

# THE NINETY DAY STEWARDSHIP WINDOW

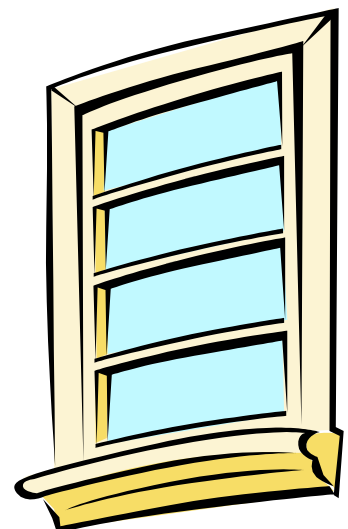
## New Jersey Synod, ELCA

Congregations are struggling to claim a sustainable model for ministry in recent decades. Sole reliance on offerings as the means of funding even modest forms of ministry is increasingly elusive. A typical congregation in the New Jersey Synod, (with a full-time pastor, part-time support staff, building and modest ministry spending) will generally reflect an operating budget of \$180,000. Simple math will indicate the challenge of sole reliance on offerings to sustain this model.

Average Weekly Attendance	Giving/person 50 weeks/year	Annual Giving
150	\$24.00	\$180,000
100	\$36.00	\$180,000
75	\$48.00	\$180,000
50	\$72.00	\$180,000

The reality for many congregations is that the generosity reflected in the offering plate is no longer sufficient to support ministry as expressed in the local congregation. Declining participation in the fellowship of the faith community and rising operating costs make it difficult to balance income and expenses. If your congregation encounters a financial deficit, or if you are using endowments and savings to cover basic operating costs, it is likely you can no longer afford your current ministry model.

It is important to recognize when you reach this circumstance. Use this time to transform and transition the ministry of the congregation to cultivate a Christ-centered, resilient, generous, and missional, faith-community for the sake of a needy world. Establish and enact a plan to investigate increasing income and moderating expenses. It is likely that you will not be able to effectively address such financial deficits with a single approach. Most congregations will need to investigate adaptations on both the income and expense side of the equation.



# Get a G.R.I.P. People!

- G** Gain Control over your budget
- R** Reevaluate God's Preferred Future for the congregation.
- I** Invest in things that achieve balance in God's Purpose
- P** Prepare for Change

The mission of the church is the non-negotiable item! When belt tightening is warranted, you will be faced with hard choices regarding what is negotiable and what is "off the table". It will be essential that the congregation have a well internalized sense of God's mission to transform creation and its place in that work before proceeding.

The identification of additional and sustainable income sources is equally difficult and disruptive. Fund raising activities, use of unrestricted savings, selling the parsonage are examples of activities that do not produce sustainable and renewable resources and quickly lead to discouragement and fatigue. More helpful activities might seek creative ways to neutralize costs of unused facilities, etc.

The Ninety Day Window is a recommended approach to stimulating the generosity of members in support of critical ministries of the congregation. The objective of this approach is to inspire congregational participants to generously support the ministry ventures of the congregation during the coming 90 days. Several advantages are apparent:

- Provides an attainable goal for ministry and generosity
- Creates an excellent venue for mission interpretation
- Connects people with purpose
- Captures more people in the invitation into ministry than most "programs"
- Encourages celebration and thanksgiving for the work that you do together



On the first Sunday of the 90 Day Window, tell the story that outlines the hopes and vision for the next three months. Identify specific ministry ventures that you will initiate during this time and the anticipated outcomes of that work. Keep it Biblically rooted and missionally based. Ask people to support this work through their generous financial support and their time and talents specific to these tasks. Thank them for their commitments.

Build a Mission Kiosk that is located in a place of prominence. (A corner or out of the way place is not acceptable.) On one side of the kiosk, place a giving thermometer and a place to add post-it-notes that identify specific talents or jobs that are being sought to complete ministry tasks. Place labels on the other sides of the kiosk to identify the 90 day projects.



Temple talks on Sunday mornings should interpret specific ministries either as they are beginning or upon completion. Tell the story of who led and worked on the project, or whose lives were changed because of that ministry.

When a ministry venture is completed or initiated, place photos over the labels on the kiosk to signal the progress in your specified work and to affirm God's purposes fulfilled by that ministry.

At the end of the 90 days, bake a cake, and have a celebration. Thank people for making ministry possible. Tell the stories, and begin again. Tell the stories of God's plan for the congregation during the next 90 days and ask for new commitments.



You should be able to see demonstrated momentum and growth in resources within 6 month if your work is effective. Use Sunday gatherings, newsletters, you-tube videos, Facebook posts to tell the stories and build investment.

# ASK, THANK, TELL!