

The six I 's of inviting

Identification: Think and pray

We want to touch everyone in the parish with the message. People who are not included may feel neglected or left out. This is really important: Never leave someone out because you assume they don't have the capacity to give money. You could be wrong!

This is also an opportunity to build community. Community is relationships. Being church together is about *loving* relationships. All kinds of people make up our communities of faith. Thanks be to God!

Storytelling and testimony are powerful tools for informing people about your ministry. They can also be used in your Inspire pieces. It is important to offer people volunteer opportunities and to illustrate the impact of generosity through all your communication vehicles: bulletin, website, slide presentations, and more.

Information: You have a powerful story of mission to tell!

We used to have static communications: a brochure, a flat website, a business card, an annual report. Today, however, how and where we present information to generate interest has changed. There are many ways to inform people about the great work that is being accomplished. Use everything you can!

Websites need to move from static to interactive. Post polls and calls to action; make them truly interactive with games and simulations. Make your brochures interactive, too: put them on your website, and send them via email. Use videos instead of photos to tell stories. Albums and movies that engage can be posted instantly.

Inspiration: People want to know how your community is advancing God's mission and making a difference

Be compelling, exciting, and worthy of people's investment. Proactively push your story as a part of communications and marketing plans that engage, inform, and inspire. And when you get feedback, respond to keep the conversation going. Make sure you attend to your social media. Enhance how you identify new volunteers and donors. In many cases, they will identify themselves by joining a fan page or following on Twitter.

Ask your friends and followers to send in their thoughts about your mission and ministry via video, and then upload the best. Interview volunteers, donors, and clients on video and upload the interviews to Facebook, YouTube, and your website. People engage with people—so get their interest with other people's thoughts, ideas, and experiences with your parish.

Involvement: Today, involvement can be episodic or virtual

Invite people to prayerfully consider their involvement in the work of the church. Although attending or serving at an event, volunteering, and serving on the board are important, maybe there are other ways you can connect with people and have them be involved.

For example, would your youth group like to present a ministry they are working on as a sermon? Would a Guide, Brownie, or Scout group that meets at your church like to do some specific tasks? Serve at a tea? Bake pies? Decorate for the season?

Those who have challenges coming to church can help with social media, be your voice on Twitter, engage others through their own social media network, or contribute to an online newsletter. People between jobs or job searches could volunteer their skills instead of general assistance, with short-term or long-term commitments in the church office, for long- or short-term commitments

People want to be part of something important, and many like to be social and have fun doing it. Sounds like the best kind of party!

Investment: Help people get personal with the mission of your parish

People who are engaged and involved are more likely to support God's mission when they have come to know it more personally. This investment can be in the form of time, talent, or treasure. A person's investment is a natural outgrowth of their involvement.

Investment used to be about writing a cheque in response to an annual appeal, paying at the door to attend an event, or volunteering regularly. Today, more donors are making their gifts online.

This means via your website's DONATE NOW button, Facebook causes page, or a link in an email solicitation. More donors are even making gifts via text and mobile phones. These numbers will increase, so we need to be prepared.

Impact: People want to know what their donation DOES—its accomplishments and impact

Donors want to make sure their gifts are truly making a difference, and they want to see the impact of their generosity. Letting people know what their gift has accomplished isn't about singling out those people for special recognition, but about creating meaningful ways of thanking people and keeping everyone updated on the work in a transparent and compelling way.

Finally: This ministry is ongoing and important to the health, growth, happiness, and sustainability of your community of faith. Create a culture of giving in your parish all year long.

—Jane Harding, Regional Development Officer for British Columbia Conference,
United Church of Canada (*used with permission*)

Thank

A culture of generosity is built on a foundation of gratitude.

In a culture of gratitude, we thank God for the blessings in our lives. God is generous again, again, and again. Say thank you again, again, and again—and in many different ways.

We thank individuals and groups for all of their generous support of the ministry in their community.

We cannot thank enough. We give thanks for every gift.

Timely, sincere, personal

We make sure our gratitude and thanks are timely, sincere, and personal.

- **Timely:** Closely connected to when each gift is received
- **Sincere:** Communicating what a difference the gift makes
- **Personal:** Face to face, or in a handwritten note

Find opportunities to say thank you directly. Find opportunities to write it personally. Thanking needs to be planned if it is to become a habit in your congregation and so that everyone who gives will be thanked.

Make it timely

- Don't wait until the end of the program.
- Thank donors as soon as the intention card arrives. Phone to say we received the gift and are grateful for their contribution.
- Thank every new donor as soon as possible with a phone call or handwritten note.

Make it sincere

- Adding appreciation to thanks builds sincerity. Acknowledgment is thanks. Think about ways of adding appreciation—affirming the qualities of the donor, their motivation, or their hopes.
- Show yourself in the thanks, and connect yourself with your donor. Wear your heart on your sleeve.

Add a simple homemade gift—cookies or some bags of special tea, for example. “Remember that we are grateful for your generosity the next time you enjoy your cup of tea.”