

## Sharing Our Gifts

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# Attitude of Gratitude

BY DEMI PRENTISS

As we grow beyond the narrow understanding of stewardship as an annual fundraising exercise – or as the late Terry Parsons (add link???) used to call it, the “annual beg-a-thon” – God begins to reshape our concept of what “gift” and “giving” actually mean.

Back in the days when spiritual gift assessments were becoming popular around the church, some leaders subscribed to the idea that all we needed to do was determine what gifts people had, match them up with the appropriate ministries, and all the church’s volunteer staffing problems would be solved. In some churches, people would anxiously await learning what gifts the survey revealed that God had given them – and then were often left to puzzle over what use might be made of those gifts. One friend consistently received the news that she had the gift of chastity. “And now what do I do with that?”

How do I use that in ministry?” she would ask. I never heard a very satisfactory answer.

### **A more ‘organic’ way**

While gifts assessments can be revealing and affirming, I think God has a more organic – and often chaotic – way of developing us as effective ministers. We often act as though people are equipped for ministry by a clear-cut process of discernment followed by formation/training followed by ministry. More often, I think, God uses those three elements as a never-ending cycle that both shapes and engages ministers in their work. Spiritual gifts are not to be understood as beautifully-wrapped presents that God hands over to us, and that we hold on to or display for others to admire. Instead, I believe, knowing our spiritual gifts gives us a name for the lens we use to perceive the needs

of the world around us, and the framework we engage to address those needs. Our gifts – including our time, talent, and resources – are important tools.

Stewardship of our gifts, then, isn't so much a matter of looking in our toolkit to discover that, behold, we've got a screwdriver, and then wandering around the world looking for a screw to drive. ("Need a Phillips?" "No, flat." "So sorry, I can't help you.")

### **Asking the right questions**

For me, stewardship begins with asking the question, "What do I see?" Or perhaps more properly, "What do I see through Christ's eyes?" In the context of that question, I can examine not only the contents of my toolkit, but also how the Holy Spirit might be calling me to use those tools. What engages me? What tugs at my heart? Who do I admire, and what is it about them that I aspire to do or be?

The questions continue: Who or what is annoying me? What's the bur under my saddle? What need in this world has God brought to my notice? How, with what God has given me, can I begin to address that need?

I believe absolutely in God's

economy: "In all things, God works for good." Even in the bad things. Even in our pain. Even in our fear. That's why the practice of an "attitude of gratitude," as the 12-Step communities call it, is so critical – it sharpens our focus on what, exactly, God has given us. And that focus can help assure that we never waste a crisis. When we see a wounded healer taking action, we have evidence that God's economy works.

### **Seeing through Christ's eyes**

In the fleeting moments when we see with Christ's eyes, we more clearly recognize that in addition to the bounty of skills and resources, God's sends us gifts in the form of the desert places and the hard passages of life. Nothing is lost. It's all gift, and in our partnering with God we are enabled to discover that.

When I began work at the Episcopal Church Center as the Presiding Bishop's program officer for lay leadership, I was thrilled to see my church affirming and celebrating the gifts of the 99.2 percent of the church that is not ordained. Less than a year later, due to the severe budget cuts adopted at General Convention in 2009, many staff positions were eliminated, including the entire ministry development office – my posi-

tion as well as two others. There was great pain for many people, I believe, in those very necessary budget cuts. At the same time, the relationships I was able to build during that year, and the broad overview of the church that I was granted, became enormous resources for the re-organization of the Diocese of Fort Worth when I joined that staff the following year. To paraphrase Joseph, perhaps someone meant evil against me, but God meant it for good. (Gen 50:20)

In a similar vein, when I was diagnosed with very early stage breast cancer, not only did God open my eyes to the pastoral gifts of the minimum-wage garage attendant at my radiation center. God also allowed me to speak with the voice of a pastor (not my usual voice!) to a number of women walking the bumpy road through radiation therapy.

Stewardship in the broad sense is how we respond to what God is trying to show us and tell us and teach us. Our response can open the door to God's multiplying our gifts, allowing them to bear life-giving fruit in the lives of others, in ways we may never have the privilege of seeing. In the words of the old saying, "Stewardship is everything we do after we say 'I believe.'"

**Demi Prentiss** is a congregational coach and a ministry developer certified by the Ministry Developers' Collaborative. (<http://livingstonespartnership.net/the-collaborative/>) She has spent more than 25 years in congregational, diocesan, and national church ministries. As a part of her focus on equipping individuals to claim their every-day baptismal missions, she and Fletcher Lowe are writing *Radical Sending: Go to Love and Serve*, which is to be released by Morehouse in late 2015.

### Try This

The next time you find yourself annoyed by someone or something, try taking a “time out” to ponder what – in this very person or thing standing in your way – might God be offering you as gift? A new perspective or idea? An opportunity to “let it go”? A call to fierce advocacy or liberating playfulness? A challenge to seek healing – your own and/or the other’s? Try capturing that experience in a “gift journal,” where you record each day at least one thanksgiving.

### Resources

- Episcopalians on Baptismal Mission <http://www.ecfvp.org/tools/episcopalians-on-baptismal-mission/>
- Episcopalians on Baptismal Mission Discernment Exercises [http://www.ecfvp.org/files/uploads/Episcopalians\\_on\\_Baptismal\\_Mission\\_Discernment.pdf](http://www.ecfvp.org/files/uploads/Episcopalians_on_Baptismal_Mission_Discernment.pdf)
- Ministry Developers' Collaborative <http://livingstonespartnership.net/the-collaborative/>
- Motivational Gifts Survey - [www.gifttest.org](http://www.gifttest.org)
- Murray Bowen and Family Systems Theory - [www.the-bowencenter.org/pages/theory.html](http://www.the-bowencenter.org/pages/theory.html)
- TENS (The Episcopal Network for Stewardship) – [www.tens.org](http://www.tens.org)

# Actitud de Gratitud

POR DEMI PRENTISS

A medida que transcendemos la interpretación limitada de la mayordomía como un ejercicio anual de recaudación de fondos – o como solía llamarlo el fallecido Terry Parsons (<http://www.tens.org/resources/blog/remembering-terry-parsons/>), la “campana anual de ruegos” – Dios empieza a dar nueva forma al significado de “donativo” y de “dar.”

En la época en que las evaluaciones de los dones espirituales estaban cobrando popularidad en la iglesia, algunos líderes adoptaron la idea de que lo que necesitábamos hacer era determinar qué dones tenía la gente, hacerlos coincidir con los ministerios apropiados y todos los problemas de obtención de personal voluntario de la iglesia quedarían resueltos. En algunas iglesias la gente esperaba ansiosamente enterarse qué dones había revelado la encuesta que les había dado Dios y a menudo tenían que determinar por su cuenta qué uso podrían dar a esos dones. Una amiga que repetidamente recibía la noticia de que tenía el don de la castidad dijo, “¿Y ahora qué hago con eso? ¿Cómo lo uso en ministerio?”. Nunca oí una respuesta satisfactoria.

## Una manera más “orgánica”

Si bien las evaluaciones de dones pueden revelar y afirmar, creo que Dios tiene una manera más orgánica – y a menudo caótica – de desarrollarnos como sacerdotes efectivos. A menudo actuamos como si la gente estuviera equipada para el ministerio mediante un proceso claro de discernimiento seguido por formación y capacitación seguida por ministerio. Más frecuentemente, creo, Dios emplea esos tres elementos como un ciclo que nunca termina y que a la vez moldea e inspira a los sacerdotes en su labor. Los dones espirituales no se deben entender como regalos bellamente envueltos que Dios nos entrega para que nos aferremos a ellos o los exhibamos para que para que otros los admiren. En lugar de ello, creo, saber cuáles son nuestros dones espirituales nos otorga un nombre para la lente que empleamos para percibir las necesidades del mundo que nos rodea y el marco de referencia que empleamos para dirigirnos a esas necesidades. Nuestros dones – incluyendo nuestro tiempo, talento y recursos – son herramientas importantes.

Entonces, la mayordomía de nuestros dones no es tanto mirar en nuestra caja de herramientas para descubrir que por suerte tenemos un destornillador y después deambular por el mundo buscando un tornillo para atornillarlo. (“¿Necesita un destornillador estrella?” “No, plano” “Lo siento, no lo puedo asistir.”)

## Hacer las preguntas adecuadas

Para mí, mayordomía empieza por hacer la pregunta, “¿Qué veo” o, más acertadamente, “¿qué veo a través de los ojos de Cristo?” En el contexto de esa pregunta, puedo examinar no sólo el contenido de mi caja de herramientas, sino también la manera en que el Espíritu Santo me puede estar llamado para emplear esas herramientas. ¿Qué capta mi atención? ¿Qué me hace palpar? ¿A quién admiro y qué es sobre esa persona que aspiro a hacer o ser?

Los interrogantes continúan: ¿Quién o qué me está fastidiando? ¿Cuál es el abrojo en mi montura? ¿Qué necesidad en este mundo Dios me ha hecho notar? ¿Cómo, con lo que Dios me ha dado, puedo empezar a dirigirme a esa

necesidad?

Creo absolutamente en la economía de Dios: “En todas las cosas, Dios trabaja para el bien”. Incluso en las cosas malas. Incluso en nuestro dolor. Incluso en nuestro temor. Es por eso que la práctica de tener una “actitud de gratitud,” como la llaman las comunidades de los 12-Pasos, es tan crítica: aumenta nuestra concentración en qué, exactamente, nos ha dado Dios. Y esa concentración puede ayudar a asegurar que jamás desperdiciemos una crisis. Cuando vemos a un sanador herido tomando acción tenemos prueba de que la economía de Dios funciona.

### **Ver a través de los ojos de Cristo**

En los fugaces momentos en que vemos con los ojos de Cristo, reconocemos más claramente que además de los innumerables recursos y destrezas, Dios nos envía dones en la forma de los lugares desérticos y de los pasajes difíciles de la vida. Nada se pierde. Todo es un don y nuestra asociación con Dios nos permite descubrirlo.

Cuando empecé a trabajar en el Centro de la Iglesia Episcopal como funcionario del programa del Obispo Presidente para el liderazgo lego, me llenó

de alegría ver que mi iglesia afirmaba y celebraba los dones del 99.2 por ciento de la iglesia no ordenado. Menos de un año después, a causa de los grandes recortes presupuestarios adoptados en la Convención General de 2009, se eliminaron muchos puestos, incluyendo toda la oficina de desarrollo de ministerio, mi puesto y el de otros dos. Fue una situación muy dolorosa para mucha gente, creo, cuando hubo que hacer esos recortes tan necesarios. Al mismo tiempo, las relaciones que pude formar durante ese año y la amplia visión general de la iglesia que se me concedió, se convirtió en enormes recursos para la reorganización de la diócesis de Fort Worth, cuando me uní a ella al año siguiente. Para parafrasear a José, tal vez ustedes pensarían mal contra mí, más Dios lo encaminó a bien. (Gen 50:20)

En términos similares, cuando me diagnosticaron con un cáncer de seno en etapas muy tempranas, no sólo Dios me abrió los ojos a los dones pastorales del asistente del garaje de mi centro de radiación -- a quien le pagaban el salario mínimo -- sino que también me permitió hablar con la voz de una pastora (no mi voz habitual) a un número de mujeres que transitaban la escabrosa senda de la terapia de radiación.

En el sentido amplio de la palabra, la mayordomía es la manera en que respondemos a lo que Dios está tratando de mostrarnos, decirnos y enseñarnos. Nuestra respuesta puede abrir las puertas a que Dios multiplique nuestros dones, permitiéndoles dar fruto en la vida en las vidas de otros de maneras que tal vez nunca tengamos el privilegio de ver. Como dice el viejo dicho: “La mayordomía es todo lo que hacemos después de que decimos ‘Yo creo’.”

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### **Pruebe esto**

La próxima vez que alguien o algo lo fastidien, dedique tiempo a pensar qué -- en esa persona o cosa que se interponga en su camino --

podría estarle ofreciendo Dios como un don. ¿Una nueva perspectiva o idea? ¿Una oportunidad para “dejarlo pasar”? ¿Una llamada a una defensa encarnizada o a una actitud juguetona liberadora? ¿Un reto para buscar sanarse y sanar a otros? Pruebe captar esa experiencia en un “diario de dones” en el que escribe todos los días al menos un acto de acción de gracias.

org

## Recursos

- Episcopalians on Baptismal Mission <http://www.ecfvp.org/tools/episcopalians-on-baptismal-mission/>
- Episcopalians on Baptismal Mission Discernment Exercises [http://www.ecfvp.org/files/uploads/Episcopalians\\_on\\_Baptismal\\_Mission\\_Discernment.pdf](http://www.ecfvp.org/files/uploads/Episcopalians_on_Baptismal_Mission_Discernment.pdf)
- Ministry Developers' Collaborative <http://livingstonespartnership.net/the-collaborative/>
- Motivational Gifts Survey - [www.gifttest.org](http://www.gifttest.org)
- Murray Bowen and Family Systems Theory - [www.thebowencenter.org/pages/theory.html](http://www.thebowencenter.org/pages/theory.html)
- TENS (The Episcopal Network for Stewardship) – [www.tens.org](http://www.tens.org)

## Editor's Letter

When you think about stewardship, do you associate it with giving or with sharing?

To me, giving suggests a transaction, a handing off, while sharing implies relationship, a connection. God invites us into relationship – with God and with each other – and encourages us to open our eyes and to see what God is showing, telling, and teaching us.

This month our Vestry Papers articles share stories of the ways congregations or individuals are responding to God's invitation. As contributor Demi Prentiss observes, "Our response can open the door to God's multiplying our gifts, allowing them to bear life-giving fruit in the lives of others, in ways we may never have the privilege of seeing."

Our stories include:

- "Attitude of Gratitude" by Demi Prentiss invites us to consider stewardship as how we respond to what God is trying to show us and tell us and teach us. How can we adopt the practice of an "attitude for gratitude" to help us focus more clearly on the gifts God has given us? Also in Spanish.
- Across our church, congregations are learning to do more with less. In "Become What You Receive," Greg Syler continues the story of the ways St. George's Valley Lee is re-learning how to *be church*, how to become the literal Body of Christ. Also in Spanish.
- Peggy Dahlberg's "From Outreach to Relationship" shares the story, not only of what happened when Christ Church Cranbrook made the decision to focus their outreach efforts more narrowly, but also how the congregation's commitment to this approach has helped it thrive through several changes of clergy leadership.
- In "Do Not Give Money to God," Sandra Swan challenges us to change our thinking about why and how we give. This fall, at St. Paul's in Greenville, North Carolina, members are being asked to put the emphasis on doing, rather than giving, a formula Sandra maintains helps transform "money into ministry."
- "God's Economy" by Jamie Coats invites readers to consider stewardship as an opportunity to deepen their relationship with God. Also in Spanish
- Erin Weber-Johnson's "Lessons from Fund Raising Volunteers" identifies five of the top lessons she's learned from congregations, the common thread being that fundraising is so much more than the accomplishment of a monetary goal.
- Einstein said, "Insanity is doing the same thing over and over, and expecting different results." "An Experiment: Year Round Stewardship" by Ken Howard outlines the process his congregation adopted once they made the decision to end their annual giving campaign.
- Karen Hunter's "Stone Soup" uses this familiar folktale as a way to illustrate that the declining resources of our churches can be a gift as well as a challenge, using her small congregation in Nampa, Idaho as an example. Also in Spanish

Each Vestry Papers article includes a practical application related to the article that you might try at an upcoming vestry meeting. You'll also find a list of the resources mentioned in the article as well as additional information related to the topic. If you have a resource you'd like to share, please email me with the link or add it to the site using the Your Turn feature. If you've a subscriber, click on the Make a Submission button.

Not a subscriber? It's easy; look for, and click on the Subscribe button in the top right hand corner of the homepage: [www.ecfvp.org](http://www.ecfvp.org).

And, please to share this issue of Vestry Papers with others in your congregation, along with an invitation to subscribe to ECF Vital Practices and Vestry Papers. Subscriptions are free; visit [ECFVP.org](http://ECFVP.org) and click on the Subscribe tab on the upper right hand corner of this page. New subscribers are asked to fill out a short registration form to have Vestry Papers and ECF Vital Practices content delivered twice

a month to your email inbox.

Faithfully,

*Nancy*

Nancy Davidge

PS: To make it easier to find the resources offered through *ECF Vital Practices*, please consider adding a link to ECF Vital Practices to your website. Here's how: Using your websites 'add a link' tool, insert our full URL – <http://www.ecfvp.org/>.

PPS: Do you live in an area with limited Internet access? If you have a smart phone, consider browsing ECF Vital Practices from your mobile device; the site has been optimized for smart phones which makes it easier to search for content.

# Become What You Receive

BY GREG SYLER

*“...What you see is simply bread and a cup. But your faith demands far subtler insight: the bread is Christ’s body, the cup is Christ’s blood. My friends, these realities are called sacraments because in them one thing is seen, while another is grasped. It is your own mystery that is placed on the Lord’s table. It is your own mystery that you are receiving. You are saying ‘Amen’ to what you are. Be what you see; receive what you are.”*

Augustine of Hippo, selections from Sermon No. 272

Around the time I was talking to the search committee at St. George’s, Valley Lee – the parish I serve – I was talking with a number of other congregations. Part of the expectation of my then curacy in the Diocese of Chicago was, they hoped, that I’d be able to stay and help grow another congregation. But many of the churches the diocese put in front of me for consideration didn’t seem particularly ready.

Something about St. George’s stood out, however, and it wasn’t because they were a completely happy lot. They’d been through an arduous

decade. Exhaustion was setting in, money was down, numbers were declining, and those on the extremes had gotten so sick of each other that they, too, went their own ways. Remaining were the faithful core, and the God they sought to follow was, they believed, a God inviting them into some profound new hope. They didn’t know what that was, and I wouldn’t say they were necessarily ready for change, but they were more ready than any other congregation I had met to date. They had faced the excruciating pain that comes when you try to run a church as a club for its members or a business for profit. They had fought and lost and what they took away was that, at the end of fighting, everyone, every single person loses.

They were more ready than even they realized to be church. When the call came that night from the vestry, I’ll admit that I, too, was as anxious and uncertain as they were about God’s future for us, but God was already supplying the “yes.”

I’d like to be able to say that congregations can turn into God’s future without having to suffer through the kind of pain St.

George’s endured. I’m certain there are plenty of stories of positive turn-arounds. Suffering is not a prerequisite for transformation; it’s just that it’s often a really effective teacher.

No matter how you get there, the lesson is the same: A people must learn to know themselves. These days, communities of faith are called upon to know themselves as the beloved People of God who become, when they gather, the literal Body of Christ. Learning that lesson also implies unlearning others: forsaking that we are, to some, a not-for-profit business or, to others, a family chapel or, to still others, a voluntary membership body. Knowing oneself as the body of Christ requires pastoral leadership, a lot of patience, and leaders who are theologians-on-the-ground, persons who are absolutely committed to living in community not because it’s a job expectation but because that’s the only way all those varied orders of ministers, priests and deacons and lay folk, will come to hear what God has been saying all along.

This is where thinking theologically comes into play. Theology,

at its root, isn't just the language we use to talk about God; rather, it's *the language of God*. Thinking theologically, then, is about hearing God and, as necessary, translating God's presence to those who are still fixated on God's absence.

The particular ways in which we were invited to think theologically in Valley Lee, Maryland are specific to this place in this time. But there is one thing we've practiced that anyone can try and, in fact, everyone should: we've treated everything, yes, *everything* as a learning opportunity. When, for instance, a father and son who were homeless came into our life, seeking help with a hotel room, we commissioned a meeting with other faith-based leaders and social services, a meeting that led to the creation of a countywide overflow homeless sheltering program in our church buildings during the winter months. When St. George's was invited to be one of the first sheltering sites, our leadership kept the conversation focused on justice and we did a lot of listening and teaching. We took some heat from a few assertive leaders, but we kept praying with one another and we kept inviting God into the process.

When those once-dominant leaders walked away – the direct result of our changing the funda-

mental charism of outreach ministry from kindness to justice, from giving stuff to them to dissolving the false separation between *them* and *us* – we were faced with a new challenge: money. The dominant leaders didn't necessarily give all that much but they pulled off enough fundraisers to keep the cash flow flowing. The projected lack of fundraiser income led, then, to a conversation about why we do these things in the first place and, as I've written before (<http://www.ecfvp.org/vestry-papers/practicing-generosity/reframing-stewardship/>), whether we could live with less income from fundraisers and set out to have fun, instead, to enrich the relationships of this congregation and wider community.

That led us to realize we could live with less income if we budgeted our money in two distinct categories: operations and ministry. We learned we could fund our current operations on the generosity of those who give via regular collections, and doing so would free up ministries to be more Spirit-led and Spirit-driven. That is to say, ministries became less about programs and more about people's hearts and minds. And the money grew but, more importantly, so did participation and energy and joy. Such is life in community when the Holy Spirit takes the lead.

Budgeting our money in these ways led us, of course, to understand the abundance and gifts of our time and energy. Simply put, we realized that there are a lot more people who are active in our congregation and in the work of the Body of Christ than we actually understand at first glance. They all don't necessarily fill out the dreaded pledge card but they give, and they give generously with their time and their prayers and their gifts – and to numerous causes. So we opened up our fall stewardship drive this past year by getting rid of pledges. Instead, we sent a letter of invitation and a box of giving envelopes to all the active households in our congregation and invited them to give, and give as generously and as often as God moves their heart so to do. And they have. Total giving to date this year far exceeds total giving at this point last year.

These rather specific things that have presented themselves as learning opportunities for one Christian congregation in one place in St. Mary's County, Maryland have helped us and, yes, from time to time, challenged us to consider how God is inviting us to *be church*. Every Sunday, standing at the altar, I've added a line to the invitation to Holy Communion. The Prayer Book instructs that the Presider says "The Gifts of God for the People of

God,” and instead of adding the optional phrase I insert a line adapted from St. Augustine’s sermon, printed in part above: “Become what you receive; the Body of Christ.” That’s what worship on the Lord’s Day is all about, after all: receiving and becoming Christ’s body. And that’s the only business plan the church, as institution, needs.

**Greg Syler** is the rector of St. George’s Episcopal Church in Valley Lee, Maryland ([www.stgeorgesvalleylee.org](http://www.stgeorgesvalleylee.org)), the oldest continuous Anglican parish in Maryland and, today, a vibrant, historic congregation in the Diocese of Washington. Greg has served on Diocesan Council, convenes the Region 6 Clericus, is a member of the Southern Maryland Steering Committee, and a leader in collaborative Episcopal ministries in southern Maryland. He also helped envision and create and, together with others, runs Camp EDOW -- the diocese’s first ever summer camp for kids and youth.

### Try This

1. What is the theology of your church budget? More than just what dollar amount you put next to what line item, what theological realities does that affirm/undermine? Is it centralized and controlled? Decentralized and generous?

Optimistic and about new life? What do those numbers say about God? About this Christian community? About human nature?

2. Do a ‘ministry audit’ of your congregation and, in so doing, think well beyond the walls and programs of the church itself: how much are the People of God doing and giving to the world? How could the institutional church enable more of that generosity and worry less about organizing competing activities?

3. If everything is a theological learning opportunity, what’s stopping us from learning? And, honestly, what would be the worst thing that would happen if the church’s leadership body stopped doing certain customary things and started to act in different ways?

### Resources

- A Spirituality of Fundraising by Henri J.M. Nouwen <http://www.amazon.com/Spirituality-Fundraising-Henri-Nouwen/dp/0835810445>
- “Measuring an Open Contribution Giving Campaign” by Greg Syler, ECF Vital Practices, April 9, 2014 <http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/measur->

[ing-an-open-contribution-giving-campaign/](http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/measuring-an-open-contribution-giving-campaign/)

- “Reframing Stewardship” by Greg Syler, ECF Vital Practices’ Vestry Papers, September 2012 <http://www.ecfvp.org/vestry-papers/practicing-generosity/reframing-stewardship/>
- “Rethinking the Pledge, Part 1: It’s Not Stewardship” by Greg Syler, ECF Vital Practices’ Vital Post, October 9, 2013 <http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/rethinking-the-pledge-part-1-its-not-stewardship/>
- “Rethinking the Pledge, Part 2: A New Way” by Greg Syler, ECF Vital Practices’ Vital Post, October 23, 2013 <http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/rethinking-the-pledge-part-2-a-new-way/>
- “Spirituality of Fundraising” by Anne Ditzler, ECF Vital Practices’ Vital Post, May 25, 2011, <http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/spirituality-of-fundraising/>
- St. George’s Episcopal Church in Valley Lee, Maryland [www.stgeorgesvalleylee.org](http://www.stgeorgesvalleylee.org)

# Conviértase En Lo Que Recibe

POR GREG SYLER

*“... lo que veis es simplemente pan y un cáliz. A estas cosas, hermanos míos, las llamamos sacramentos, porque en ellas es una cosa la que se ve y otra la que se entiende. Lo que se ve tiene forma corporal; lo que se entiende posee fruto espiritual. Por tanto, si quieres entender el cuerpo de Cristo, escucha al Apóstol, que dice a los fieles: Vosotros sois el cuerpo de Cristo y sus miembros. En consecuencia, si vosotros sois el cuerpo y los miembros de Cristo, sobre la mesa del Señor está el misterio que sois vosotros mismos y recibís el misterio que sois vosotros. A lo que sois respondéis con el Amén, y con vuestra respuesta lo rubricáis. Se te dice: “El Cuerpo de Cristo”, y respondes: “Amén”. Sé miembro del cuerpo de Cristo para que sea auténtico el Amén.”*

San Agustín de Hipona, pasajes del Sermón No. 272

Alrededor de la fecha en que estaba hablando con el comité de búsqueda de St. George, Valley Lee – la parroquia a la que sirvo – estaba hablando con un número de otras feligresías. Parte de la expectativa de lo que en ese entonces era mi coadjutoría en

la Diócesis de Chicago era que yo pudiera permanecer y ayudar a que las feligresías crecieran. Pero muchas de las iglesias de la diócesis que me presentaron para que las considerara no parecían estar listas.

Sin embargo, hubo algo especial sobre St. George, y no era que parecía ser una feligresía feliz. Acababan de pasar por una década ardua. Estaban empezando a sentirse exhaustos, los fondos y los números estaban decreciendo y los que estaban en los extremos estaban tan hartos de verse las caras que también se habían dispersado. Los que permanecieron eran el pilar fiel y, según creían, el Dios al que anhelaban seguir los estaba invitando a una profunda nueva esperanza. No sabían exactamente qué era y yo no diría que estaban *listos* para el cambio, pero sí diría que estaban más listos que ninguna de las otras feligresías que yo había visto hasta el momento. Habían enfrentado los enormes problemas relacionados con tratar de administrar una iglesia como un club para sus miembros o como un negocio con ánimo de lucro. Pelearon y perdieron, y lo que les quedó al final

de la lucha fue que en ese tipo de lucha todos son perdedores.

Estaban tan listos que hasta ellos se dieron cuenta de que deberían ser una *iglesia*. Cuando recibí la llamada de la junta parroquial esa noche, admito que yo también estaba un poco nervioso e incierto sobre lo que Dios quería que fuera nuestro futuro, pero Dios ya nos estaba dando el “sí”.

Me gustaría poder decir que las feligresías puedan mirar hacia el futuro de Dios sin tener que pasar por el dolor que sufrió St. George. Estoy seguro de que hay muchas historias de cambios positivos. El sufrimiento no es un requisito previo a las transformaciones, pero la realidad es que a menudo es un maestro sumamente efectivo.

Independientemente de cómo llegue uno allí, la lección es la misma: los pueblos deben aprender a conocerse a sí mismos. En la actualidad, las comunidades de fe están llamadas a conocerse a sí mismas como el bienamado Pueblo de Dios que se convierte, cuando se reúne, literalmente en el Cuerpo de Cristo. Aprender

esa lección también implica *desaprender* otras: dejar de lado que somos, para algunos, una empresa sin ánimo de lucro, una capilla familiar o, para otros más, una entidad con participación voluntaria. Conocerse a uno mismo como el Cuerpo de Cristo requiere liderazgo pastoral, muchísima paciencia y líderes que son teólogos prácticos, personas absolutamente comprometidas a vivir en una comunidad no porque es una expectativa laboral, sino porque esa es la única manera en que todos los órdenes variados de ministros, sacerdotes, diáconos y legos vendrán a oír lo que Dios había estado diciendo todo el tiempo.

Es aquí donde pensar teológicamente entra en juego. La teología, en su base, no es sólo el lenguaje que usamos para hablar sobre Dios, sino que es el *lenguaje de Dios*. Por lo tanto, pensar teológicamente escuchar a Dios y, según sea necesario, traducir la presencia de Dios a los que todavía están obsesionados con la ausencia de Dios.

Las maneras específicas en las que nos invitaron a pensar teológicamente en Valley Lee, Maryland, son específicas de este lugar en ese momento. Pero hay una cosa que practicamos que cualquiera puede probar y que, de hecho, todos deberían probar: tratamos

todo, sí, *todo*, como una oportunidad de aprendizaje. Cuando, por ejemplo, un padre y un hijo que estaban sin hogar acudieron a nosotros para que los ayudáramos a encontrar una habitación de hotel, nos reunimos con otros líderes de instituciones de fe y de servicios sociales. Esa reunión generó la creación de un programa de todo el condado de refugios para los sin hogar en los edificios de nuestras iglesias durante los meses de invierno. Cuando se invitó a St. George a que fuera uno de los primeros sitios de refugio, nuestro liderazgo mantuvo la conversación centrada en la justicia y dedicamos mucho tiempo a escuchar y enseñar. Un puñado de líderes nos criticó, pero seguimos orando los unos con los otros y seguimos invitando a Dios al proceso.

Cuando uno de esos líderes anteriormente dominantes se fue – el resultado directo de haber cambiado el carisma fundamental del ministerio de extensión de bondad a justicia, de darles cosas a ellos a disolver la falsa separación entre *ellos y nosotros* – enfrentamos un nuevo desafío: el dinero. La falta proyectada de dinero proveniente de los recaudadores de fondos condujo a una conversación sobre por qué hacemos estas cosas en primer lugar y, **como escribí anteriormente**, (<http://www.ecfvp.org/vestrypapers/>

practicing-generosity/reframing-stewardship/), si podríamos vivir con menos ingresos de los recaudadores de fondos y, en lugar de ello, nos dispusiéramos a divertirnos, para enriquecer las relaciones en esta feligresía y con la comunidad en general.

Eso nos llevó a darnos cuenta de que podríamos vivir con menores ingresos si presupuestáramos nuestro dinero en dos categorías específicas: operaciones y ministerio. Aprendimos que podríamos financiar nuestras operaciones actuales con la generosidad de los que donan mediante las colectas habituales y que hacerlo permitiría que nuestros ministerios estuvieran más encabezados e impulsados por el Espíritu. En otras palabras, los ministerios pasaron a ser menos sobre programas y más sobre los corazones y las mentes de la gente.

Haber presupuestado nuestro dinero de estas maneras nos llevó a, por supuesto, entender la abundancia y los dones de nuestro tiempo y energía. En términos sencillos, vimos que había mucha más gente activa en nuestra feligresía y en la labor del Cuerpo de Cristo que lo que habíamos visto en primera instancia. No todos llenan nuestra temida tarjeta de promesa de donativo, pero donan, generosamente su tiempo, oraciones y dones a numerosas causas.

Así que iniciamos nuestra colecta otoñal de mayordomía del año pasado sin las tarjetas de donativos. En lugar de ello enviamos una carta de invitación y una caja de sobres de donativos a todas las familias activas en nuestra feligresía y las invitamos a que donaran, y a que donaran lo más generosamente y con la frecuencia con que Dios los inspirara a hacerlo. Y lo hicieron. Hasta ahora, los donativos totales de este año exceden de lejos los donativos del año pasado en el mismo período.

Todas estas cosas tan específicas que se presentaron como oportunidades de aprendizaje para una feligresía cristiana en un lugar en el Condado de St. Mary, Maryland, nos ayudaron y sí, de tanto en tanto nos retaron a que consideráramos la manera en que Dios nos estaba invitando a ser iglesia. Todos los domingos, de pie en el altar, añadí una línea a la invitación a comulgar. El Libro de Oración indica que el celebrante dice: “Los Dones de Dios al Pueblo de Dios, y en lugar de añadir la frase optativa inserté una línea adaptada del sermón de San Agustín, impreso en parte más arriba: “Conviértanse en lo que reciben: el Cuerpo de Cristo”. Después de todo, el culto en el Día del Señor es sobre recibir el cuerpo de Cristo y convertirse en Él. Y ese es el único plan de negocios que, como institución, necesita la

iglesia.

**Greg Syler** es rector de la Iglesia Episcopal St. George en Valley Lee, Maryland, la parroquia anglicana continua más antigua de Maryland y, en la actualidad, una vibrante feligresía histórica en la Diócesis de Washington. Greg sirvió en el Consejo Diocesano, convoca el Clericus de la Región 6, es miembro del comité directivo del Sur de Maryland y un líder en los ministerios episcopales colaborativos en el sur de Maryland. También ayudó a prever y crear y, junto con otros, está a cargo del Campamento EDOW, el primer campamento veraniego para los niños y los jóvenes de la diócesis.

### Pruebe esto

1. ¿Cuál es la teología del presupuesto de su iglesia? Más que la cantidad de dinero que pone junto a un cierto ítem, ¿qué realidades teológicas afirma o socava? ¿Es centralizado y controlado? ¿Descentralizado y generoso? ¿Optimista y dedicado a nueva vida? ¿Qué dicen esas cifras sobre Dios? ¿Sobre esta comunidad cristiana? ¿Sobre la naturaleza humana?
2. Haga una ‘auditoría de ministerio’ de su feligresía y al hacerlo piense más allá de los muros y de los programas de la iglesia en sí: ¿cuánto está el Pueblo de Dios está haciendo y dando al mundo?

¿Cómo puede la iglesia institucional posibilitar más de esa generosidad y preocuparse menos sobre organizar actividades en competencia?

3. Si todo es una oportunidad teológica de aprendizaje, ¿qué impide que aprendamos? Y, honestamente, ¿qué sería lo peor que podría pasar si el liderazgo de la iglesia dejara de hacer algo que hace habitualmente y empezara actuar de otras maneras?

### Recursos

- A Spirituality of Fundraising by Henri J.M. Nouwen <http://www.amazon.com/Spirituality-Fundraising-Henri-Nouwen/dp/0835810445>
- “Measuring an Open Contribution Giving Campaign” by Greg Syler, ECF Vital Practices, April 9, 2014 <http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/measuring-an-open-contribution-giving-campaign/>
- “Reframing Stewardship” by Greg Syler, ECF Vital Practices’ Vestry Papers, September 2012 <http://www.ecfvp.org/vestry-papers/practicing-generosity/reframing-stewardship/>

# FROM OUTREACH TO RELATIONSHIP

BY PEGGY DAHLBERG

Anyone can be spread too thin.  
Even a congregation.

For many years, our outreach efforts at Christ Church Cranbrook (CCC) were very widespread. Our grants program, funded by parishioner pledges and income from specific investments, supported about 50 agencies. In addition, the congregation's Episcopal Church Women (ECW) group held two rummage sales and a used book sale each year, giving the proceeds to local and international charities.

Eventually, the rummage sales and book sales were replaced by an evening event that included live and silent auctions. The proceeds were distributed to four charities chosen by the ECW.

## Seeing with new eyes

In 2010, when Gary Hall became our rector, he observed we were giving money to a lot of different organizations. He suggested the congregation could really make a difference by narrowing our outreach efforts, identifying a program we could both support financially and create a relationship with, drawing upon the congregation's

wide array of talents and resources.

Parishioners embraced the idea. A list of our interests, skills and talents emerged: tutoring, helping people prepare for and obtain jobs, and assisting with legal, health, and financial issues. Looking at all of our outreach efforts, we decided to fold our Servant Saturdays program, a day when we volunteered our time and labor to an organization, into this initiative as well.

Beth Taylor came on board as an associate priest and led the committee charged with finding an organization we could partner with and funnel the majority of our outreach funds – and talents – to. The committee chose Focus: HOPE, ([http://www.focushope.edu/page.aspx?content\\_id=1&content\\_type=level1](http://www.focushope.edu/page.aspx?content_id=1&content_type=level1)) a Detroit based civil and human rights organization dedicated to overcoming racism, poverty, and injustice. Committed to developing safe, strong, and nurturing neighborhoods where people want to live, work, and raise a family, Focus: HOPE programs include career training, community development, fighting hunger, and, through their HOPE Village Initiative, childhood education.

## It takes a village

Believing that “it takes a village to raise a child,” the HOPE Village initiative ([http://www.focushope.edu/page.aspx?content\\_id=3&content\\_type=level1](http://www.focushope.edu/page.aspx?content_id=3&content_type=level1)) actively seeks partners who will bring together the resources needed to transform the community. What caught the hearts and minds of CCC were the children attending Glazer Elementary School. Our committee learned that the school wanted to build a STEM lab (Science Technology, Engineering and Math); this project resonated with the committee and others in the congregation and the decision was made to select Glazer Elementary as the beneficiary of that year's “Evening for Outreach” fundraiser.

Support for this project came from every part of the congregation. Members of the prayer shawl ministry created and sold hats, scarves, and baby items to finance a life sized skeleton for the STEM lab. The Sunday school children held a bake sale to buy items for the lab as well. And, one of our parishioners owns a lab that he was in the process of renovating so he was able to donate the granite worktable tops

as well as advise on the project.

Another parishioner took a group of Glazer students to the Field & Science Museum in Chicago!

### **Birthday cakes and books**

Following the gift of the STEM lab, members of the congregation began to look for other opportunities at Glazer Elementary. An after school tutoring program and ballet lessons were established; an after school robotics club is in the planning stage.

Spending time at the school and getting to know the students, we learned that for some children birthdays might not include a cake. The congregation now holds a “Birthday Bag” drive twice a year. This is a parish wide collection of cake mix, canned frosting, oil, and candles – everything to make a birthday cake except the eggs. Friday mornings during the school assembly, every student who has a birthday in the upcoming week gets a rousing chorus of “Happy Birthday to You” and receives a bag decorated by our youth group filled with the ingredients to make a birthday cake. One boy told me this was the only thing he got for his birthday.

Working with the students and the staff, we saw the interest in reading and learned of the desire

for an improved library and books for the children to bring home over the summer. A few of our parishioners organized the Glazer Library and filled in with books where needed. A book collection drive was held in the spring. Enough books were collected so that each student was able to choose two to three books to take home.

Since that first year, we’ve added monthly food drives for Focus: HOPE families as well as providing school supplies in the summer and mittens in the winter.

### **Collaboration**

The relationship that we have built with Glazer is one of collaboration, not us swooping in and doing what we think needs to be done. The staff, parents, and students tell us what they would like help with and we try our best to help them achieve their goals.

As the next “Evening for Outreach” approached, we talked with staff, parents, and students about their dreams for the school and the children. What rose to the top of the list was a new playground. We agreed to raise the money and help with construction; the staff at Focus: HOPE got busy identifying other partners to help with the design and the labor.

Working with landscape architecture graduate students from the University of Michigan, and the students and staff at Glazer, a design for the new playground was formed. Parishioners, staff, students and parents, neighbors, U of M students and Focus: HOPE staff helped build and landscape the playground over two weekends. Little things like resealing and lining a walking track that encompasses the playground made people more aware of its existence. One woman from the neighborhood told me that she never knew the walking track was there. Now she can walk without fear of being attacked by dogs that roam the neighborhood.

### **The importance of shared vision**

Our relationship with Focus: HOPE continues, in large part because our church leaders took the time to explore what a different approach to outreach might look like at Christ Church Cranbrook. Many people in the metro Detroit area are working poor and need help. We have lost many of the well paying factory jobs that provided so many with comfortable lifestyles. Working together, we explored what focusing our effort on a specific organization might be like and thought about ways our wide array of talents and resources might be

put to use.

Since beginning this relationship, Gary Hall moved on to become the dean of the Washington National Cathedral and Beth Taylor was called to be the rector of St. John's Episcopal Church in Royal Oak, Michigan. The lay committee Beth set up early on continues to guide this ministry.

After Beth's call to St. John's our interim rector, Ron Pogue, hired Katy Knoer as the coordinator of ministries for outreach, hospitality, and stewardship. Katy has been incredibly busy overseeing the relationship between Christ Church Cranbrook, Focus: HOPE, and Glazer Elementary, keeping the vision and mission alive and the congregation engaged.

This year's "Evening for Outreach" beneficiary will be the construction of an outdoor learning center at Focus: HOPE's Center for Children. ([http://www.focushope.edu/page.aspx?content\\_id=196&content\\_type=level2](http://www.focushope.edu/page.aspx?content_id=196&content_type=level2)) This will be an outdoor addition to the childcare facility at the center that trains adults for jobs. The children will be able to play outdoors in a safe, educational environment. The adults can leave their children at the Center for Children while they are learning life and job skills. Recently, the congregation called

William Danaher, Jr. to become our rector and he is passionate about the Christian need to care for others. He is committed to continue and support Christ Church Cranbrook's current outreach efforts. He has also articulated a goal of ensuring that the Episcopal Church become deeply involved in Detroit's comeback.

***Peggy Dahlberg** is director of communications at Christ Church Cranbrook. She has been a member of CCC since 1984 when she and Lyle were married here. Peggy was a member of the vestry from 2006 to 2009 and for the last year was junior warden. She worked as a volunteer training and scheduling the acolytes for many years in addition to other volunteer activities before coming on board as a member of the staff.*

### Try This

What is God calling your congregation to do? (<http://www.ecfvp.org/files/uploads/StMattVestryDiscernment.pdf>)

Consider bringing people in your congregation together to explore this question: "When the people at (your church) bring together your deepest desires and greatest gifts, how do you imagine the future God is bringing forth among you?"

### Resources

- Bound Together Pontiac <http://boundtogetherpontiac.org/programs-services/>
- Center for Children at Focus: HOPE [http://www.focushope.edu/page.aspx?content\\_id=196&content\\_type=level2](http://www.focushope.edu/page.aspx?content_id=196&content_type=level2)
- Christ Church Cranbrook <http://christchurchcranbrook.org>
- "Cultivating a Culture of Discernment" by Blair Pogue, ECF Vital Practices' Vestry Papers, July 2010
- Focus HOPE <http://www.focushope.edu/Default.aspx>
- "Generosity" by Barrett Fisher, St. Matthew's Episcopal Church blog Open Table, September 19, 2013 <http://stmatthewsmn.wordpress.com/2013/09/19/generosity/>
- Glazer Academy <http://npglazeracademy.org>
- Glazer's new playground (video) [http://www.focushope.edu/videopage.aspx?video\\_id=35](http://www.focushope.edu/videopage.aspx?video_id=35)

- Glazer Elementary – The Unveiling of the New STEM Lab  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WQui7VRX7gA>
- The Story of Christ Church Cranbrook, 2011 video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jn2VtKNM4wk>

# God's Economy

BY JAMIE COATS

For 85 years the Brothers of the Society of Saint John the Evangelist lived in their monastery on the Charles River in Cambridge, Massachusetts. The monastery is so beautiful that it has become a place of pilgrimage for many, where even before you meet a monk, you are reminded by the place that God sees beauty in you. For 85 years the Brothers did not set aside money for building upkeep and finally the monastery fell apart, windows, roofs, electric wiring, heating -- even the sewers packed in. And then the financial crisis hit. The Superior at that moment was Brother Curtis Almquist.

At a meeting at the home of a friend of the Society, Br. Curtis said, "As Superior I have a responsibility to ask for money. I also have no idea how much money any of you have. I ask one thing: please pray to God, and between you and God figure out what is right for you. Thank you."

In saying this, Curtis made a distinction between his role as a leader who has to ask for money and his role as a monk who helps people deepen their relationship with God. Curtis helped me understand

what Jesus meant by "Render under Caesar the things that are Caesar's and to God the things that God's."

We live in a world with two economies: the economy of transactions and the economy of gift, Caesar's economy and God's economy.

There is a simple exercise that I like to use to help people understand how they live in these two economies. You can do it verbally or ask people to write down their answers.

What do you do?  
How do you exchange your time for money?  
What do you care about?

I always used to answer the first question as how I earned money, forgetting to mention that I am a parent of a teenager, I write poetry, I try to stay fit, and so on. I used to let money solely name what I do, forgetting to mention the relationships that matter to me.

In the transaction economy we humans name a price for everything and then trade. This allows us to bring our gifts to bear to earn a

living. I am not the farming type, so I value being able to exchange what talents I have to buy stuff like food. Trade is important, but it is not everything and it is not the business that the Church is in.

Living in the gift economy, God--not us--names the price: we are all loved; we see beauty in the world and each other; we care and are cared for; we rely on each other; we give as we receive, living in a cycle of kindness; we deepen relationships and understand meaning.

So here is the core challenge that I believe Br. Curtis defined so well: you have to name the price of your church. You have to ask for money. But to receive money you have to help your friends and parishioners deepen their relationship with God -- you have to help them pray, be of service, and see themselves as stewards of their lives.

When churches ask me for fundraising advice, I urge them to be more upfront than many churches often are about their finances. Don't claim to celebrate a balanced budget when no money has been set aside for building upkeep. As one donor helping us renovate

the monastery put it, “Why should I give you money when you have been stupid and irresponsible for 85 years?” Buildings rot. The Brothers started a building fund the year before they began asking for capital donations – and they continue to fund the building fund annually.

The heart of stewardship is helping people deepen their relationship with God. When Br. Curtis asked people to pray to God over what to give, he was able to provide support in helping them steward their own lives first. A core part of the Brothers’ ministry is to help people develop a personal rule of life, to discern a rhythm for their life that allows them to live well in both economies. Simply put, the Brothers ask people to explore and examine their relationships in four dimensions:

- With God
- With themselves
- With one another
- With their stuff (including money)

We all need help learning how to be stewards in our own lives. When our churches help us do this for ourselves we are deeply appreciative. The challenge is that this formation works best when it does not happen in stewardship season. When you are asking for

money we tend to tighten up in our souls, tend to think in transactions. If earlier you have helped us understand our personal stewardship, and think about how we live in two economies, then the conversations in stewardship season will be easier, more fun, and maybe joyous.

I am pleased to report that Monastery was successfully renovated in 2010. Information about the Brothers’ work on a developing a rule of life, learning to steward your own life can be found at [www.SSJE.org/rule](http://www.SSJE.org/rule)

*Jamie Coats serves as the director, Friends of the Society of St. John the Evangelist, a monastic community of the Episcopal Church. He shares his personal writing at [wingedboots.com](http://wingedboots.com).*

### Try This

Think about the two economies we live in: the economy of transactions and the economy of gifts. In “Our Money Life,” ([http://www.ecfvp.org/files/uploads/Our\\_Money\\_Life.pdf](http://www.ecfvp.org/files/uploads/Our_Money_Life.pdf)) David Fisher invites us to reflect on the following questions:

How does my money life influence how I live out my Baptismal Covenant?

Am I in charge of my money or

is my money in charge of me?

What role does my money play in my relationships, behaviors, and decisions? (Consider this question in terms of your religious/spiritual life and also in terms of your home life, work life, community life, and leisure life.

Do you own your money or does your money own you?

### Resources

- “Creating a Culture of Giving” by Angela Emerson, ECF Vital Practices’ January 27, 2012 blog post <http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/creating-a-culture-of-giving/>
- “One Step Out of Stuckness” by Jamie Coats, ECF Vital Practices’ Vestry Papers, September 2011 <http://www.ecfvp.org/vestry-papers/innovative-stewardship/one-step-out-of-stuckness/>
- “Our Money Life” by David Fisher, ECF Vital Practices’ Your Turn resource <http://www.ecfvp.org/yourturn/our-money-life/>
- Society of St. John the Evangelist Rule of Life [www.SSJE.org/rule](http://www.SSJE.org/rule)

# La Economía de Dios

BY JAMIE COATS

Por 85 años, los Hermanos de la Sociedad de San Juan Evangelista (Saint John the Evangelist) vivieron en su monasterio en el río Charles en Cambridge, Massachusetts. El monasterio es tan bello que se ha convertido en un lugar de peregrinaje para muchos. Incluso antes de ver un monje, el lugar nos recuerda que Dios ve belleza en cada uno de nosotros. Por 85 años los hermanos no destinaron dinero a reparar el edificio y finalmente el monasterio se deterioró: ventanas, techos, cables de electricidad, calefacción... hasta se taponaron las cloacas. Y después vino la crisis financiera. En ese entonces el superior era el hermano Curtis Almquist.

En una reunión en la casa de un amigo de la Sociedad, el hermano Curtis dijo, "Como superior tengo la responsabilidad de pedir dinero. Además no tengo idea de cuánto dinero tienen ustedes. Les pido una cosa: por favor récnle a Dios y entre ustedes determinen qué es lo adecuado para ustedes. Gracias".

Al decir eso, Curtis hizo una distinción entre su rol de líder que pide dinero y su rol de monje que ayuda a la gente a profundizar su relación con Dios. Curtis me ayudó

a entender lo que Jesús quiso decir con "Dad lo que es de César a César y a Dios lo que es de Dios".

Vivimos en un mundo con dos economías: la economía de las transacciones y la economía de los donativos, la economía de César y la economía de Dios.

Hay un ejercicio sencillo que me gusta usar para ayudar a la gente a entender cómo vive en estas dos economías. Se puede hacer oralmente o se puede pedir a la gente que escriba sus respuestas.

¿A qué se dedica usted?

¿Cómo intercambia su tiempo por dinero?

¿Qué cosas le importan?

Siempre solía contestar la primera pregunta diciendo cómo ganaba dinero, olvidando mencionar que soy padre de un adolescente, que escribo poesía, que trato de mantenerme en forma, etc. Solía permitir que sólo el dinero indicara lo que hago, olvidando mencionar las relaciones que son importantes para mí.

En la economía de transacción nosotros los seres humanos

le ponemos un precio a todo y después intercambiamos. Eso permite que empleemos nuestros dones para ganarnos la vida. No tengo dotes de agricultor, así que valoro poder intercambiar los talentos que tengo para comprar cosas como alimentos. El intercambio es importante, pero no es todo, y no es el negocio en el que está la Iglesia.

Al vivir en la economía de donativos, Dios – no nosotros – pone el precio: todos somos amados; vemos belleza en el mundo; dependemos los unos de los otros; damos como recibimos, viviendo en un ciclo de bondad; profundizamos relaciones y entendemos los significados.

Así que éste es el desafío principal de lo que en mi opinión el hermano Curtis definió tan bien: usted tiene que nombrar el precio de su iglesia. Usted tiene que pedir dinero. Pero para recibir dinero tiene que ayudar a sus amigos y feligreses a profundizar su relación con Dios: tiene que ayudarlos a orar, a ser serviciales y a verse como mayordomos de sus propias vidas.

Cuando las iglesias me piden

consejos sobre la recaudación de fondos, les insto a que sean más francos que lo que muchas iglesias son a menudo sobre sus finanzas. No digan que su presupuesto está equilibrado si no apartaron dinero para las reparaciones del edificio. Como lo dijo un donante que nos estaba ayudando a renovar el monasterio, “¿Por qué debo darles dinero cuando han sido estúpidos e irresponsables por 85 años?”. Los edificios se deterioran. Los hermanos iniciaron un fondo de construcción un año antes de empezar a pedir donaciones de capital... y siguen financiando el fondo de construcción todos los años.

El pilar de la mayordomía es ayudar a la gente a profundizar su relación con Dios. Cuando el hermano Curtis le pidió a la gente que orara para saber cuánto debían donar, pudo proporcionarles apoyo para ejercer mayordomía primeramente sobre sus vidas. Una de las partes más importantes del ministerio de los hermanos es ayudar a las personas a elaborar una regla de vida personal, a discernir el ritmo para sus vidas que les permita vivir bien en ambas economías. Dicho sencillamente, los hermanos le piden a la gente que examine sus relaciones en cuatro dimensiones:

Con Dios  
Con ellos mismos

Entre sí  
Con sus cosas (incluyendo dinero)

Todos necesitamos aprender a ser mayordomos de nuestras propias vidas. Cuando nuestras iglesias nos ayudan a hacer esto para nosotros mismos, lo apreciamos profundamente. El reto es que esta información funciona mejor cuando no ocurre en la temporada de mayordomía. Cuando nos pide dinero tendemos a apretar nuestras almas, a pensar en transacciones. Si anteriormente nos ayuda a entender nuestra mayordomía personal y a pensar en cómo vivimos en dos economías, las conversaciones en la temporada de mayordomía serán más fáciles, más divertidas y tal vez gozosas.

Me complace decir que el monasterio fue renovado en 2010. Para obtener información sobre el trabajo de los hermanos sobre la elaboración de una regla de vida y aprender a ser mayordomos de la propia vida, visite <http://ssje.org/ssje/category/rule-of-life/>.

**Jamie Coats** es director de *Friends of the Society of St. John the Evangelist*, una comunidad monástica de la Iglesia Episcopal. Comparte sus ensayos personales en [wingedboots.com](http://www.wingedboots.com). <http://www.wingedboots.com>

### Pruebe Esto

Piense en las dos economías en las que vivimos: la economía de transacciones y la economía de donativos. En “Our Money Life,” ([http://www.ecfvp.org/files/uploads/Our\\_Money\\_Life.pdf](http://www.ecfvp.org/files/uploads/Our_Money_Life.pdf)) David Fisher nos invita a reflexionar sobre las siguientes preguntas:

¿De qué manera el dinero influye sobre la manera en que vivo mi pacto bautismal?

¿Estoy a cargo de mi dinero o mi dinero está a cargo de mí?

¿Qué papel desempeña mi dinero en mis relaciones, conductas y decisiones? (Considere esta pregunta en términos de su vida familiar, su vida de trabajo, su vida comunitaria y su vida de ocio).

¿Es dueño de su dinero o su dinero es dueño de usted?

## Recursos

- “Creating a Culture of Giving” by Angela Emerson, ECF Vital Practices’ January 27, 2012 blog post <http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/creating-a-culture-of-giving/>
- “One Step Out of Stuckness” by Jamie Coats, ECF Vital Practices’ Vestry Papers, September 2011 <http://www.ecfvp.org/vestry-papers/innovative-stewardship/one-step-out-of-stuckness/>
- “Our Money Life” by David Fisher, ECF Vital Practices’ Your Turn resource <http://www.ecfvp.org/yourturn/our-money-life/>
- Society of St. John the Evangelist Rule of Life [www.SSJE.org/rule](http://www.SSJE.org/rule)

*¡No se pierda ningún número de Vestry Papers! Inscríbese en [www.ecfvp.org](http://www.ecfvp.org) para recibir nuestra suscripción gratuita.*

# Lessons from Fundraising Volunteers

BY ERIN WEBER-JOHNSON

It's October. For many congregations, fall means annual campaigns or pledge drives. Our vestries and stewardship committees are focused on raising money and thinking about budgets, meeting operating costs, and forecasting financial needs for the coming year.

The focus is on doing. Or as Jamie Coats suggests in "God's Economy," also found in this issue of Vestry Papers, their emphasis is on what the brothers at the Society of St. John the Evangelist call the economy of transactions. Everything has a price and we trade – our time, talent, and treasure – to get the things we need.

As a consultant to Episcopal congregations for capital campaigns and related stewardship topics, I often have a front row seat to the challenges stewardship volunteers face: "I couldn't possibly ask another person to make a gift to\_\_\_\_," or "Talking about money makes me feel uncomfortable," or even "I'm not sure how you can do what you do."

Yet, these same volunteers continue to teach me about fundraising. Specifically, these lessons relate to

what the brothers call God's economy; where God names the price: As Jamie writes, "we are all loved; we see beauty in the world and each other; we care and are cared for; we rely on each other; we give as we receive, living in a cycle of kindness; we deepen our relationships and understand meaning."

Here are some of the things that I've learned from the congregations I've worked with:

## 1. Fundraising can be fun

Recognizing the appeal of videos, when St. James Cathedral in Chicago paired their annual fall giving with a special diocesan appeal and event, videos were part of the plan. Seen as a way to both educate the parish and to get people talking, the committee decided to create three short videos starring well-loved staff members from the Cathedral.

Parishioner Alan Taylor reports, "Both the committee behind the camera and the staff featured in the videos had fun being creative and laughing together. What a joy to have the laity take more of a leadership role in our church!

"Of the three videos, we've had nearly six hundred views and counting."

Not only were the videos successful in raising awareness about the special appeal, everyone enjoyed their spirit of fun. Each video highlighted an aspect of the needed renovations, and, created interest and excitement about the planned fall fundraising event.

Here are the links to these videos:

- Part I - <http://youtu.be/W2kXRb2xuTQ>
- Part II - <http://youtu.be/VySBx2emxhI>
- Part III - <http://youtu.be/0TG97jjVTUM>

What made these videos fun and successful? A few key elements:

- Keeping each one short and playful, using a consistent theme throughout the campaign.
- Featuring well known staff or parishioners.

- Including an action item in the end requiring response.
- Using each video to build excitement for the next installment.

## 2. Fundraising can build community within a parish

Although Good Shepherd Episcopal Church in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin has a small congregation, they have a big impact in the community. Centered on the belief that as people of faith, we deepen our relationship with God through both Word and deed, the congregation enjoys strong partnerships with area organizations. Be it direct service, building relationships, or fundraising, the parishioners of Good Shepherd are helping to make a positive difference in Sun Prairie. <http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/community-engagement-a-little-church-that-could/>

Earlier this year Good Shepherd turned some of its attention inward, planning for, then launching a debt retirement capital campaign. The parish has already shown marked success in meeting its early fundraising goals and is demonstrating how fundraising can have intangible benefits.

Parishioner Jerry Simono shares, "When I think about how fund-

raising has impacted our church community, I think of three things:

- What started slowly has gradually brought a stronger and stronger commitment by more and more people to work together to do what they can to raise the money.
- Many people who have remained silent in the past are now becoming engaged in sharing talents that they never expressed before. These are talents that will provide leadership for GSEC in the future.
- Our success to this point has made doubters into believers. And believers bring an even greater commitment to Good Shepherd. We are now a more enthusiastic church family than ever before."

## 3. Fundraising doesn't steal resources from other areas

When thinking about fundraising, there may be the assumption that a capital campaign will negatively impact annual giving. Some believe a donor's willingness to give is capped at a fixed capacity and is immovable. Anna Doherty, priest in charge, St. Aidan's, Hartford, Wisconsin describes the concern expressed

by members of her congregation:

"Our parish can barely raise enough money to meet our operating expenses, how could we raise more for a capital campaign?"

Through a program of increased education about stewardship, and conversations centered around the congregation's mission and impact in the community, St. Aidan's capital campaign leadership team discovers that donors' willingness to give or to prioritize their giving increases. As the campaign progressed, Anna was pleased to report, "Folks at St. Aidan's were surprised--pleasantly so--to discover that capital campaign fundraising can actually increase annual stewardship giving!"

Here's a visualization exercise I do with people to help change their perception about fixed capacity: I like pie. To help people overcome their perception that giving capacity is fixed, I invite them to picture a pie as representing donors' dollars. And then I ask them to visualize cutting the pie into slices to represent their budget. Now here's the twist: Once they have the picture of a pie in their mind, I invite them to visualize a bigger pie, rather than cutting the smaller pie differently.

#### 4. Fundraising often begins with listening to our neighbors

Christ Episcopal Church was engaged in a listening process to determine and articulate how capital improvements may help the parish live more fully into their mission. As part of the process, visitors to the church's website are invited to take a survey that asks both open ended and choice questions including:

- How can a church located in the center of downtown contribute to the health of the community?
- Christ Episcopal Church is considering renovation and expansion of the existing parish hall. Here are some potential uses. Please choose those that you think would be important to the community.
- What advice do you have for us as we continue our planning?

"What surprised me, that now makes sense to me on this end, was the stress/emphasis put on reaching out to the local Red Wing community to get their input," shared Michael Way, rector, Christ Episcopal Church, Red Wing, Minnesota.

After listening to the neighbors and community partners, the parish created a cohesive plan to improve

the parish's space making it available for the local community to use it for meetings, events, and annual functions.

Currently in the midst of the feasibility study, Christ Church will look to engage in further conversations during solicitation. Knowing that the plans reflect the local community's input gives the parish confidence in its planning.

#### 5. Fundraising, when ministry, can transform lives

Often people see fundraising as a means to an end. They believe that if a certain amount of money can be raised, then the parish can start doing ministry.

Yet, fundraising is a process of inviting others to give their resources to the Kingdom of God. It has the power, as any other ministry, to transform lives. Including the lives of those asking others to join in giving.

Shirley Foster, parishioner, Good Shepherd Episcopal Church, Sun Prairie, Wisconsin, shares,

"I can see now looking back where God cleverly wove all this around and in me the last 10 months. I feel...different. I leave these folks and feel on top of the world! I was not comfortable with asking folks for money, and I purposely did not

memorize or even try to remember what people had said they were thinking of giving. I try to keep this as private as possible and we just talk of how God has blessed our lives, and the goals that we built the capital campaign around. Every single time I talk, there are tears.

"God has given me great stories to tell, to share, and to listen of other things He has done for others, which also is deepening MY faith, and let me just say... never in my wildest dreams did I ever consider that this capital campaign would touch me this deeply and make my life even richer than ever."

When thinking about the top lessons I've learned from others, the common thread is that fundraising is so much more than the accomplishment of a monetary goal. The lessons of community, transformation, and relationships underscore this profoundly.

What lessons have you learned along the way? Have you been surprised along the way? What would you pass on to others?

**Erin Weber-Johnson** joined the Episcopal Church Foundation as a capital campaign consultant in 2009. In addition to capital campaign consulting, Erin has facilitated diocesan and vestry retreats on annual stewardship and the

*development of a spiritual ethos for giving. She is also a grants officer at Trinity Wall Street in New York City. She has a master's degree in public administration from NYU.*

*Erin and her husband, Jered, previously served as missionaries of the Episcopal Church, based in Taiwan and now live in St. Paul, MN where Jered is rector of St. John the Evangelist. Erin and Jered have two sons, Jude and Simon-Henri, and are proud to call Minnesota home.*

### Try This

In her blog post "Creating a Culture of Giving," TENS board member and priest Angela Emerson invites congregational leaders to craft a financial stewardship statement reflecting the ways they experience God in the midst of financial decision making. Learn more here. <http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/creating-dioa-culture-of-giving/>

### Resources

- Christ Episcopal Church, Red Wing, Minnesota <http://www.christchurchredwing.com>
- Christ Episcopal Church, Red Wing, Minnesota, building project plans <http://www.christchurchredwing.com/news/building-project.html>
- Christ Episcopal Church Purpose, Vision, and Strategy Document <http://christchurchvt.org/about-us/vestry-members/>
- Christ Episcopal Church, Red Wing, Minnesota, building plan survey <https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/FDCQDYM>
- "Community Engagement: A Little Church that Could" by Erin Weber-Johnson, ECF Vital Practices' blog post June 10, 2014 <http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/community-engagement-a-little-church-that-could/>
- "Creating a Culture of Giving" by Angela Emerson, ECF Vital Practices' January 27, 2012 blog post <http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/creating-a-culture-of-giving/>
- Generations Walking the Way webinar <http://www.ecfvp.org/webinars/generations-walking-the-way/>
- Good Shepherd Episcopal Church, Sun Prairie, Wisconsin <http://www.gsechurch.com>
- How to Prepare for a Capital Campaign <http://www.ecfvp.org/tools/how-to-prepare-for-a-capital-campaign/>

- "Lessons from an Annual Giving Campaign" by David Posterero, ECF Vital Practices' Vestry Papers, September 2010 <http://www.ecfvp.org/vestry-papers/pledging/lessons-from-an-annual-giving-campaign/>

- "Raising Generous Givers" by Greg Syler, ECF Vital Practices' September 24, 2014 blog post <http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/raising-generous-givers/>

- Church Feasibility Study, St. Aidan's Episcopal, Hartford, Wisconsin <http://www.staidans-hartford.org/2014-feasibility-study/>

- St. James Cathedral Special Appeal <http://www.saintjames-cathedral.org/members/stewardship-specialappeal/>

# Experiment: Year Round Stewardship

BY KEN HOWARD

***“Insanity is doing the same thing over and over, and expecting different results.”***

Albert Einstein

Like many – if not most – Episcopal parishes, my congregation has never been completely satisfied with our stewardship program. Despite frequent, intentional experimentation with a variety of approaches since our founding in 1995, we have continued to feel a “disconnect” between the way we describe stewardship and the way we facilitate decisions about giving.

We talk about stewardship as a lifelong, year-round *process* of thoughtful and prayerful individual and congregational discernment, based on our responsibility to God and our responsibility to each other (our neighbor in the context of the congregation). Yet in practice our programmatic efforts to provide stewardship education and facilitate stewardship discernment and decisions have been limited almost entirely to a single, intensive *campaign* conducted in the fall of each year. Despite earnest desires and repeated plans, a truly year-round steward program never seemed to materialize.

Reflecting on this conundrum, we realized that no matter how we adjusted the content, process, timing, or title of this annual giving campaign (we no longer call it a pledge drive), this campaign-centered approach to stewardship has consistently produced effects inconsistent with our intentions. It reduced the congregation’s sense of responsibility and sense of stewardship as a way of life by reducing their opportunities to discuss, discern, and decide about stewardship practice. It increased the anxiety of parish leadership about the financial health of the congregation by reducing their opportunities to dialogue with the congregation regarding the congregation’s finances (and this anxiety bleeds back out into the congregation). It made our best efforts to make stewardship “not all about money” seem like make believe, and our most heartfelt theological explanations of stewardship sound like a cover story for getting into peoples’ wallets. And by the time the *campaign* was “put to bed” each year, there remained neither the energy nor the appetite for building a year-round *program* on top of it.

Finally, after asking “Why?” enough

times, we came to see the “elephant in the room.” The problem was the campaign-based stewardship model itself: as long as the annual giving campaign lived, a truly year-round stewardship program would not be born. So we decided it was time to stop doing what wasn’t working. Taking a decision that was simultaneously exciting and scary, our vestry, with the support of our finance committee, voted to kill our annual giving campaign.

***“And now for something completely different.”***

Monty Python

What we are now developing is a straightforward and transparent year-round system of ministry planning, budget development, member incorporation, stewardship education, and opportunities for giving discernment/decision organized around four quarterly town hall style meetings, or as we have come to call it “town hall quarterly.” Using a rapid prototyping approach to design and test our emerging approach, we have completed two developmental iterations of the town hall quarterly process and are about to begin our third. To use the language of

software development, the first iteration, completed in early spring, was our “private beta release,” in which we walked a select group of leaders through the process in order to ascertain how well the process we had designed would achieve our objectives and to identify and fix any major “bugs.” The second iteration, completed in early summer, was our “public beta release,” in which we guided all those involved in planning or delivering our ministries through completing a full quarterly cycle of the process in order to refine it further. Our third iteration of the process, which will culminate at our annual parish meeting this fall, is our first “public release,” in which the entire congregation will be involved in completing a full cycle of the process in roughly its final form.

## How Does the Town Hall Quarterly Process Work?

### *Quarterly Town Hall Meeting*

The most visible and public part of the town hall quarterly process is the town hall meetings. Held in the first month of each quarter, they take place during the half-hour break between our primary Sunday worship service and our quarterly potluck brunch.

The total meeting is 25 minutes long: 15 minutes of presentations, followed by 10 minutes of town-hall Q&A, leaving 5 minutes of “wiggle room.”

The agenda looks like this:

- 11:00 am – Scripture & Prayer (rector). Carefully selected and brief, with a stewardship focus.
- 11:01 am – Vision & Priorities Report (senior warden). A brief and straightforward vision and priorities report on behalf of the Vestry, outlining overarching priorities for the next quarter (and beyond), why we think they are important, and what they would cost.
- 11:03 am – Five 2-Minute Ministry Reports (ministry planning team leaders). Brief reports from each of our five ministry planning teams on lessons learned from the previous quarter, opportunities in future quarters, and plans for the current quarter.
- 11:13 am – Finance and Budget Report (finance committee). A brief and straightforward financial report outlining our present financial position and what additional resources will be necessary to

achieve our plans in upcoming quarters.

- 11:15 am – Town Hall Discussion (congregation). A question and answer period intended to help the congregation understand the personal implications of the previously presented reports. During the discussion, handouts covering the above items and including a quarterly giving estimate form are disseminated to those present (the same handouts are also sent via email to all members later the same day).
- 11:25 am – Closing Prayer, Dismissal, and Instructions (rector). A brief closing prayer and dismissal, with instructions to participants to give prayerful consideration to what they have heard and to submit an updated giving estimate form by the following Sunday, either in the offering plate or online.

### ***Connected by a Quarterly Ministry Planning & Implementation Process***

The quarterly town hall meetings serve as milestone markers between which the work of planning and implementing ministry (and programs) takes place.

**Ministry planning teams hold a single planning meeting each quarter.** In a major change from past practice, our ministry planning teams no longer meet monthly. Rather, they limit themselves to a single, formal, in-person ministry planning session every quarter, during which they are required to achieve four objectives:

- (a) review and learn from previous quarters' successes and failures,
- (b) identify future opportunities for ministry,
- (c) plan for the upcoming quarter, and
- (d) provide directions to their various ministry guilds on carrying out their part of the plans.

Upon completion of each quarterly ministry planning meeting, each ministry planning team shares its meetings notes not only with their own ministry guilds, but also with the other ministry planning teams, the finance committee, and the vestry. Between their quarterly ministry planning sessions, ministry planning teams provide guidance and support to their ministry implementation guilds through less time-consuming channels (e.g., email, phone, social media, etc.). The ministry implementation guilds (and clergy) then incorporate the results of the planning process (and the

quarterly town hall discussions) into the content of their various ministries. Thus, practical issues and real-life concerns make their way organically into adult formation programs, sermons, newcomer welcome/member engagement programs, and even into the prayers of the people at worship services.

**Vestry continues to meet monthly but with a more strategic focus.** The vestry tries to function less a group of department heads that "run" the various ministries of the church and more like a body collective charged with discerning, keeping, and communicating the church's vision, mission, and ethical norms, and making sure the church's various ministries have the resources, support, guidance, and encouragement necessary to achieve them.

**Finance committee of the vestry also continues to meet monthly but with a more investment-oriented focus.** Rather than developing a single annual budget, from which the Vestry plans its stewardship and budget management efforts for the whole year, the finance committee now prepares four quarterly budgets for the vestry's approval, each of which has two parts. The first part of the budget covers the immediate upcoming quarter and

is always balanced based on current income from giving estimates and other known sources (e.g., rents, interest income, etc.). The second part covers the three following quarters, and is also balanced but based on the increased investment (through membership growth or increased individual giving) necessary to fund the ministries and programs required to achieve the church's vision and mission.

### **The Payoff: Fewer Meetings, More Effective Ministry, and a Realignment of Responsibility**

We foresee many benefits to this new (and still evolving) approach to stewardship, some of which we are already beginning to realize, some of which will take time to fully realize, and others which we will no doubt serendipitously discover over the long term.

Perhaps the greatest benefit we foresee is a more appropriate realignment of responsibility. The congregation will have greater mutual responsibility for discernment about finances and stewardship. The ministry planning teams will have greater and more collaborative responsibility for direction of ministry and the managing of programs. The finance committee will have a more collaborative and investment-oriented responsibility for budgeting and financial

management. And the vestry will have a stronger strategic focus on the vision and mission of the parish.

### At Least That's the Plan

What we are doing here is an experiment after all. By next year at this time we will have had a year's more under our collective belt with this new approach of ours. And we promise to return in the fall of 2015 with a report on what we have learned.

***Ken Howard** is the author of *Paradoxy: Creating Christian Community Beyond Us and Them* (Orleans, MA: Paraclete Press, 2010), the founder and director of *The Paradoxy Center for Incarnational Christianity* at St. Nicholas Church, and the rector of St. Nicholas Episcopal Church in Germantown, Maryland. St. Nicholas Church was the first successful church plant in its diocese in nearly forty years. Growing steadily since its start in 1995, it is in the top third of diocesan congregations in size and the top 5% in per capita giving. Ken's blog, *Paradoxical Thoughts* may be found at [PracticingParadoxy.com](http://PracticingParadoxy.com).*

### Try This

In the fall of 2001, St. Nicholas Episcopal Church was in tough

shape. With only \$500 in the checking account, anxiety levels were high, and choices needed to be made. Our first response: Asking ourselves "Why do we exist?"

In the process, we discovered four things:

- If we couldn't answer this question, then it was time for the church to close.
- We weren't afraid of dying.
- We could live with the knowledge that, "We didn't succeed but were faithful"
- We couldn't live with "they were killed by anxiety."

We could answer the question and we are still here today, still asking the same question.

Is your church in an anxious place? Perhaps asking this same question, 'why do we exist' will help clarify next steps for your congregation.

### Resources

- Practicing Paradoxy, Ken Howard's blog <http://practicingparadoxy.com/>

- Resources and planning tools for St. Nicholas' Town Hall Quarterly Process <http://www.ecfvp.org/yourturn/resources-for-an-experiment-practicing-year-round/>

- St. Nicholas Episcopal Church in Germantown, Maryland <http://www.saintnicks.com/wp/>

## Stone Soup

BY KAREN HUNTER

There is an old story everyone knows. It is about a “poor” traveler who comes to town and with great flourish begins to boil a pot of water, to which he ceremoniously adds a stone. Before long, of course, curiosity conquers and residents gather around to inquire. “Welcome,” cries the traveler, “Stone soup is so much better with friends!” Intrigued, the people listen to him describe the soup he is making and before you know it, everyone has brought something to contribute. In the end the neighborhood sits down together, with bread from the baker and wine from the vintner, to the most amazing feast.

This story makes us laugh. Silly people, tricked into making soup for a beggar! But were they? Did the traveler really contribute nothing or was he the catalyst, the Spirit bearer who made new life possible? Hard to imagine that a man with only a pot and a stone could produce a banquet, but he did. So what wisdom is here for the Church? Could it be that our declining resources are not only a challenge, but also a gift? This may be hard to imagine when you are struggling to pay bills and make

ends meet, but let me tell you another story.

Several years ago, Grace Church, Nampa, Idaho started “Adventure Club,” a hiking group for kids during the summer. Numbers grew, especially when kids from La Capilla de la Gracia, our Latino mission, joined in. We needed a bus.

“No problem,” said one of the youth leaders. Her sister-in-law was on the board of a large foundation, the Maybelle Clark Macdonald Fund. The youth leader spoke with sister-in-law to learn more about the types of projects they funded. Although Grace and la Gracia weren’t a perfect match for fund’s stated criteria, we were encouraged to write a grant proposal.

Several months later we were the proud owners of a “new” (used) bus with a wheelchair lift. Having the bus made it possible to expand Adventure Club and to transport kids the thirteen miles from La Gracia to Grace Church for a combined youth group. We took a picture, expressed our profound thanks to the foundation, and thought that was the end.

The following summer, a representative from the foundation was in town visiting and stopped at the church. She spent nearly an hour discussing the mission and ministries of Grace. “So why,” she said, “haven’t you asked for anything more? There’s so much we can do to help. How about technology? I love technology.”

She was so enthusiastic! It was crazy and confusing. I wanted to say, “But we don’t meet your foundation’s criteria and we already have a computer!” It isn’t often, however that someone comes along and tells you what amazing work your church is doing. So, even though I thought the last thing we needed was “technology,” I let the idea roll around in my head.

I remembered the race for the iPad a volunteer had brought to our afterschool program at La Gracia. The students loved using it. Well, maybe, I thought. Maybe tablets for the afterschool program couldn’t hurt. Very few of our students had access to more than phones, so we put together an after school tutoring program built around using tablets to help students meet their academic goals

and wrote the grant. The program was funded.

It was amazing. Our program grew as students earned points toward getting their own Surface or Nabi tablet. We developed relationships with student's teachers and parents. Using the tablets meant that homework got done more quickly, students were on-task, and a stronger and stronger sense of community developed. When summer came, much to the surprise of parents, we explained that we trusted them and their children to take the tablets home. This trust and relationship made it possible for us to send seven students to a two-week science camp when the last minute opportunity came. The "technology" that I didn't think we needed transformed our program.

And it has begun to transform the way we think about mission and resources here at Grace. We know we need to start with a vision and to articulate that vision. We know we need to take action with the resources we have. But like the traveler, we are learning that there is a gift in sharing that vision. When the vision of Grace/La Gracia Church in Nampa, Idaho encountered the vision of the Maybelle Clark Macdonald Fund of Washington state, a spark was struck and the Spirit breathed it into new life. We are both more than we were. As we live more

deeply into this new understanding of shared vision and mission, unexpected gifts abound. We understand that we are called to share our resources, our vision, and our need. The empty seats at our table have become invitations to participation rather than symbols of decline.

So how does it work? First we acknowledge that God has put us here for God's good purpose. We give thanks for God's wisdom and goodness. Then we find a place where the Good News needs proclaiming. We articulate a vision for that mission as best we can and assess the resources we have. It is supper time. No one seems inclined to share. Well, let's put the water to boil and invoke the Spirit. What resources do we need? Make a public list of all that is needed. As amazing as this soup is, a few carrots would make it even better! Some resources will come to you. Others you will need to pursue. For Grace, grant writing has been an excellent source. Get on the Internet. Google what you are looking for such as "grants for children's programs" or "grants for art installations". You are searching for foundations with a vision that intersects with your vision. Read the criteria carefully. You want the best match you can find, but be open to possibilities. And if you know someone who knows someone, knock on that door!

Remember, you are inviting someone to the banquet. Be open to the Spirit. You are the vision carrier, but that vision is never complete. Be open to changes that come with collaboration. And finally, include everyone in the celebration. All foundations ask for final reports. This is a document of celebration. Be thorough and respectful when completing these documents. These people have a seat at your table. They are honored guests and fellow travelers.

**Karen Hunter** has been a priest in Idaho since her ordination in 1998. She served both the Episcopal and Presbyterian churches in the small mountain community of Salmon, Idaho before coming to Nampa and Grace Church in 2007. She was also the part time Canon for Education and Formation and the editor of the diocesan newsletter several years. She is a native of Montana where she began her professional ministry as a campus chaplain at the University of Montana in Missoula. She served as a lay vicar at St. Mark's, Anaconda, Montana and Church of the Redeemer before her ordination. She and her husband Randy have two sons and five grandchildren.

### Try This

In the story of the Stone Soup, the hero has a vision – a delicious meal. Then he explores his assets.

Then he explores his assets. He has a soup pot, materials to make a fire, water, and a stone. He takes what he has and begins. Then he shares the vision and the specific needs with others. For congregational leaders, we invite you to follow these five steps:

1. Vision
2. Assess resources
3. Take some forward action
4. Share vision and needs (You too could be part of this great work!)
5. Allow the vision to grow as the community around it grows. Celebrate current abundance!

Researching\_Grants.pdf

- Stone Soup visioning resource  
[http://www.ecfvp.org/files/uploads/Stone\\_Soup\\_resource.pdf](http://www.ecfvp.org/files/uploads/Stone_Soup_resource.pdf)
- Tutoring program at La Capilla  
<http://gracenampa.episcopalidaho.org/La%20Capilla/tutoring.html>

## Resources

- Adventure Club <http://gracenampa.episcopalidaho.org/Children%20&%20Youth/adventure-club.html>
- Grace Episcopal and La Capilla de la Gracia's Adventure Club Recognized by Diocese (Story begins on page 6)  
[http://s3.amazonaws.com/dfc\\_attachments/public/documents/3173542/Idaho\\_Episcopalian\\_Winter\\_2013FINAL.pdf](http://s3.amazonaws.com/dfc_attachments/public/documents/3173542/Idaho_Episcopalian_Winter_2013FINAL.pdf)
- Researching grants <http://www.ecfvp.org/files/uploads/>

# Sopa de Piedra

POR KAREN HUNTER

Hay un viejo cuento que todo el mundo conoce. Es sobre un viajero “pobre” que llega a un pueblo y con mucho floreo empieza a hervir una olla de agua a la que ceremoniosamente añade una piedra. Poco después, por supuesto, la curiosidad vence y los habitantes del lugar se acercan para preguntar. “Bienvenidos”, dice el viajero, “¡la sopa de piedra es mucho más sabrosa con amigos!”. Intrigada, la gente lo escucha describir la sopa que está haciendo y al poco tiempo todos empiezan a aportar cosas. Finalmente la gente del barrio se sienta junta, con pan del panadero y vino del bodeguero, para comparar un verdadero banquete.

Este cuento nos hace reír. Gente tonta, engatusada para hacerle sopa a un mendigo. Pero, ¿realmente la engatusaron? ¿Realmente el viajero no aportó nada o fue el catalizador, el portador del Espíritu que posibilitó una nueva vida? Es difícil imaginar que un hombre con sólo una olla y una piedra hubiera podido producir un banquete, pero lo hizo. Entonces, ¿qué sabiduría hay en ello para la Iglesia? ¿Podría ser que nuestros recursos en disminución además de ser un reto son un don? Eso puede ser difícil

de imaginar si uno está luchando por pagar las cuentas y llegar a fin de mes, pero permítanme contarles otro cuento.

Hace varios años, Grace Church, Nampa, Idaho inició el “Adventure Club”, un grupo de senderismo para niños durante el verano. Los números aumentaron, especialmente cuando los niños de La Capilla de la Gracia, nuestra misión latina, se unieron. Necesitábamos un autobús.

“No hay problema”, dijo una de los líderes de jóvenes. Su cuñada estaba en la junta directiva de una gran fundación, el Fondo Maybelle Clark Macdonald. La líder de jóvenes habló con su cuñada para obtener más información sobre los tipos de proyectos que financiaban. Si bien Grace y la Capilla de la Gracia no coincidían exactamente con los criterios de financiamiento de la fundación, los estimularon a que redactaran una propuesta de subsidio.

Varios meses después eran los orgullosos propietarios de un “nuevo” autobús (usado) con un elevador para sillas de ruedas. Tener el autobús les permitió

expandir el Adventure Club y transportar a los niños las trece millas desde La Gracia hasta Grace Church para contar con un grupo de jóvenes combinado. Sacamos una foto, expresamos nuestro profundo agradecimiento y pensamos que eso era todo.

El verano siguiente, una representante de la fundación estaba de visita en la localidad y paró en la iglesia. Pasó casi una hora hablando sobre la misión y los ministerios de Grace. “Entonces, ¿por qué no pidieron nada más?”, dijo. “Hay tantas cosas que puedo hacer para ayudar. ¿Qué les parece tecnología? Me encanta la tecnología”.

¡Estaba tan entusiasmada. Era raro y confuso. Yo tenía ganas de decirle, “¡Pero no cuadramos con los criterios de su fundación y ya tenemos una computadora!”. No es a menudo, sin embargo, que alguien venga y le hable a uno sobre el increíble trabajo que está haciendo su iglesia. Entonces, incluso si pensé que lo último que necesitábamos era “tecnología”, dejé que la idea me siguiera dando vueltas en la cabeza.

Recordé el entusiasmo que generó

un iPad que había traído un voluntario a nuestro programa La Gracia para después del horario escolar. A los estudiantes les encantaba usarlo. Bueno, a lo mejor, pensé. A lo mejor tabletas para ese programa podrían ser útiles. Muy pocos de nuestros estudiantes tenían acceso a más que teléfonos, así que diseñamos un programa de enseñanza individual para después del horario escolar en el que se empleaban tabletas para ayudar a los estudiantes a alcanzar sus objetivos académicos. Después redacté el pedido de subsidio. El programa se financió.

Fue increíble. Nuestro programa creció a medida que los estudiantes fueron ganando puntos para obtener sus propias tabletas Surface o Nabi. Forjamos relaciones con los maestros y los padres de los estudiantes. Usar las tabletas significó que la tarea para el hogar se hacía más rápidamente y que los estudiantes estaban a la par. El sentido de comunidad que surgió fue cada vez más fuerte. Cuando llegó el verano, para gran sorpresa de los padres, explicamos que confiábamos suficientemente en ellos y en los niños como para permitirles que se llevaran las tabletas a la casa. Esta confianza y relación nos permitió enviar a siete estudiantes a un campamento de ciencias de dos

semanas cuando surgió una oportunidad a último minuto. La “tecnología” que pensé que no necesitábamos transformó nuestro programa.

Y todo ha empezado a transformar la manera en que pensamos en nuestra misión y recursos aquí en Grace. Sabemos que tenemos que empezar con una visión y expresar esa visión. Sabemos que tenemos que tomar acción con los recursos que tenemos. Pero al igual que el viajero, estamos aprendiendo que hay un don en compartir esa visión. Cuando la visión de Grace/La Gracia Church en Nampa, Idaho, encontró la visión del Fondo Maybelle Clark Macdonald del Estado de Washington, se encendió una chispa y el Espíritu le dio un soplo de nueva vida. Ambos somos más que lo que éramos. A medida que vivimos más profundamente en esta nueva comprensión de visión y misión compartidas, abundan los dones inesperados. Entendemos que estamos llamados a compartir nuestros recursos, nuestra visión y nuestra necesidad. Las sillas vacías en nuestra mesa se han convertido en invitaciones para participar, en lugar de símbolos de decadencia.

Entonces, ¿cómo funciona? Primero acepte que Dios nos puso ahí para un buen propósito

de Dios. Agradecemos a Dios por su sabiduría y bondad. Después encontramos un lugar en el que hace falta proclamar las Buenas Nuevas. Expresamos esa visión para esa misión de la mejor manera que podemos y evaluamos los recursos que tenemos. Es hora de la cena. Nadie parece estar dispuesto a compartir. Bueno, pongamos agua a hervir e invoquemos al Espíritu. ¿Qué recursos necesitamos? Haga una lista pública de lo que hace falta. ¡Con lo buena que es esta sopa, algunas zanahorias la mejorarían todavía más! Algunos recursos vendrán a usted. Otros tendrá que buscar. Para Grace, redactar subsidios ha sido una gran fuente. Entre en Internet. Busque en Google lo que esté buscando, como “subsidios para programas de niños” o “subsidios para instalaciones de arte”. Lo que está buscando son fundaciones con una visión que se cruce con su visión. Lea los criterios detenidamente, Uno busca objetivos comunes, pero también debe estar abierto a posibilidades. ¡Y si conoce a alguien que conoce a alguien, toque esa puerta!

Recuerde que está invitando a alguien al banquete. Ábrase al Espíritu. Usted es el que porta la visión, pero esa visión nunca está completa. Esté receptivo a los cambios que vienen con la colaboración. Y finalmente,

incluya a todos en la celebración. Todas las fundaciones piden informes finales. Ese es un documento de celebración. Sea detallado y respetuoso al completar esos documentos. Esta gente tiene una silla en su mesa. Son huéspedes de honor y compañeros de viaje.

**Karen Hunter** ha sido sacerdote en Idaho desde su ordenación, en 1998. Sirvió en iglesias episcopal y presbiteriana en la pequeña localidad montañosa de Salmon, Idaho, antes de ir a Nampa y Grace Church en 2007. También fue canónica a tiempo parcial de Educación y Formación y jefa de redacción del boletín diocesano por varios años. Es oriunda de Montana, donde inició su ministerio profesional como capellana de la Universidad de Montana en Missoula. Fue párroca lega en St. Mark's, Anaconda, Montana y en Church of the Redeemer antes de su ordenación. Ella y su esposo Randy tienen dos hijos y cinco nietos.

### Pruebe Esto

En el cuento de la Sopa de piedra, el héroe tiene una visión: una comida deliciosa. Después explora lo que tiene. Tiene una olla, materiales para encender un fogón, agua, una piedra. Toma lo que tiene y empieza. Después compare la visión y las necesidades específicas con otros. Invitamos a los líderes de feligresías a que sigan

los siguientes cinco pasos:

1. Visión
2. Evaluar recursos
3. Tomar alguna acción
4. Compartir visión y necesidades (¡Ustedes también pueden ser parte de esta gran labor!)
5. Permitir que la visión crezca a medida que la comunidad que la rodee crezca. ¡Celebre la abundancia que tiene ahora!

### Recursos

- Adventure Club <http://gracenampa.episcopalidaho.org/Children%20&%20Youth/adventure-club.html>
- Grace Episcopal and La Capilla de la Gracia's Adventure Club Recognized by Diocese (Story begins on page 6) [http://s3.amazonaws.com/dfc\\_attachments/public/documents/3173542/Idaho\\_Episcopalian\\_Winter\\_2013FINAL.pdf](http://s3.amazonaws.com/dfc_attachments/public/documents/3173542/Idaho_Episcopalian_Winter_2013FINAL.pdf)
- Investigación de subsidios [http://www.ecfvp.org/files/uploads/Researching\\_Grants.pdf](http://www.ecfvp.org/files/uploads/Researching_Grants.pdf)

■ Recurso de visión de Sopa de piedra [http://www.ecfvp.org/files/uploads/Stone\\_Soup\\_resource.pdf](http://www.ecfvp.org/files/uploads/Stone_Soup_resource.pdf)

■ Programa de enseñanza individual en La Capilla <http://gracenampa.episcopalidaho.org/La%20Capilla/tutoring.html>

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