

VESTRY PAPERS

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empowering congregations

To inspire, affirm and inform Episcopal leaders in their work

Lessons from an annual giving campaign

by David Posteraro

Trinity Episcopal Cathedral in Cleveland is home to a diverse congregation of more than 850 people. Some of us are cradle Episcopalians familiar with an annual pledge; others are new to the Episcopal Church and have never pledged.

As with all churches, 2009 was challenging for Trinity. Our endowment was down. Many of our working members had lost their jobs and our retired members saw losses in their pensions and investments. Our city had lost significant population and foreclosures were too common. The unemployment rate was over 9 percent and climbing. The vestry had made painful choices to reduce staff and programs. For a large part of the year our dean, Tracey Lind, was the only clergy person on staff.

While annual giving had increased every year for the last ten years, the prospects for the 2010 campaign looked bleak. In the past, our annual stewardship campaign had been limited to a written appeal and a sermon on Stewardship Sunday. In the economic climate

of fall 2009, our minimalist approach was not going to work.

We were blessed to have Bailey Herrington, a retired Lutheran minister and member of the congregation, to head our campaign. Perhaps Bailey's experience as a preacher informed his decision that a successful campaign had to be congregation-led and congregation-involved. Bailey made sure that the ministry of the laity was a central theme of the campaign, as indicated in the opening of the letter sent to all members at the outset of the campaign:

Each Sunday in worship, the people of Trinity Cathedral affirm our faith by reciting five vows from the Baptismal Covenant of the Episcopal Church's Book of Common Prayer:

- *Will you continue in the apostle's teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers?*
- *Will you persevere in resisting evil, and, whenever you fall into sin, repent and return to the Lord?*

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This Issue:
Pledging and stewardship

Annual giving campaigns. Stewardship. Pledging. Sometimes just the sound of the words is enough to make otherwise kind-hearted vestry members run for the hills. But have no fear. Others have trod that rocky path and done well. In this issue, explore how several individuals have courageously addressed the perennial issue of raising money to help their churches flourish.

Inside:
*Don't inspire guilt.
Deliver hope.*



NICK WOLF



What is the difference between stewardship and annual giving? The former underlies being good stewards of all we have been given and living our lives in response to God's generosity, and the latter is simple: raising money annually for the work of the church.

Annual giving campaign

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- *Will you proclaim by word and example the Good News of God in Christ?*
- *Will you seek and serve Christ in all persons, loving your neighbor as yourself?*
- *Will you strive for justice and peace among all people, and respect the dignity of every human being?*

To each question, we respond: I will, with God's help.

When we recite our baptismal vows, we are renewed in and reminded of God's call in our lives and the life of Trinity Cathedral. We are all

the dean, no matter how persuasive, would not be enough. Understanding that "repetition is the mother of donation," Bailey and the stewardship committee assembled members of the congregation from all walks of life – young, old, employed and unemployed – to speak at all services on successive Sundays before the actual Stewardship Sunday. They told personal stories of what Trinity and stewardship meant to each of them and each spoke in a different way to reach different members.

In the economic climate of fall 2009, our minimalist approach was not going to work.



ministers of God's word by virtue of our baptism, and we are all called by God to proclaim, in word and action, God's justice, love and mercy for all creation.

Bailey also believed that we had to repeat our annual giving message often and that a single Stewardship Sunday message from

We also adopted a "Don't Ask; Tell" philosophy. Everyone involved in the campaign was educated about our ministries and our message was focused on ministry, not money. We explained where pledge dollars went and how every member's financial

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A letter from the Editor

Dear Readers,

Elsewhere in this issue, we explore the importance of saying thank you to donors when they pledge. It is my turn to thank you now.

After nine years editing *Vestry Papers* and twenty-two years with the Episcopal Church Foundation, I am moving on to new ministries in print and parish life. I've started a new job as interim rector of Trinity Church in Excelsior, Minnesota and have several books coming out: *The Scarlet Cord: Conversations with God's Chosen Women* (published by O Books of London; see www.scarletcordbook.com); a book of Lenten Meditations, and another on women's meditations, scheduled for publication by Forward Movement in 2011.

Through fifty issues of *Vestry Papers*, we have explored all sorts of topics: vestry responsibilities, welcoming newcomers, understanding budgets, parish communications and more. *Vestry Papers* is the only newsletter to win the general excellence award twice for high standards in journalism from the Episcopal Communicators and has some thirty other awards as well. You have made that possible by sharing in this ministry with other vestries, telling your stories, and listening to theirs.

I am deeply grateful for your ministries and your support of this publication, and to the Episcopal Church Foundation for making this great journey possible. I am also grateful to my husband, the Rev. Leonard Freeman, whose writing appeared in these pages and whose inspiration is always a part of my work.

Thank you, and see you around the Vineyard.

The Rev. Lindsay Hardin Freeman



Don't inspire guilt, deliver hope

by Emilia Allen

From August 2009 to July 2010 I was a part of the Relational Evangelism Pilot Project, a program of the Diocese of Massachusetts. As part of my work I ran an economic justice campaign, the Hope in Action Campaign, at Emmanuel Church in downtown Boston.

Emmanuel is a small congregation of around 100-150 mostly middle-class, skeptical and arts-loving "over-'40s." Our campaign resulted in eighty individuals from the church committing time or money to support the Boston Public Quartet (BPQ), a small non-profit music program serving

We were diverse, but our common commitment made us a team.

Second: get and stay in touch with why you're doing what you're doing. Asking people for things is hard, so you wouldn't be doing it if it wasn't important. Remind yourselves repeatedly of the deeper meaning behind the work. What will it mean to the life of the church, the surrounding community and the work of God to raise the money you want to raise? The moment our team really became a team instead of a gaggle of well-intentioned but confused



Richard Barbalece

Emilia Allen (left) with Hope In Action campaign team members.

elementary school children in a Boston public school that provides no other arts education or exposure of any kind.

Here are the things that distinguished our campaign from all the other guilt-inspiring, despair-delivering, email asks that you and I see in our inboxes every day.

First: if you want to get something done, form a team of diverse and committed individuals, and work together like a team. Trust one another, share responsibility, hold one another to your commitments. Our group was a motley crew of young adults: a choir member, a sexton, Boston Public Quartet's founder-director, an atheist graduate student with a commitment to economic justice and parishioners committed to young adult leadership.

explorers was the moment we decided to set our sights on the incredible need of BPQ students coupled with the incredible beauty of its work. It inspired us and nearly everyone in the parish to make a difference.

Third: develop and utilize real relationships to meet your goal.

Schedule one-to-one meetings. Sit down for coffee and talk with folks. Learn about their passions, and share with them why you're passionate about and committed to the work you're doing with your team. If this is something they care about too, your passion will be infectious. Human connection is a very deep thing. It can't be faked or replicated, and there is no shortcut to creating that connection. Finding a mutual concern can

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Say thank you to those who pledge. Also helpful are regular statements as to pledges paid and a quarterly update in parish newsletters as to where money is being spent.

For more information on stewardship, visit The Episcopal Network for Stewardship (TENS) at www.tens.org



Consider presenting a narrative budget. Take each staff person and allocate the percentages of their time spent on: worship, pastoral care, outreach, education, administration, etc. Then allocate their total compensations by mission category. Do the same with the building's uses and costs. You get a very different view of what your money is accomplishing.

Deliver hope

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create a genuine bond, loyalty and a sense of shared purpose. And doing this work in a parish paves the way for deeper community development.

Fourth: set concrete, ambitious and realizable goals. Doing so will help you measure your progress and hold yourselves accountable for doing the work well enough that it produces results. It will also be inspiring to the people you're hoping to get to pledge. This can be uncomfortable, and our team never really took on the challenge

Sixth: Celebrate! Just as Easter brings light after the trials of Lent, celebration is an important part of any campaign. It allows your team and your community to acknowledge and honor your accomplishments as a collective and it brings you together as a group of people committed to doing important, challenging work to reach a cherished goal.

Campaigns are challenging by their nature. They are in many ways at odds with the way we live our lives, and they are intended to be.



Nick Wolf

The Rev. Alejandro Montes, Iglesia Episcopal San Mateo in Houston, regularly preaches about stewardship and tithing (see article at right).

of creating and holding ourselves to concrete goals because we didn't want to have to say no to anyone or to ask anyone for more, but it hurt our final result. When people in the parish asked us, "How's it going?" we couldn't say, "We're 'x' percent of the way there." When supporters asked us, "How much do you need?" we were never able to say, "We need 'x' more dollars by 'x' date." Not having those goals clear suggested that we weren't committed to achieving anything in particular, even while we were trying to maintain the impression, "Whatever you can give, we'll accept."

Fifth: set a discrete timeline. A campaign is an exhausting thing. Setting a beginning and ending date for the campaign creates holy time for doing the work. It creates urgency in your parish and gives the team the promise of respite once the campaign is over.

They are holy times: time to struggle and grow as individuals and communities; to ask deep, difficult questions and to live in close contact with the answers; to develop public rather than private relationships; to cherish commitment; to measure goals; to celebrate; to stretch ourselves in the name of God's work. What better place to take on this challenging work than in our faith communities?

Emilia Allen was the 2009-2010 Relational Evangelist at Emmanuel Church in Boston, working with a team of young adults to run an economic justice campaign, which supported the music education efforts of the Boston Public Quartet in Mattapan, a neighborhood of Boston. Emilia is also active in Boston's thriving opera and theatre communities, working primarily as a stage director.

Editor's note: Any way you slice it, successful stewardship is key to a congregation's success. Here, lessons learned from interviews with Hispanic congregations across the country in 2010 reveal six key practices for stewardship. Instructive for the rest of the church as well, they focus on a hands-on approach to stewardship.

Model high standards of intentional giving

by Laurel Johnston

In the spring of 2010 the Rev. Anthony Guillen, the Hispanic/Latino Ministries Officer and I conducted interviews with ten Latino/Hispanic congregations about their understanding and practice of stewardship. The purpose of the interviews was to discern and disseminate best practices about stewardship from a variety of contexts and settings: from a mission parish on the East Coast whose membership is 40 percent recent immigrants, to the fastest growing congregation in the Diocese of Oklahoma that recently purchased its own building, to a thriving bilingual congregation in Los Angeles.

Do not be afraid to preach and teach about stewardship

Teaching about stewardship begins with the teaching of what it means to be God's entrusted steward, one who cares for and uses all of God's gifts to bring about God's Kingdom. The word *mayordomo* (steward) in Spanish may carry more negative connotations than it does in English, evoking a conniving middle-man who cheats both peasants and owners. Teaching might focus on the biblical understanding of steward from the opening verses of Genesis as one who shares in dominion of the entire created order.

There are three conversions necessary: the conversation of the heart, mind, and the purse.

Martin Luther

We can no longer afford to leave people guessing or in the dark about what it means to be a member of a faith community, especially when it comes to intentional giving.

In striking parallel, we discovered that the most effective stewardship formation occurs in the context of worship, in open and frank discussions about money, faith and giving, and in the ability to help people understand how their giving funds the various ministries of the church, including social outreach. Here are our findings:

Rectors need to be visible givers

Leaders cannot ask others to do what they will not do themselves. During the annual giving campaign it is crucial that rectors and vicars share their own story about giving – both the joys and the struggles. Leaders can help people understand their giving as a spiritual discipline that draws one into deeper relationship with God. Let the congregation see the clergy put their pledge card and weekly envelope in the offertory plate. The congregation must see giving modeled by clergy, vestries and bishop's committees. Do not be afraid to set high standards. People will grow into responding to high standards especially if you show them how.

Exploring opportunities to teach and preach about the *limosna* (spontaneous and generous alms-giving) verses a *promesa* (a pledge) is an effective way to teach about intentional and proportional giving. The most effective stewardship formation comes from the pulpit and from Bible studies.

Lay testimonials

To nurture a culture of gratitude and generosity, invite people to give testimonials of why they pledge to the church each week of the annual giving campaign as well as on a quarterly basis throughout the year. In lieu of the Epistle reading, invite lay witnesses to give a "contemporary epistle" of their giving story. Encourage and coach them to share how they see the generosity of God at work in their lives and how they see the generosity of the congregation at work in the community.

Pledge cards and envelopes year-round

Don't wait until the annual giving campaign to ask for pledges. Include pledge cards

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Share with God's people who are in need. Practice hospitality.

Romans 12:13



Many congregations encourage online banking and electronic pledging through their parish website. (Trinity Cathedral in Ohio uses ClickandPledge at clickandpledge.com) David Posteraro says it appeals to members who are accustomed to shopping and banking online. Unlike passing the plate, "You are not at the whim of the weather, vacation or too much partying on Saturday."

Annual giving campaign

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contribution supported the programs and ministries that are important to our congregation.

On Stewardship Sunday itself, a lay member of the congregation preached. (True humility prevents me from commenting on the brilliance of that sermon).

Because many of our members come from faith traditions that do not share our practice of annual pledging, we sought to explain the importance of budget forecasting and the impact of pledges on programs and ministries.

As our cathedral sits in the middle of an urban university campus and draws from that community of students and faculty, we encouraged online pledging and payments and published podcasts of individual congregation members talking about the importance of our annual campaign.

Lay involvement was also critical after the campaign. Every member who pledged received a personal letter of thanks signed by the dean, the head of the development committee and the chair of the stewardship campaign. People who increased their pledges significantly were personally contacted so we could express our thanks directly.

The 2010 campaign that started with grim prospects ended successfully with just over a six percent increase from 2009. Of our total 2010 pledges, seventeen percent were new pledges. Forty-one percent were increased pledges. Thirty-two percent were the same as 2009 and less than ten percent decreased.

Clearly we succeeded in educating members about the significance of the annual campaign and the importance of pledging. Too often when it comes to an annual campaign we ask our pastors to be "pesters." We expect them to raise the money, collect it and account for it. If, in fact, we believe in a priesthood of the laity, then it is important that the laity not only share in the work of an annual campaign but also take leadership in that work.

At Trinity we believe that the priesthood of the laity involves all of our members in all phases of church life. Giving is part of that life.

David Posteraro is junior warden of Trinity Cathedral in Cleveland, Ohio, and a partner in the law firm of Kohrman Jackson & Krantz where he practices intellectual property and business law.

New website marks growth of *Vestry Papers* ecfvp.org to launch in October

For fifteen years, the Episcopal Church Foundation (ECF) and *Vestry Papers* have provided vestry members with spiritually grounded, practical resources to help vestries build healthy congregations in service to God's mission.

Vestry Papers has won numerous awards, but more important, it has helped create community among Episcopal leaders, fostered learning about congregational issues, and prepared vestries to respond to the ever-changing needs of the Church.

Now it is time for ECF and *Vestry Papers* to respond to the changing needs of the Church. We are pleased to announce that, in October 2010, *Vestry Papers* will reach even more people when it becomes a website dedicated to vital practices for leading congregations. The new website, www.ecfvp.org, will include the *Vestry Papers* articles on which our readers rely; practical tools for parish leaders; a lively blog where readers can share ideas and experiences; and a place to submit your own best congregational practices. To keep informed about the new site, send your name and email address to mescobar@EpiscopalFoundation.org.

Thank you for being a part of *Vestry Papers*. We look forward to seeing you online.

Intentional giving

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in new-member packets. Talk about the purpose of giving in catechumenate and Inquirer classes. Make pledge cards and offertory envelopes big and bright and keep them in the pews year-round for children, youth and adults. From the pulpit, teach about the purpose of pledge cards. Make sure envelopes are accessible in the narthex.

Show them the money

Demonstrate how pledges fuel the ministry of the congregation. Convey in pictures, graphs, and story how God's vision is made

can affirm, thank and celebrate the giftedness of their members.

Commitment to the formation of disciples is paramount to the vitality and vibrancy of Latino congregations. The real gift in discovering and naming best practices of stewardship in Latino/Hispanic congregations is that they are applicable to the wider church, especially to congregations that attract seekers and newcomers. We can no longer afford to leave people guessing or in the dark about what it means to be a



Iglesia Episcopal San Mateo, Houston TX

Pledges fuel outreach ministry activities at Iglesia Episcopal San Mateo in Houston, Texas.

real through the congregation. Connect expenses with mission areas: worship, outreach, children, youth and adult formation, evangelism, and pastoral care. Invite the bishop's committee/vestry to hold quarterly meetings with the congregation to talk about money and ministry.

Celebrate and thank for all gifts

Publishing names of pledging members in the newsletter, sending a thank you letter every two months for gifts of ministry—are just two examples of how a congregation

member of a faith community, especially when it comes to intentional giving. As God's entrusted stewards we are designed for goodness and generosity. Stewardship formation at its best unlocks our innate generosity and calls us to live our lives as a generous response to a life-giving generous God.

The Rev. Laurel Johnston is the Program Officer for Stewardship for the Episcopal Church.



Findings from a recent survey indicate that 38 percent of churches reported a decline in giving in 2009. Churches in Pacific and Mountain states reported the worst decline, at 55 percent and 46 percent, respectively. From "State of the Plate," by Christianity Today's International Church Finance Today and Leadership publications.



ECF's Mission

To strengthen the leadership and financial capabilities of Episcopal congregations, dioceses and related organizations to pursue their mission and ministry.



President

Donald V. Romanik

Senior Program Director

Anne Ditzler

Editor

The Rev. Lindsay Hardin Freeman
VestryPapers@EpiscopalFoundation.org

Editorial Associate

Cathy Carpenter

Senior Director of Marketing

Rebecca McDonald

Design/Production

Monarch Communications

Subscriptions

To subscribe to Vestry Papers, email
mescobar@episcopalchurch.org

Episcopal Church Foundation

815 Second Avenue

New York, NY 10017

(800) 697-2858

www.EpiscopalFoundation.org

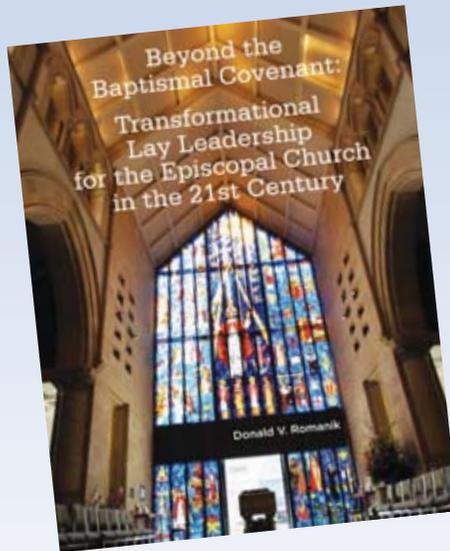
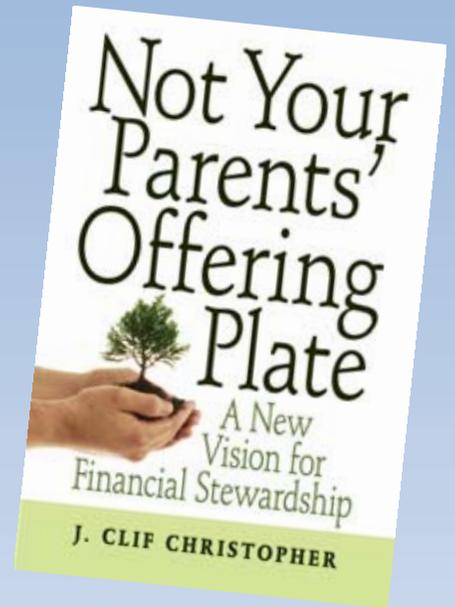
Resources

Not Your Parents' Offering Plate: A New Vision for Financial Stewardship

J. Clif Christopher

J. Clif Christopher presents a new understanding of stewardship in the 21st century. Here's one idea among many: Don't stop with the annual pledge campaign. For example, rectors should have a list of projects in their top drawer that they'd like to accomplish beyond the normal fare of parish life. Christopher points out that unless clergy and vestries are prepared to receive generous gifts, donors will most likely walk away and give their money elsewhere.

www.cokesbury.com



Beyond the Baptismal Covenant: Transformational Lay Leadership for the Episcopal Church in the 21st Century

Donald Romanik

The future of the Episcopal Church depends on the raising up of fully committed, fully equipped lay leaders, suggests Donald Romanik, president of the Episcopal Church Foundation. Written for laity and clergy alike, the book uses insights gleaned from both the corporate world and Scripture. Romanik explains the historical and biblical roots of lay involvement and outlines how to promote lay leadership to grow the church.

www.forwardmovement.org

Christian Giving: Dollar\$ and \$ense

Raymond F. Kasch, Jr.

Money is not a problem unless it makes us do things we ought not to do. Rather, we can use money for good and right purposes.

Author Raymond Kasch encourages action based on truth rather than guilt in this best-selling twelve-page publication. Approaching giving from a theological stance, he presents and answers the following important questions: Is giving based on the church's budget? How much should we give? What if I cannot afford to give? Where do I give?

www.forwardmovement.org

