

A Guide for Fundraising Activities

for St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church and School

Introduction and Purpose Statement

For centuries, Christians and Christian congregations have struggled with the appropriateness of sponsoring activities designed to raise money to support the church and/or its various organizations. Some churches have outlawed all forms of fund-raising; others have taken an “anything goes” attitude.

Scripture, however, neither commands nor forbids such fundraising activities. There is no biblical list of fundraisers that are “always forbidden” or “always allowed.” Instead, as with all matters of adiaphora, God is concerned about attitude and motive.

The purpose of this document is to facilitate prayerful study of the scriptural principals regarding stewardship and ministry and the guidelines for scriptural practice derived from those principles; to help organizations within St. John's evaluate their present and proposed fundraising activities; and to systematize the procedure for submitting requests for fundraising activities to the Church Council for approval.

Guidelines for Scriptural Practice

1. Scripture neither commands nor forbids the buying or selling of goods or services by Christian congregations. Therefore the scriptural principles pertaining to adiaphora will guide the decisions made regarding fundraising activities at St. John's.

“Everything is permissible” – but not everything is beneficial. “Everything is permissible” – but not everything is constructive. Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others. (1 Cor. 10:23-24)

Why should my freedom be judged by another's conscience? (1 Cor. 10:29)

Whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. (1 Cor. 10:31)

2. God intends that the church's activities should be supported by the gifts of believers, in thankful response to God's love in Christ. The primary source of funds for the church is the “firstfruit” financial offerings of its members.

Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops. (Pr. 3:9)

We love because he first loved us. (1 Jn. 4:19)

Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Cor. 9:7)

3. Money is not the only gift a Christian may desire to give God and his church. Christians may also donate their time, skills, and other possessions to support the church. Often such non-monetary gifts must be converted to money before they can be used to support a particular area of ministry. Some fundraising activities actually convert the non-monetary gifts of Christians into monetary gifts.

Every skilled woman spun with her hands and brought what she had spun – blue, purple or scarlet yarn or fine linen. (Ex. 35:25)

From time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need. (Ac. 4:34-35)

“You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’” (Ac. 20:34-35; compare with Ac. 18:3)

4. Fundraising activities must comply with the mission statement of St. John's and must support a specific ministry of St. John's.

“Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.” (Mt. 6:33)

Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way. (1 Cor. 14:40)

...to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. (Eph. 4:12-13)

5. The selling of items such as Bibles, Christmas cards, and Christian literature at or near cost need not be considered fundraising but rather offering a service to Christians.

We are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men. (2 Cor. 8:21)

6. Fundraising activities and services should not be a distraction to worship.

On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, “Is it not written: ‘My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations?’ But you have made it ‘a den of robbers.’” (Mk. 11:15-17)

7. Fundraising by means of a lottery, raffle, or other form of gambling may encourage the sin of greed or coveting and may offend the conscience of some Christians; therefore such fundraising activities should be considered with discretion.

If what I eat causes my brother to fall into sin, I will never eat meat again, so that I will not cause him to fall. (1 Cor. 8:13)

Do not cause anyone to stumble. (1 Cor. 10:32)

People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. (1 Tim. 6:9-10)

Potential Dangers of Fundraising Activities

1. They may rob Christians of the time, energy, and attention they need to carry out other forms of Christian ministry (i.e., selling wreaths versus visiting delinquent members).
2. They may leave the impression (to believers and unbelievers alike) that the church's business is raising money.
3. They may encourage Christians to expect something in return for their financial gifts.
4. They may downplay the privilege of and motivation for giving "firstfruit" financial offerings.
5. They may cultivate spiritual immaturity among Christians who don't fully understand the scriptural principals of stewardship.
6. Fundraising activities in the form of gambling may tempt people to commit the sin of greed or coveting.

Potential Benefits of Fundraising Activities

1. They may give Christians an opportunity to use their God-given talents to the best of their ability as they glorify God in thankfulness.
2. They may give Christians an opportunity to use their God-given time in service to God's church as they glorify God in thankfulness.
3. They may stimulate passion among members for a specific ministry project.
4. They may serve as an opportunity for Christian fellowship.
5. They may serve as an opportunity for pre-evangelism, if non-members are invited onto our campus.
6. They may provide a source of funds for Christian ministry.

Procedure for Submitting Requests for Fundraising Activities

1. All St. John's organizations must obtain the approval of the Church Council before engaging in any fundraising activity.
2. The sponsoring organization must study this document ("A Guide for Fundraising Activities"), complete the "St. John's Fundraising Activity Evaluation Form" (see page 5), and submit that form to the Church Council through its governing board/team (or through the Council vice-president, if the governing board/team leader position is currently vacant). Sponsoring organizations should submit the form to the Church Council at least two months prior to the fundraising activity to allow the Council time to approve the request.
3. The Church Council retains the authority to approve, disapprove, discontinue, or postpone any fundraising activity at any time.
4. Upon completion of a fundraising activity, the sponsoring organization will meet with its representative councilman to evaluate the activity.

St. John's Fundraising Activity Evaluation Form

Sponsoring Organization: _____

Governing Church Board/Team: _____ Date: _____

- A. What kind of ministry will be supported by the funds raised?

- B. What benefit is gained by funding this ministry with a fundraising activity rather than a free will offering or church budget item?

- C. How does the involvement of the people carrying out this fundraising activity (not the funds themselves) achieve the mission of the organization? (i.e. How well does this activity convert Christian time and talents into treasures?)

- D. Is this a one-time event, or will it be repeated regularly?

- E. Will this fundraising activity ask non-members to provide support for the ministry of St. John's? If so, why?

- F. What impression do you expect this fundraising activity to have on members and non-members?