Tip of the Month

# NOVEMBER – It’s about giving thanks

This is the month when we are focused on Thanksgiving, the end of the calendar year and holidays. Yet, one of the areas that we do not use as systematically or effectively as we might, is giving thanks.

We miss a HUGE opportunity. A recent stewardship thought from Margaret Marcuso of the Ecumenical Stewardship Center underscored this message. I’m not talking about the letter sent to members with their financial statements, or the general thank you that we give to members during worship announcements or in an annual report. I’m talking about a handwritten note.

Let me repeat that – a handwritten note. Yes, they still exist and because they are so rare, the impact of this method is ten-fold or more as opposed to an email or instant message. A handwritten note of thanks for a member’s wonderful support of the work of the congregation or their years of service in a particular ministry or their faithfulness in weekly worship is worth its weightin gold. I bet you remember and cherish thoughtful written notes that you have received.

Simple, right? And yet it is not. Pastor Bob Hyson who served Trinity, Lansdale for so many years was legendary for his hand-written notes. He told me that he took time once a week to write out 20 or so to members. Two hours of time, but untold benefits.

Here are six suggestions that Margaret Marcuson gave for notes you could write:

1. Over time, write a note to everyone on your board thanking them for their contribution. You could do that with other committees and teams in your church.
2. Write to members of your staff - both current and past.
3. Write thank you notes to those who give.
4. Write to someone you are having trouble with.
5. Write to new members.
6. Send sympathy notes to someone who has lost a loved one recently, or a year ago.

You won't run out of possibilities.

You may be saying:

I can't possibly do this, I don't have an extra 10 minutes, my handwriting is terrible, or some other excuse. Can't I send an email instead? I absolutely get it.

And, Margaret’s point remains: A handwritten,snail-mailed note makes an impact. Some of your ministry leaders may get inspired by your example and write a note of thanks to their team members. Giving thanks could grow and your congregation will benefit.

So, get a selection of beautiful greeting cards with a Scriptural message or print up some attractive congregational note cards or something similar, and just say, "Thinking of you. Thank you for all you do," and sign it. Even on a notecard you only need three sentences, though a bit more personal, even if short, is better.

Here's a checklist:

1. Buy notecards or greeting cards that make you feel good.
2. Get commemorative stamps.
3. Make a list of the first four people that come to mind.
4. At the beginning of your week, set a timer for 10 minutes. Write a note to the first person on the list. Address the envelope. Add a stamp. Put it in the mail.
5. Repeat #4 the next day. Repeat 3-4 next week (Sundays off).

I don't want to add to your list of obligations, even if it feels like it. What I DO want is for you to have healthy and growing relationships with your leaders and other key people in your congregation. If my idea here makes your heart sink, leave it for another time. If you feel drawn to this, try it out.

It’s about giving thanks!