

## **STEWARDSHIP ACTIVITIES FOR THE NEW YORK AVENUE PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH Washington, DC – 2021 Stewardship Campaign**

The New York Avenue Presbyterian Church (NYAPC), an historic urban church in downtown Washington, DC is in the midst of its 2021 Stewardship Campaign. The church's congregation consists of around 320 households of members in DC, Maryland, and Virginia, and its 2021 pledging goal is \$700,000. As of October 13, 2020, two thirds of this goal has been met from just under one third of the congregation (\$519,000 from 90 households).

This year's stewardship campaign differed from past campaigns in four primary ways. First, due to the fact that NYAPC has been meeting virtually by Zoom since March, more of the campaign was virtual, with a greater emphasis on online communications like videos, emails, the website, and online pledging. Second, the campaign sought to incorporate more best practices from the non-profit world, including having a longer solicitation letter to articulate the strengths of the church's multi-faceted missions, personalized letters that include members' names in the letter salutation, and having pre-addressed, pre-stamped return envelopes in the stewardship mailings. Third, the committee sought to professionalize stewardship-related communications by having an official Stewardship Campaign logo and paper-products designed and using professional printing. And, finally, there was a greater emphasis on getting members of the church's four boards – Trustees, Session, Diaconal Ministers, and Deacons – to pledge in advance of the kickoff of the formal stewardship campaign. In fact 54 pledges – totaling ~50% of the church's goal – came from the church's four boards and were pledged before the official launch of the campaign.

What follows is an overview of the NYAPC **Stewardship plan and campaign implementation**. Note that this synopsis is being written mid-campaign and thus does not reflect the outcome of the campaign or whether all intended actions were taken.

### **1. Committee recruitment and workings**

- a. Recruitment – Began early summer. Committee members recruited from various board committees and church membership more generally. Desired committee member characteristics: people who get things done, age and member tenure diversity, and technological proficiency.
- b. Committee size – The committee is composed of six members and the senior minister
- c. Committee meeting cadence – The committee meets weekly on Zoom, with agendas to track progress towards the campaign launch
- d. Committee member responsibilities – Each member has been responsible for a specific piece of the campaign (e.g. solicitation letter writing, writing and sending weekly congregational emails, mission fair, recruitment of members for Minutes for Mission, pledge progress/results monitoring etc.)

### **2. Goal setting**

- a. Goal setting body – Financial goal set in August by Stewardship Committee in consultation with the church's senior minister, the budget committee, the National Capitol Presbytery and other church stewardship chairs, and other members of the congregation.
- b. Considerations - Goal set taking into consideration prior year's pledging goal, church's giving history, church's budgeting needs, and current climate (including pandemic)
- c. Comparison to prior year - Committee ultimately set the goal at the same level as for the 2020 stewardship campaign. The committee views the goal as aspirational, though potentially attainable, given that the church has not been meeting in person since March, but instead meeting on Zoom.

### 3. **Schedule Setting**

- a. Committee calendar duration - Calendar of Stewardship Committee activities spans July through November.
- b. Pledge period - The official pledge period is from September 27th – November 15<sup>th</sup>
- c. Deadlines included - Calendar set deadlines to track progress including interim deadlines (e.g. first draft of letter, final draft of letter, letter to printer etc.)

### 4. **Stewardship Theme and Design**

- a. Theme - Benchmarked and presented 12 spiritual themes for committee discussion and decision.
- b. Design – Recruited professional graphic designer to create a campaign logo and design, stationery, and thank you cards.

### 5. **Multi-layered Stewardship Communications Plan**

- a. Pre-campaign solicitations – Committee co-chairs presented to each of four boards (Trustees; Session; Deacons; Diaconal Ministers) during each boards’ regular meetings and asked board members to pledge ahead of Stewardship Campaign Launch. Committee co-chairs and/or the senior minister followed up with non-pledging board members by email, which resulted in 100% participation.
- b. Worship – Multi-pronged approach to stewardship during Zoom online worship:
  1. Worship slides – slides that cycle prior to the beginning of worship include a slide with the Stewardship logo, a reminder to pledge, and a link to the online pledging portal.
  2. Minutes for Mission – Members of the congregation have spoken during worship about why they give; four Minutes for Mission have been scheduled about stewardship throughout the campaign.
  3. Sermons – Minister has been speaking about stewardship-related topics during multiple sermons during the stewardship campaign.
  4. Offering – Minister has reminded congregation to pledge during the offering and there has been a link to the online pledge portal on the Zoom slide during the offering.
  5. Dedication Sunday – Committee intends to put together a short video featuring a number of members of the congregation saying upbeat, stewardship-related messages.
- c. Mail – Mailed stewardship letter, pledge card, and return envelopes to current and recent members of the congregation.
  1. Letter - Wrote, edited, and finalized two-page solicitation letter, leveraging resources and sample letters from the Presbytery and other churches; letter was intended to include a comprehensive articulation of gift impacts and to motivate empathy and response.
  2. Member addresses - Reviewed and corrected all member names, addresses, and other information to the extent not previously updated in the church’s records.
  3. Printing logistics – Obtained bid from four printers and selected printer. Then sent printer name and address data, templates from graphic designer, and signatures of minister and co-chairs of the stewardship committee, who signed the letter. The laser set-ups were then approved (letters were personalized and mail merge was used to place individual names on letters). The printer also placed stamps on all exterior and interior/return envelopes to increase response.
  4. Letter stuffing and mailing - The committee picked up the letters to avoid delivery costs, folded/stuffed the letters, and delivered them to the post office. The mailing consisted of an exterior envelope, personalized stewardship letter, a pledge card, and a pre-addressed, stamped return envelope.

- d. Website – Included a button on homepage related to pledging and included a pledge portal through which members could pledge online
- e. Stewardship-Specific Emails – The committee has sent weekly emails to the congregation regarding stewardship and pledging, including emails with testimonials from members of the congregation about why they pledge.
- f. Other Congregational Emails – Reminders about the stewardship campaign have been included in select regular email communications to the congregations.
- g. Virtual Mission Fair – Members of the congregation stayed on Zoom after church one recent Fall Sunday to see a video showcasing many of the church’s missions. There was a short Q&A session following the video. This virtual mission fair was an alternative to NYAPC’s annual in-person mission fair where each mission had a booth to welcome visitors and discuss how pledges and congregational gifts support these programs.
- h. Social Media – Reminders about the Stewardship Campaign were posted on Facebook and Instagram. Content on these platforms was somewhat limited by individuals not wanting their testimonials or likeness to be on a public social media platform.

#### 6. **Post-Pledging Actions**

- a. Pledge Monitoring – Weekly reporting on progress towards goal done by committee co-chair in connection with the church’s accountant. Amounts of pledges are kept confidential.
- b. Thank You – The Committee co-chair assigned names to members of the stewardship committee so the committee members could write a handwritten thank you to individuals who have pledged. The pastor acknowledges and writes thank you notes for all gifts over \$10,000.

For questions, you are welcome to write the Co-Chairs of New York Avenue Presbyterian’s Stewardship Committee:

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