

The
Stewardship
JOURNAL
March 8, 2021

**From the Desk of Our
Executive Director**

We Are Your Stewardship Resource

**The Direct Appeal Lane:
Using Snail Mail to
Build Stewardship**

**The Basics of an Effective
Direct Appeal Letter**

Be a Saint!

THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNAL

From the Desk of Our Executive Director

Where do you go to get stewardship help? In this edition of *The Stewardship Journal*, I am taking space to share with you several resources to aid in developing a stewardship platform in your church. My post is entitled, **We Are Your Stewardship Resource**. Our goal at the Missouri Baptist Convention is to help each of our Missouri Baptist churches see an increase in giving and givers. We believe these tools help you achieve that.

"And the survey says..." Have you taken our survey on helping us improve *The Stewardship Journal*? Responses are coming in, and we are looking forward to sharing with you the findings. If you have not yet taken the survey, please do so at the following link,

<http://survey.constantcontact.com/survey/a07ehkvwotekx0rffo/start>.

Now here is a preview of what else you can expect in the pages that follow.

Is snail mail still effective in raising funds? Mark Brooks, The Stewardship Coach, addresses this as he continues his series on the various "lanes" a church needs to build for a successful stewardship platform. Mark's post this week is entitled, "***The Direct Appeal Lane: Using Snail Mail to Build Stewardship.***"

Our **Bonus Section** then lays out the basics of an effective direct appeal letter. Here is a quote from the section, "Appeal letters, written correctly, are one of the best ways to increase giving at your church. **The key is writing them well.**" The steps in our Bonus Section show you how.

Offering Talk – Churches that set up their offering time helping people make the connection between giving and life-change always see an increase in giving. Our "talks" are designed to be shared in two minutes or less. This week's talk is entitled, **Be a Saint!**

Let's use the tools provided to see a giving revival sweep our churches, helping us fuel the work of ministry in your city, town, county, Missouri, our country, and the entire world!

Advancing the Gospel!



Dr. John Yeats

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We Are Your Stewardship Resource

Dr. John L. Yeats, Executive Director

Where do you go for resources? Once upon a time, Baby Boomer pastors like me, when looking for resources, would get in our cars and often drive for hours to the nearest Baptist Bookstore. I can remember walking in wonder down the aisle of books, commentaries, and other supplies, thinking about how this tool or that tool would better help me as a pastor. Millennial pastors right now are probably thinking, what's a bookstore?

Times have changed, but one thing has not changed. Pastors and church leaders need resources to better equip them for ministry. The need for resources is especially acute when it comes to stewardship. I don't know about you, but most of what I have learned about stewardship came through the school of hard knocks. During the depths of the pandemic, I felt it was vital to address the need for stewardship education resources. *The Stewardship Journal* is a major step in providing our churches with the best stewardship resources in the SBC.

The response we have received from *The Stewardship Journal* has been encouraging. Last week, we sent out surveys asking for your input on improving the Journal to better fit your needs. If you did not receive the link, here it is: <http://survey.constantcontact.com/survey/a07ehkvwotekx0rffo/start>. Please give us your thoughts. We are sharing the results in a later Journal.

The Stewardship Journal is one of many resources available to you. Every Monday, we post a new Journal at <https://mobaptist.org/stewardship/>. We are archiving every copy of the Journal, making it easy for you to access back issues. You can also find a link to download Dr. Ronnie Floyd's book, *Ten Percent: A Call to Biblical Stewardship*.

In the February 1 edition of *The Stewardship Journal*, we posted an interview with MBC President Jon Nelson. Pastor Nelson commented about the need to help people see the *why* behind their gift. He said, "We go out of our way to show people how their gift makes a difference. Each week we focus on some aspect of the impact giving can have through Baptist life and programs, pointing out that their gifts make this happen. Helping people understand the why of giving will lead to an increase in giving."

Where would you get a resource to show the impact of giving through a Southern Baptist church? Look no further than our own MBC website at <https://mobaptist.org/cp/>. There you can find a treasure trove of material that helps you show people the positive impact of a gift to your church. You also can find print material, videos, and other resources that show the power of our giving in reaching people for Jesus.

We have a link to the SBC's newly released Cooperative Program Church Digital Kit, <https://www.sbc.net/missions/the-cooperative-program/>. You can find PDFs of articles on stewardship and downloadable CP videos, and many more resources designed to help increase giving.

The Internet has almost completely driven brick-and-mortar bookstores out of business. We no longer must get in our cars and drive for miles. All the help we need is at our fingertips. You still must search the Net to find the right resource. Our commitment is to create for you the resources you need to increase giving and make them easily accessible.

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Current Events and Relevant Thoughts From:

The Stewardship Coach

Mark Brooks

The Direct Appeal Lane: Using Snail Mail to Build Stewardship



What is the most important step in running a race? The first step. The same is true for driving to work. You have to start the car before you drive it. As your stewardship coach, one of my goals is seeing you add new donors. The path to becoming a good steward of what God has entrusted to us starts with the first gift.

Here is the thing. At some point, you have to make the appeal to give. That is why you need a Direct Appeal Lane. I am continuing my focus on building out the various Lanes we need in your stewardship platform. I want to take the next two issues and talk about direct appeals. This week, my focus is on snail mail and next week the focus will be on email. This week's Coach is entitled, *The Direct Appeal Lane: Using Snail Mail to Build Stewardship*.

Let me start by dealing with what may be some hesitations you have about appeals as well as a few important points. I often get asked...

Won't making appeals make us look like all we are interested in is money? No, because the focus we put on the message is not money but life change. Remember, it is not *that* you ask for money that drives people away but *how* you ask. If you truly believe in the mission of your church, then you will do whatever it takes to get your message out. From charities to churches, donors respond to appealing appeals. My view is that your church is essential. You are doing life changing work building up the Kingdom of God. Why would people *not* want to give to support the life change you are seeing?

Will people be turned off by an appeal? Don't confuse my use of the word appeal as begging. I want you to do exactly the opposite. I teach that frantic letters sent out "appealing" for emergency funds does more damage than good and should thus be avoided. By appeal, I mean casting a vision for the gift you are asking for in such an appealing manner, the donor's heart is touched; resulting in a gift to your cause.

Will my regular donors be turned off by receiving appeals? I use appeals as a communication tool informing members of opportunities for generosity. Valerie and I have tithed our entire marriage. Yet, when needs come to our attention we respond as the Holy Spirit guides us. Many times, it was a direct appeal that made us aware of the need and thus spurred a gift from us. At the same time, I have never had a tithing church member ever complain that we were sending out too many appeals!

Do direct appeals work? Yes! The Direct Appeal Lane is one of the key pieces of any church's giving plan that I put together. In fact, now more than ever, when your engagement with members is fragmented due to COVID, you need multiple layers of communication to have your message heard. Direct appeals done correctly not only raise money, but they raise awareness and keep your congregation connected to your vision.

In this issue and the next, I will lay out for you some of the basics that we will flesh out further in future posts. This leads to a key question about using the United States Postal Service for sending out appeals. I like to call it snail mail. A lot of you reading this right now are thinking ...

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Using Snail Mail to Build Stewardship

Why waste time on snail mail?

The easy answer is that snail mail still works. Why do you think you get all those letters from charities? Let me back that up with some statistics I found in a book by Phil Cooke, entitled *Maximize Your Influence: How to Make Digital Media Work for Your Church, Your Ministry, And You*. In his chapter on fundraising, he has a section entitled “Do Donors Like E-Mail Or Snail Mail? Here is a quote:

“You’ve probably had someone on your team tell you that direct mail is over as a fundraising tool. Certainly, there’s a transition happening, but research indicates that most donors see advantages to both e-mail and direct mail communication from the organizations they support, and one study reveals that very few completely reject one form or the other.”¹

I’ll spare you the data Cooke then shares, but the bottom line is that, with few exceptions, nearly everyone in every generation responds to multiple platforms of appeals. Indeed, the study Cooke quotes backs up other studies done on the same subject. I can assure you the non-profit world pays attention to what works and what doesn’t. This is why they continue to use snail mail and why you should also use snail mail. Let me give you another reason you must have a snail mail stewardship strategy.

Grandma ain’t dead yet. I qualify for an AARP card so I can say those kinds of things. My point is that even though your Seniors are fast moving to Heaven, they still faithfully give. My 92-year-old parents continue to mail their tithe check in as well as sending \$50 a month to support their former dentist who does dental mission trips to third world countries. They live a simple life to “afford” to joyfully give their money away. If they were members of your church, snail mail is the lane you need to travel upon to appeal to them.

205 FARNOL STREET SW
WINTER HAVEN, FL 33880
WWW.HEARTCHURCH.ORG

BUSINESS REPLY MAIL
FIRST CLASS PERMIT NO. 1000 WINTER HAVEN, FL
HEARTLAND COMMUNITY CHURCH
205 FARNOL STREET SW
WINTER HAVEN, FL 33880



Senior giving, while in decline, comprises still a significant amount of dollars

donated. Their dollars count. Send them an appealing appeal, insert a postage paid envelope like the one pictured here, and Seniors will respond. Please don’t rob them the joy of perhaps mailing in a \$50 check to provide a scholarship for some poor kid to go to camp! We still interact with those born in the 20th century so...

Don’t give up on 20th century technology! Last summer we drove the thirty minutes from our house to Folly Beach for the day. Right after planting my chair and umbrella, along came an airplane pulling a banner with the name of a prominent insurance company. I thought at that time that old school marketing still, *if* used effectively, can make an impact.

The real question isn’t *if* snail mail works but how we can make *your* snail mail work for you.



Mark Brooks – The Stewardship Coach
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Find out how to access all of my playbooks at <https://acts17generosity.com/store/>.

1. Cooke, Phil. *Maximize Your Influence: How to Make Digital Media Work for Your Church, Your Ministry, And You*. Cooke Media Group, 2020.

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Bonus Material

The Basics of an Effective Direct Appeal Letter

Do you know how to write a church fundraising letter? Believe it or not, that is one of the most asked questions on the Internet. Appeal letters, written correctly, are one of the best ways to increase giving at your church. **The key is writing them well.** But first, let's establish some key points.

Vision drives dollars, even in a snail mail letter. The reason most direct mail letters fail for churches is not that they are not written well but that the message is not appealing. Every appeal letter **MUST** touch the heart of the donor before they will send you any money. What is the vision driving the appeal of your letter?

We teach what we call the 3 C's of vision. Make the vision of your appeal...

- **Clear** – If I can't make sense of what my gift will accomplish, I will not give.
- **Concise** – Get to the point. I am a one-page appeal guy. If you can't state what the appeal is in one page, then no one will get where the dollars are going. They also won't read the letter!
- **Compelling** – The more compelling the message, the more effective the results.

My top 10 writing tips for church fundraising letters – Since I am an advocate of writing concise appeal letters, let me list out my top 10 writing tips.

1. **Write and send them!** You won't know if appeal letters work or not if you don't first send them. So, get your letter in the mail!
 2. **Don't be boring.** I always try to tell a story of real-life change that will make my letters interesting.
 3. **Start with a bang!** If you don't grab their attention in the first few lines, they won't read the letter and you won't get any money.
 4. **Get in and get out.** The second C of the vision is concise. So, get to the point!
 5. **Personalize it.** Dear Mark, is much better than Dear Church member.
 6. **Use bold and underlined text.** Just as your eye was drawn to the bold in my text, so will your readers be drawn to your bold and underlined text.
 7. **Use bullet points.** People skim, so make it easy for them to get the facts quickly.
 8. **Always include a PS.** Studies show people almost always read a PS.
 9. **Always include an envelope.** Make it easy for people to respond and they are more likely to respond.
 10. **Consider inserts.** Inserts allow you to say more and they are almost always looked at even if your letter is not read.
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Missions and Ministry Moment: Setting Up Your Offering

Every week we provide what are called offering talks. We have found that the easiest way to see an increase in giving is to improve how you approach the offering time. Instead of telling people they don't have to give, we like to show them what giving to a church accomplishes. By showing people your mission and ministry focus, you create a desire in your attendees to *want* to give to support that life change. That's why we call them Missions and Ministry Moments.

You can read them exactly how we write them or use them as idea starters for how the message fits your culture and context. Our goal is to develop lifetime stewards, but we must get the first gift to begin them on the journey. Here is this week's offering talk.

Be a Saint!

Do we have any Irish here? How about online? This week is St. Patrick's Day. If you're not Irish, you might not know much about this day.

According to Irishcentral.com, here are a few things you need to know:

- St. Patrick was a missionary to Ireland and he became an adored figure for Irish Catholics as the person to bring Christianity to the Emerald Isle.
- March 17 marks the fifth-century death of our beloved patron saint, Saint Patrick, and for over a thousand years, this date has been celebrated as a religious feast day.
- Patrick has never officially been canonized by a Pope although he is included on the list of Saints.¹

It's a technical issue that would take me too long to explain, why he wasn't officially canonized, but I did find an interesting backdrop to how Patrick became recognized as a Saint.

According to The History Channel, Patrick came from wealth. Early in his life, he was kidnapped by Irish Raiders and held for years against his will. After he escaped and made his way back home, how did this rich kid respond? He trained in theology, went back to Ireland and helped convert it into a Christian nation. The History Channel site ended with this phrase:

"After becoming a priest and helping to spread Christianity throughout Ireland, Patrick was likely proclaimed a saint by popular acclaim."²

Patrick gave his life to a people that were once his captors. The Irish people recognized his sacrifices by giving him the greatest honor they knew, sainthood. His actions made him a saint.

Would you like to be a saint? Proverbs 18:16 is an interesting verse that says,

"A gift opens the way and ushers the giver into the presence of the great."

We are doing life changing work here. We believe it is a great work. I want to tell you that every time you give to support our work here, **you** help that great work. To us, **you** are a saint!

1. <https://www.irishcentral.com/roots/history/real-meaning-saint-patricks-day>
 2. <https://www.history.com/topics/st-patricks-day/who-was-saint-patrick>
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