

Diocese of Owensboro Increased Offertory Program

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Diocese of Owensboro Increased Offertory Program

The Increased Offertory Program is designed to assist a parish wanting to increase its weekly collections. It is not a stewardship effort and should not be used in place of a Stewardship Initiative. Likewise, the Offertory Program is not usually an acceptable substitute for a parish capital campaign. The Offertory 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.

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

The Calendar of Activities for the Offertory Program is as follows:

Weekend #1:

The program is introduced on the first 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 need to 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 discussed in the pastor’s weekly column). Having this written summary available at the time of the homily presentation may also be helpful.

Week #1:

After the pastor’s homily presentation, every registered family should receive a personalized letter which restates the homily 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) faithful and generous contributors; b) more sporadic contributors; and c) the non-contributors. 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.

Weekend #2:

On the second weekend, one or two parishioners are introduced by the pastor and they give short presentations on the financial strengths and needs of the parish. The presentation should begin with some personal observations about the vitality and strength of the parish. No one wants to support an organization that isn't ministering well and serving its community. Thus, we begin this second 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's better to focus on just one or two ministries as examples of what the parish does rather than a "grocery list" of program titles.

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 youth ministry 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 can't manage that on the current, shoestring budget."

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.

Week #2:

During the second week, every registered family will receive another letter from the pastor 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 a copy of the offertory Planning Guide and Response Card. A sample of the guide is included in the appendix of this document.

In the letter, the pastor will ask each registered family of the parish to review the Offertory Planning Guide 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.

Weekend #3:

This is Commitment Sunday. Each parish will have its own feeling for how best to handle the filling-out and collection of the response cards during Mass. The best advice is to use what has worked in the past for programs like the Upper Peninsula Catholic Services Appeal (UPCSA) or other in-pew pledge opportunities. While the steps may differ, several very important things should happen regardless of the actual process for collecting the response cards.

First, the pastor will want to thank everyone for listening to the material that has been presented over the past two weeks. This has been a break from the normal order of the Mass, and it was done because of the importance of this matter to the health and vitality of the entire parish. Secondly, you will also want to thank those parishioners that have already turned in their response card - even if there aren't 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.

Thirdly, the pastor will want to briefly review the instructions for filling out the Offertory Response Card. You will want to talk about the fact that each family will have to determine what is an appropriate and reasonable level of offertory support for themselves. No one else can make this decision for them. Begin by making a commitment to give regularly. This is the first, and most important step. If you're already giving regularly, then you need to look at the level of your support. Are you giving what you think you should be giving? Is your offertory support an appropriate response to God and the parish? If so, fine. If not, what steps can you take to close the gap between what you're giving now and where you'd 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 an appropriate and special fashion. Once the cards have been collected, thank everyone for their support and continue with the Mass.

Follow-up:

There are several follow-up activities that are important to a successful conclusion 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 for larger parishes.
- 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 have yet to 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 steps taken by the parish, anticipated increase in the offertory, number of families returning a commitment card, etc. Follow-up efforts will also need to be outlined.

Appendix #1 - Sample Letters for Week One

Letter A - Consistent, Regular Donors

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.

(Name)
(Address)
(City, State Zip)

Dear (Parishioner Name):

This past weekend, I spoke at all of the Masses and announced the beginning of our parish's Increased Offertory Program. I shared with everyone how proud I am of....**here you should list several of the recent accomplishments of the parish or other positive comments that were made during the weekend #1 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.

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. For the most part, our parish has done well in maintaining its buildings and meeting our budgeted needs. **However, as the parish grown over the past five years, the demands on our programs and ministries have grown as well. We need to expand the number and type of spiritual programs we offer our young people. We also need to hire a full-time Director of Youth Ministry in order to develop a year-round program of spiritual, social and ministry activities for our young people. We also would like to begin offering Adult Spiritual Formation classes - something that I know many of you have asked for.**

Unfortunately, **name of parish** can't expand these important ministries and programs on our current budget. **Our parish leadership, including our Parish Staff, Parish Pastoral Council, and Parish Finance Council have looked at the budgets and made sure that we're using the money that you generously give each week as efficiently and effectively as possible. We don't have any "fat" in the budget to cut.** The only way we can expand our ministries to meet the needs of our parish family is to increase our offertory.

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. The method we use for receiving this support in our Sunday offertory.

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. However, I do know that an increase in the overall parish offertory is necessary if we have any hope of expanding our ministries to meet the increased demand for services.

Because of the needs of our parish, and the cost of expanding our programs, I am hoping that you will be willing to look at your offertory giving and see how you might be able to help **name of parish** in the coming months. Over the next several weeks, we will be discussing more about our parish plans and offering some tools for examining your current offertory contribution and planning future levels of giving. 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 in the Lord,

Pastor

Letter B - Occasional Donors

(Name)
(Address)
(City, State Zip)

Dear (Parishioner Name):

This past weekend, I spoke at all of the Masses and announced the beginning of our parish's Increased Offertory Program. I shared with everyone how proud I am of....**here you should list several of the recent accomplishments of the parish or other positive comments that were made during the weekend #1 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.

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. For the most part, our parish has done well in maintaining its buildings and meeting our budgeted needs. **However, as the parish grown over the past five years, the demands on our programs and ministries have grown as well. We need to expand the number and type of spiritual programs we offer our young people. We also need to hire a full-time Director of Youth Ministry in order to develop a year-round program of spiritual, social and ministry activities for our young people. We also would like to begin offering Adult Spiritual Formation classes - something that I know many of you have asked for.**

Unfortunately, **name of parish** can't expand these important ministries and programs on our current budget. **Our parish leadership, including our Parish Staff, Parish Pastoral Council, and Parish Finance Council have looked at the budgets and made sure that we're using the money that you generously give each week as efficiently and effectively as possible. We don't have any "fat" in the budget to cut.** The only way we can expand our ministries to meet the needs of our parish family is to increase our offertory.

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. The method we use for receiving this support in our Sunday offertory.

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. We need to have regular, consistent support from our parish families in order to **expand our 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. However, I do know that an increase in the overall parish offertory is necessary if we have any hope of expanding our ministries to meet the increased demand for services.

Because of the needs of our parish, and the cost of expanding our programs, I am hoping that you will be willing to look at your offertory giving and see how you might be able to help **name of parish** in the coming months. Over the next several weeks, we will be discussing more about our parish plans and offering some tools for examining your current offertory contribution and planning future levels of giving. 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 in the Lord,

Pastor

Letter C - Non Donors

(Name)
(Address)
(City, State Zip)

Dear (Parishioner Name):

This past weekend, I spoke at all of the Masses and announced the beginning of our parish's Increased Offertory Program. I shared with everyone how proud I am of....**here you should list several of the recent accomplishments of the parish or other positive comments that were made during the weekend #1 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.

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. For the most part, our parish has done well in maintaining its buildings and meeting our budgeted needs. **However, as the parish grown over the past five years, the demands on our programs and ministries have grown as well. We need to expand the number and type of spiritual programs we offer our young people. We also need to hire a full-time Director of Youth Ministry in order to develop a year-round program of spiritual, social and ministry activities for our young people. We also would like to begin offering Adult Spiritual Formation classes - something that I know many of you have asked for.**

Unfortunately, **name of parish** can't expand these important ministries and programs on our current budget. **Our parish leadership, including our Parish Staff, Parish Pastoral Council, and Parish Finance Council have looked at the budgets and made sure that we're using the money that you generously give each week as efficiently and effectively as possible. We don't have any "fat" in the budget to cut.** The only way we can expand our ministries to meet the needs of our parish family is to increase our offertory.

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. The method we use for receiving this support in our Sunday offertory.

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 services is essential and would also encourage your assistance with supporting our parish programs and ministries.

I have no way of knowing your current personal or financial situation. Only you can make a determination whether or not you can take an active role in supporting **name of parish**. Because of our parish needs, I am hoping that you will be willing to consider becoming an active and regular supporter of **name of parish**. Over the next several weeks, we will be discussing more about our parish plans for **expanding our ministries** and offering you support for the decision to become an active member of our parish.

I realize that becoming an active parishioner will involve both a sharing of your blessings and a sacrifice of your time. I appeal to your generosity, and I will be grateful for whatever decision you make.

Sincerely in the Lord,

Pastor

Appendix #2 - Sample Letter for Week Two

(Name)
(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**. The 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. They also called our attention to the continued population growth in our parish and to several of the new ministries and programs that we'd like to be able to provide - but can't under our present budget.**

To help increase parishioner awareness of the importance of our parish offertory, **name of parish** is using the Diocese of Owensboro's Increased Offertory Program. This program encourages every parishioner to make a decision to provide regular, consistent support to their parish through the offertory. This is a highly individualized decision, and we can't tell you what you can, or should, be giving. Only you can make that decision - because only you know your current financial situation.

I know of no pastor who enjoys raising financial issues. However, the reality of the matter is that when Bishop **Garland** appointed me as **pastor of name of parish**, he put me in charge of the financial as well as spiritual health of the parish. **Name of parish** is a religious organization that serves the needs of **hundreds/thousands** 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 expand our ministries and programs so we can continue to serve our community.**

Trusting in your understanding, I am now asking all of **name of parish** families to reflect on their offertory contribution. I've enclosed a brochure with this letter - titled "**Offertory Planning Guide and Response Card.**" This brochure 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.

Please take the time to read over this brochure. 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 ut 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 these traditions **and expand 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 in the Lord,

Pastor

Appendix #3 - Sample Planning Guide and Response Card

St. Our Parish
Stewardship Initiative

Planning Guide And Response Card

(optional parish photo or stewardship clip art could be placed here)

...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

How much should I be giving?

That's a question that people ask every day. There is not "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.

Most of us are a little embarrassed when we discover how little it really is. The question to ask is not "what percentage do I need to give?" but rather, "Does what I'm giving adequately reflect my gratitude to God?"

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 let the fact that you're only giving one or two percent right now scare you away from the concept of stewardship. By taking a series of small "*progress steps*" over a period of time, almost everyone can increase the amount they give back to God.

It is common practice among those who have adopted a stewardship attitude to divide their gifts between their home parish and other charitable causes. Many plan their giving so that half of their donations go directly to their parish and the rest go to support other worthy programs. Again, you must determine which different organizations you will support and to what extent. There is not single "right answer" for everyone.

Perhaps the most significant outcome of sacrificial giving is that it causes us to look at our priorities. By re-ordering these priorities and reconsidering our values, we make the ideal of a sacrificial gift a reality. And every time we give that gift, we are reminded of the reasons that we choose to give.

Sacrificial giving is one of the ways that we have of following in the footsteps of the Lord. Jesus sacrificed everything to 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.

(optional parish photo or stewardship clip art could be placed here)

St. Our Parish
111 Main Street
Our Town, USA 00001
270-555-0000

Making Progress in our Stewardship...

“On the subject of mutual charity you have no need for anyone to write you, for you yourselves have been taught by God to love one another...nevertheless we urge you, brothers, to progress even more.”

1 Thessalonians 4:9-10

How to use the Planning Guide

- 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 offertory.
- 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.
- Your decision is a commitment made with God. However, to help the parish plan its annual budget, please consider filling out the response card on the left.

Taking a Step Toward Sacrificial Giving

Household Income

Weekly Giving to the Parish

Hourly	Weekly	Monthly	Yearly	1%	1.5%	2%	2.5%	3%	3.5%	4%	4.5%	5%
\$4.80	\$190	\$835	\$10,000	\$2.00	\$3.00	\$4.00	\$5.00	\$6.00	\$7.00	\$8.00	\$9.00	\$10.00
7.20	290	1,250	15,000	3.00	4.00	6.00	7.00	9.00	10.00	12.00	13.00	14.00
9.60	385	1,667	20,000	4.00	6.00	8.00	10.00	12.00	13.00	15.00	17.00	19.00
12.00	480	2,085	25,000	5.00	7.00	10.00	12.00	14.00	17.00	19.00	22.00	24.00
14.50	575	2,500	30,000	6.00	9.00	12.00	14.00	17.00	20.00	23.00	26.00	29.00
16.75	675	2,915	35,000	7.00	10.00	13.00	17.00	20.00	24.00	27.00	30.00	34.00
19.25	770	3,335	40,000	8.00	12.00	15.00	19.00	23.00	27.00	31.00	35.00	38.00
24.00	960	4,165	50,000	10.00	14.00	19.00	24.00	29.00	34.00	38.00	43.00	48.00
29.00	1,155	5,000	60,000	12.00	17.00	23.00	29.00	35.00	40.00	46.00	52.00	58.00
33.50	1,345	5,835	70,000	13.00	20.00	27.00	34.00	40.00	47.00	54.00	61.00	67.00
38.50	1,540	6,665	80,000	15.00	23.00	31.00	38.00	46.00	54.00	62.00	69.00	77.00
48.00	1,925	8,335	100,000	19.00	29.00	38.00	48.00	58.00	67.00	77.00	87.00	96.00
57.70	2,308	10,000	120,000	23.00	35.00	46.00	58.00	69.00	81.00	92.00	104.00	115.00