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Why Should I Support This?

Practical advice on your parish's case for support for any campaign

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Whether your parish is raising money for general support or for a specific ministry the case for support must be clear and concise. No matter how large or small the campaign goal is – from \$1,000 - \$100,000,000+ a case for support should always be written out. It is the parish's guide for the campaign, ensuring everyone is on the same page.

The key components of a case for support are the following:

Your Vision: What difference will the funds raised make in the world? Notice, I didn't say, what difference will it make for the parish. The vision is not about the parish's needs. It is about the difference the parish will make in the lives of others.

Example: We envision the ministries of St. Swithin's to create a place where people gather regularly in a welcoming community to be faith formed and encouraged to express their deepening faith by acting justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with God.

The Problem: What's keeping the parish from achieving its vision? Describe what's holding the parish back. The statement of the problem sets up the solution and your campaign.

Example: While St. Swithin's has several volunteer-led ministries, many keen volunteers seek to demonstrate their growing faith by caring for their surrounding community's need for a free to low-fee, weekly nutritious take-home dinner service. However, St. Swithin's does not have a commercial kitchen to meet the requirements of Public Health to prepare the food in our kitchen facility. St. Swithin's has much of the commercial-grade kitchen equipment but lacks the proper ventilation required to run such a program. We have skilled volunteers to support meal preparation but do not have the final approval of Public Health to designate our kitchen a commercial kitchen. In short, we have volunteers with time and skills but not the proper ventilation needed in our kitchen space.

The Plan: How will the parish overcome the problem so the vision can be achieved? Plainly and briefly share what the parish plans to do with the money raised and why that will solve the problem.

Example: St. Swithin's has gathered three quotes for the installation of a proper ventilation system that meets the requirements for Public Health to approve the kitchen for usage for this ministry. With the proper ventilation St. Swithin's will be able to provide much-needed nutritional support with readymade meals to be provided at no-cost to low-cost. In the future, St. Swithin's hopes to provide meal preparation and storage for homeless and precariously housed neighbours – a place where they can create nutritious meals, package them for individual consumption, and simply heat them or take to their living space if they have the proper facilities. The added capabilities of a commercial kitchen will also allow St. Swithin's to lease space for events that include meals such as wedding receptions, banquets, and similar.

The Cost: The total cost including the elements of the campaign budget all added up. This total cost will be the parish's total working goal. Be sure to include in the working goal the fundraising costs, such as postage, brochures, events, and donor recognition. Another cost to include is staff time – from clergy to church administrator – their time equals money. On average, the research indicates the cost to raise funds ranges from 7%-12% of the total campaign in parish fundraising.

Example: We estimate that the total cost of this project will be \$50,000. This includes the cost of renovations for a proper kitchen ventilation system, at \$40,000; the startup ingredients, cleaning products, storage containers, and to-go containers, at \$6,000; and the investment into fundraising and administration which is estimated at \$4,000.

Why Now: Why is this important now – every case needs to have a sense of urgency.

Example: After completing a needs audit of our surrounding community, St. Swithin's learned that before COVID-19 there was a growing population of low-income, single-parent led families in our area. We also learned that many of the children in our neighbourhood live in poverty. Also, we learned that many people in our area are homeless or precariously housed and as such do not have a working kitchen to prepare nutritious meals with the food items they are provided with by the local foodbanks. Because there are many in our parish with time, skillset, and passion together we agreed that St. Swithin's would provide a low to no-cost prepared nutritious dinner weekly that individuals and families could pick-up and take home or simply eat on the go. COVID-19 has only exacerbated the already growing needs in our neighbourhood and has negatively affected our neighbours more than any other community in the Winchester area.

The Call to Action: What can someone do to help your parish solve the problem and achieve its vision? How can someone give and at what level or suggested amount?

Example: We invite you to make a gift that will provide needed nutritious meals that will feed the hungry and bring peace of mind and support for our neighbours a reality. Join St. Swithin's in being a good neighbour and create a space that will give readymade meals to those in need, teach nutrition while providing healthy meals, food storage, and kitchen access to those without. You are welcomed to provide gifts of cash, cheque, credit card, or pledge your gift over as many as three years. St. Swithin's is also able to accept gifts of shares. We will be pleased to review the naming opportunities for this project. All gifts of \$2,000 or more will be listed on a plaque in our parish hall.

Pro-tips: Don't focus your case on your parish's needs, such as bills or debts. Few are motivated to give to debt directly. What people care about is your parish's ability to make a positive difference in the world. So, if you're raising funds for general usage make sure to demonstrate how general usage supports the vision of the parish. However, when possible, focus on projects with direct outcomes.

This is not the time for a homily. The case for support should be written in simple, clear language with active verbs and short sentences. Once you have the framework right, put it together so it flows easily and smoothly. As much as possible, avoid jargon and acronyms. When possible, and with ethical judgement, add a short personal story from a volunteer and/or beneficiary. If this is a new ministry with no pilot project to draw from have a future volunteer share their hopes and expectations. Clear photos of an individual looking at the camera can elicit the most emotion, which leads to a response.

Once the final draft is created, ask a few parishioners who may be able to provide lead gifts what their thoughts on the project are and if the draft document is clear and persuasive. Take their views under advisement and make the needed adjustments. Let them know how their concerns and advice helped.

Once this document is completed and depending on the financial goal, the parish may be ready to begin asking for financial contributions. Always start with personal asks from those who may be likely to give – in-person when possible or on the phone. Once these requests for support have been made add the total given and pledged. Use this total as part of the good news in the letter portion of the campaign. This will encourage gifts from those who may be more reluctant to provide a donation.

And remember, never make excuses for other people's money. Allow people to choose for themselves if they want to be a part of the campaign. This may mean they give \$10 but it was their \$10 to give.