve, and connect with others in a setting which centers on Christ.

Idea to Enhance the Offering this Month: Have a youth member and youth leader come forward. Have them read *Jeremiah 29:11*, “‘For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares the LORD, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.’” Have the youth and leader share their experiences at FreeRide or from other youth events from a previous year. Some questions that may help to guide you on what you talk about:

What are things that are learned at the events? What are your favorite moments? How do these moments impact your faith?

Activity – Envelope Campaign: On a poster board in the lobby/narthex post detachable envelopes with dollar amounts on each. The total of all the envelopes should equal your overall goal (i.e. If you needed to raise 500 dollars, the numbers could range sequentially, \$1, \$2, \$3... to \$31 or \$32—which would raise \$496 or \$528.) Have members of the congregation select the amount which they would like to give and put it in envelope to go into the offering plate the next Sunday. This activity works best for fundraisers that are under \$1000.

After the youth event, have one of the youth share about their experiences.

Closing Prayer:

*Dear God, we give thanks to you for events and experiences that nurture and expand our faith. Allow us to be generous to our young leaders and to help cultivate the formation of their faith. Bless them as they grow in Christ and continue to be leaders in your church. Amen*

Supplies if needed: Poster Board, tape, envelopes with amount written on the front. This activity works best for fundraisers that are under \$1000.

## OFFERING CELEBRATION

### **November – The Gift of Thanksgiving**

Purpose: In November, many churches begin canned-food drives and clothing drives for those in need. It is a time when we are thankful for all that we have and inspired by that thanksgiving, we give to others. This is another time when we can see the products of our gifts and bless them as they go out to those who are in need of them.

Idea to Enhance the Offering this Month: The Sunday before Thanksgiving, have the collected food around the table/altar so that the congregation can see the food and gifts that were collected. Because it is often heavy, it may be good to have it there before the service begins. Have a youth or organizer of the food drive (and/or clothing drive) read:

Psalm 107:8-9, *“Let them thank the LORD for his steadfast love, for his wonderful works to humankind. For he satisfies the thirsty, and the hungry he fills with good things.”*

Have the leader thank the congregation for their generosity and gifts. Then guide each member of the congregation (if they gave food items or not) to write a short note to those that will receive this food. Share the note should tell them that we love them and that we are thinking and praying for them. Then sign your first name and your congregation's name.

Have each member bring the note forward and place it with the food when they come up for communion (if this is difficult, you can collect the notes with the offering and the ushers can place them with the collected food items).

#### Blessing of gifts:

*Merciful God, we give thanks to you for everything that we are so privileged to have, food, shelter, and community. Bless these gifts that they may go to the nourishment of our siblings in need. Bless these letters that they may lift the spirits of those who read them and give them comfort to know they are loved.  
Amen*

Supplies if needed: Collect food items in the week beforehand. Have cards, post cards, paper, and/or envelopes for the notes. Have pens for everyone in the congregation. Have ushers or youth participants pass out the paper and pens and be there to collect them if needed.



## OFFERING CELEBRATION

### **December – Tis the season to be Thankful**

Purpose: It's the season and month that people have been talking about FOR MONTHS. Christmas gifts, travel, worship services, concerts, pageants... people are very much giving their time, talent, and treasure to many different communities (and they have also been giving quite a bit in the months before). Now is an incredible time to say, "Thank You!" And it can be done in many different ways:

Idea to Enhance the Offering this Month: We should say thank you more than one time a year, and this is a good time to say it multiple times.

1. At one of your services, have the leader of your generosity/stewardship team or your pastor say thank you during the offering for all that people have given in this past year. Use real examples and speak of time, talent, and treasures.
2. As December ends and you begin working on end-of-year giving statements, have your stewardship team write handwritten thank you notes to go with each giving statement (the more personal you are, the more effective it is).
3. Create a video to post on your website and/or Facebook page that thanks all those who have given and have supported your congregation. While it is a great way to say thank you, it is also a wonderful way to show newcomers that you are appreciative of the people in the church as well as the community around you.
4. Write thank you letters to community organizations that have partnered with you in your ministry. This is a great way to stay connected to them and to reach out and tell them that you look forward in continuing to work together.

#### Verses to use:

2 Samuel 2:6, *"May the Lord now show you kindness and faithfulness, and I too will show you the same favor because you have done this."* (NIV)

Philippians 1:3-5, *"I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."* (NIV)

Closing Prayer: (You can include this in your letters too!)

*Loving God, we thank you for the gift of this congregation and our partners in ministry. Thank you for their spirit of generosity and love. Thank you for their presence and their gifts to this church. Bless them now and always. Amen*

Supplies if needed: Time. "Thank you" letters can take longer than we anticipate when personalized. The sooner you begin writing them, the more likely you will be able to send them. Supplies for mailing if you are sending them out by postal service.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR GIFTS  
OF TIME, TALENT, & TREASURE  
TO OUR GREATER CHURCH  
AND PARTICIPATING  
IN OUR SYNODS  
OFFERING CELEBRATION  
OF ABUNDANCE AND  
GENEROSITY!