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## A MESSAGE FROM THE OFFICE OF THE BISHOP June 2023

This Month's Writer: Paul Marsh, GSB Fundraising Synod Partner

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### Inviting Generosity!

So much has been written by and for fundraisers about “the ask.” There is a bit of overhyped mythology around asking someone for a gift or gift commitment.

First, let’s review how we get to the “ask,” what I prefer to call the “invitation.”

The first step is that we must identify who we are inviting to be generous. In the congregational context, that’s pretty easy—it’s our members (or act-like members). Next, we want to inform these prospective donors what we are raising money for: replacing the roof? The parking lot? A new Bible study curriculum? The third—and I would argue most important—step is to inspire our prospective donors by linking the request to a vision of enhanced ministry. Tell the story of how someone’s life will be changed for the better as a result of a donor’s generosity.

Finally, it is time to invite that generosity. Your first job is to listen to the donor. What are they passionate about? Is this a project or ministry that they would be excited to support?

If you are inviting a major gift, a challenge gift, or a lead gift for a campaign, it is important to meet the prospective donor (and their spouse) in person. Use a case statement to inform and

inspire them. Then share a proposal which invites them to prayerfully consider a specific gift or a specific range of gifts:

“...would you prayerfully consider a gift of \$10,000?”

As you read that out loud, pause afterwards to let them consider your request. Let the donor break the silence.

Here’s the most important thing to remember: your job is not to get a “yes.” It is, rather, to get a decision. We are not selling them anything, we are inviting them to be a part of something important.

As Henri Nouwen in his book “A Spirituality of Fundraising” writes, “We do not need to worry about the money. Rather, we need to worry about whether, through the invitation we offer the donor and the relationship we develop with them, they will come closer to God.”

Don’t forget that you are not alone in this endeavor. My partner Pete Reuss and I are available for you to call, Zoom, email or text with questions or to simply talk through a visit with a donor in your congregation. Our contact information is on the ND Synod website under “staff.”

Go forth and invite generosity! It is life changing for the donor AND for your ministry.

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Paul Marsh, GSB Fundraising Synod Partner

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**Synod Assembly 2023**  
Sat. June 3 – Sun. June 4, 2023  
Bismarck Hotel and Conference Center  
Pre-Assembly Workshops Fri. June 2