

Responses to Common Appeal Questions and Concerns

We already give to Synod and a number of other over and above agencies.

Bless you. Synod and its associated agencies have the opportunity to reach millions of souls here at home and around the world. You are situated exactly where God would use you as an extension of His mission arm. Your church body wants you to have the joy of partnering in this opportunity. *Fan into Flame* is planned to come back to you not only in dollars, but in a wealth of materials, leadership, affirmation of your mission, professional assistance, and whatever your unique situation requires. Pray for a clarification of your needs and give Synod this opportunity to help you expand your members' mission vision.

We are already supporting mission work. Why should we commit to this additional appeal?

Many congregations fund multiple mission projects throughout the world. *Fan into Flame* is a historic mission effort that will fund both local and global mission goals and we are asking you to simply approach your members and invite their support. In order to bring Christ to 100 million people by 2017, we are asking every congregation to agree to participate in this important funding effort.

We have our own mission program.

Wonderful. How can we help? We would like to help you by training evangelists and field workers for you. Do you need some materials? Are you having difficulty funding your mission work? We are happy to share some excellent Gospel-oriented, "make the saints feel good about giving" stewardship ideas. If you don't need our help, please share with us those things that work well for you so that we don't have to re-invent them. We especially ask that you pray for your brothers and sisters in mission, and for us.

There are too many other activities going on; we'll wait to plan our appeal.

These appeals are straight-forward in their approach and require very little effort if a small team of volunteers pitches in for a few short weeks. There is no need to clear your entire calendar of activities to conduct the appeal. Each local appeal is meant to be crisp, mission-focused and successful.

It is also suggested that planning begin early, in the sense that your congregation get appropriate approval to run the appeal. These are simple steps that if done timely, provide a smoother and simpler appeal.

I don't even know where to begin.

The first step is to present *Fan into Flame* to your leaders and individuals who have a heart for missions. There is a promotional video that provides a wonderful overall view of *Fan into*

Flame. The District Office also has tri-fold brochures explaining both national and district goals.

You can also begin by placing bulletin inserts that can be found on the LCMS website (www.lcms.org). You can also place information and facts found in the district's newsletters which can found on the district's website (www.mid-southlcms.com).

I can't ask my congregation to participate now in these hard economic times.

It is important to remember that over the long term, the economy will improve. Over the years, when we have seen recessions, philanthropy has remained the same or even increased. It is during these tough times that individuals are more generous, because the need is greater. We are asking you to provide the opportunity to your members to support this historic mission effort.

We are without a (senior) pastor, we are mission-minded but can't participate without a pastor's leadership.

Are there lay leaders or a Mission Board that we may talk with to inform them about *Fan into Flame*? Lay leaders are essential to participation. There are easy steps that lay leaders can take to ensure that the decision and planning making processes continues even without a senior pastor.

The pastor is the gatekeeper and doesn't want/is scared to bring *Fan into Flame* forward to the congregation. How as lay people can we encourage congregation or individual participation?

Ask the pastor for his support through encouraging words during worship service, but let him know that as lay leaders you would like to see the congregation support *Fan into Flame*. Ensure him that the work will be light on his part, that a group of lay leaders would like to bring forth this opportunity and allow the congregation to decide. As the pastor of the congregation, you need his support, but the work will be completed by your group. You are asking for him to provide the opportunity for individuals to hear about and decide for themselves their own financial participation.

As a pastor, I support *Fan into Flame* and its goals, but my elders/board does not want to participate. What can I do to convince the leaders to take this important mission effort to the congregation?

Ask your elders/board if you can present *Fan into Flame* to the congregation after a worship service. The promotional DVD is a wonderful tool that can assist you in introducing *Fan into Flame* to the congregation.

As a pastor, I have the support of all my elders/board/lay leaders except for one who is quite vocal. How can I acknowledge his concerns and yet move the decision making process along to the entire congregation?

Have a private conversation with this individual and see what specific concerns the individual has. Typically, it is a misunderstood statement that with conversation can be resolved. If the individual maintains a negative stance, ask that the congregation be allowed to hear and decide for themselves.

I want all of my congregation's giving to come into our home coffers.

Each congregation arranges its organizational affairs as it sees fit. Gathering the money offerings of the congregation and disbursing them for God's purposes can be a great model for each family's personal giving habits. But questionable practices like paying utility bills out of the mission offerings, for example, can actually hinder stewardship and good giving.

Stewardship by the pastor, council, and voters needs to be practiced as well as preached. Each must challenge the other to walk with Jesus. Congregational leaders often encourage their people to tithe, but are content to watch the congregation do less than the tithe when sharing with outside missions.

It is very easy for a congregation to become profit-oriented rather than service-oriented (How much can we gather? Rather than how much can we give away?). Committing to participation in a Synod-wide campaign revitalizes everyone in leadership to the joys of personal *and* corporate stewardship.

We are here to help you sow in fields around the world. Do you have any idea how great a harvest that will be both globally and for you?

We are a poor congregation; we don't have enough money to support something else.

Fan into Flame provides funding for the circuit, district, and World Missions globally to bring Christ to the lost. This includes revitalizing older congregations by breathing new life into them with captivating projects and mission-minded programs. The district is not going to forget the needs of existing congregations, nor will it ignore the opportunities for growth. In fact, these are equal priorities highlighted in the mission plan. *When we return a portion of His blessings we will receive back new blessings a hundred-fold.*

Our budget is already strained to the limit. So are each of our households. We are already having difficulty meeting our budget. We are a poor congregation serving poor people.

Let us help. Share with your synodical partners the needs in your parish. Allow us to share with you wonderful opportunities to do the Lord's work that you can share with each other. The Macedonian churches in 2 Corinthians 8 gave out of poverty, as did the widow who gave her mite. Jesus knows exactly how tight your circumstances are. But as He did with a boy's small lunch, He will multiply and put to use the gift whatever the size. At the same time, He will enable you to share in the fruits of Synod's wider harvest. Your plight will come to light for your fellow saints who can share with you.

We have to take care of the home fires first.

How true. The harvest fields are ready right around you. Attention needs to be given right at home. And since God says that the laborer is worthy of His hire, you get to partake of the first fruits of the offerings of God's people. You may hear cynics counter the *Fan into Flame* appeal by quoting the old saying, "charity begins at home." Quite true. Note, however, the old adage does not say charity stops at home. From home we *begin* our sowing. My home congregation is the field upon which I can sow my offering to the Lord, which then in turn can sow in the community and in the Synod, which in turn sows in the world and back in our home congregation. The Lord's kingdom is a never ending, worldwide caring and sharing circle where He provides both the abundance and the privilege of sharing.

We (I as pastor) are too busy to get involved in this process. I just won't inform the congregation of this process and opportunity.

Need help? We stand ready. Conducting *Fan into Flame* is a marvelous opportunity to receive help from those who see your parish as a mission outpost for sowing the seeds of the Word and beginning to reap the harvest. We have so many resources to share with you and such an exciting opportunity to include you in the worldwide harvest.

The options seem to be -- give my members the opportunity or keep them uninformed. Is the fear really, "If I publish this giving opportunity, we will fall even farther behind in our budget?" Please realize that providing your congregation with the possibility to sow will also increase your home gifts and relieve your time pressures.

The best reason to sow is that Jesus promises there is no sowing without a harvest.

*"Christ desires nothing more than that we speak of him,"
Martin Luther*