

Mobilizing our Assets for Mission
September 2019

Stewardship and Land

Brian Sellers-Petersen

Christianity is a food religion. A faith based around a meal table. Birthed in the agrarian life of ancient Palestine. I grew up thinking that Joseph and Jesus were carpenters, but I have come to understand them as farmers who had a side-hustle carpentry shop. As I read and listen to the gospels, there are not many stories about carpentry, but lots rooted in soil, food and eating. Mary and Joseph and their neighbors were subsistence farmers, not unlike many in our global family.

I grew up in the land of church potlucks and casseroles – Minnesota. In the Methodist Church of my youth, coffee (and donuts) after worship were a weekly sacrament. It's the same in our Episcopal tradition – plus, we share food at the Eucharistic table every week and just about every time we gather for worship.

During the past 20 years of my work with Episcopal Relief & Development (ERD) and the Diocese of Olympia, I have visited hundreds of parishes, schools, camp and conference centers, monasteries and community outreach ministries. Of those ministries that reach into the community and neighborhood, the most common have to do with food – food pantries, meals, community gardens, support for local Meals on Wheels, food bank affiliates for Feeding America and ERD's global hunger alleviation programs.

Our role in God's supply chain of abundant life

I have a multi-use stump speech, sermon and presentation that I give that includes the idea that **all** Episcopal congregations and institutions can grow food, regardless of the amount of arable land on their property. I back it up with examples of parking lot gardens, roof gardens, vertical gardens and indoor hydroponic gardens. I have since amended my thesis to "all can grow food, but not all should." But in some way, we are all called to live out the feeding of the five thousand, where "all ate and were filled; and they took up what was left over." (Matthew 14:13-21) We are all a part of God's supply chain of abundant life.

For years I worked with ERD's community development methodology, *Asset Based Community Development (ABCD)*. It offers an important first step if you are interested in food or agrarian ministry or believe it is the best use of your assets to benefit your community. ABCD may help you discover that your assets are best deployed in a completely different way, maybe even a non-food ministry. Embrace it! ERD and the Episcopal Church's Domestic Poverty Office have a training program in ABCD - *Called To Transformation*.

Stewarding the land in many ways

The fact is, the Episcopal Church and the Anglican Church globally own a lot of land. Collectively one of greatest assets is land. To put a fine point on this fact, we are stewards of a lot of land and called to care for all of creation. We have come into possession of our land through a variety of means. The question is, how to best steward this outstanding resource to benefit our communities and give glory to God. There are countless examples of the ways congregations, schools, seminaries, monasteries, camps and conference centers are engaged in this life-changing ministry.

Shepherd Farm at the Church of the Good Shepherd in Town and Country, Missouri, and the Organic Vegetable Garden at St. Andrew's, Seattle, are wonderful models of parish gardens that serve the hungry and provide volunteer opportunities for church and community members.

The University of the South and their domain consists of 13,000 acres with a strong commitment to environmental sustainability that includes land-use planning, drinking water procurement, wastewater processing, food production, natural resource extraction and biodiversity protection.

Food enterprises based in dioceses and parishes are growing in numbers. Examples include: Thistle and Bee in the Diocese of West Tennessee; Transfiguration's Crazy Chile Farm in Mesa, Arizona; Honore Farm and Mill at Bishop's Ranch in Healdsburg, California; Shima of Navajoland at Good Shepherd in Fort Defiance, Arizona; and Harbor Roots Farm CSA in Grays Harbor County, Washington.

Next door to the Diocese of Los Angeles's Cathedral Center is the Edendale Grove Parish Garden and the Living Labyrinth. Next time I'm in LA, I plan to ask if I can sample while I walk the labyrinth.

Bellwether Farm in the Diocese of Ohio "offers a model of sustainable living that promotes physical and spiritual wellness, fidelity to the environment and social justice. It incorporates farming, food production and eco-stewardship into land-based educational programs for people of all ages and backgrounds."

During a 2018 visit to the Diocese of Iowa, I learned that church-based Pocket Prairies have the power to sequester carbon, provide habitat for wildlife, prevent erosion and supply clean water. St. Mary's in West Columbia, Texas, helps steward a rare, pristine prairie that has never been grazed or plowed with over 300 different species of plants.

In 1705, Queen Anne of England donated 215 acres of prime Manhattan farmland to Trinity Parish on Wall Street, which in turn has stewarded this land asset to the benefit of the Anglican Communion globally to the tune of millions of dollars through their grants program. They also have a conference center, farm and donkey sanctuary in West Cornwall, Connecticut.

A growing number of Colleges and Universities affiliated with the Episcopal Church are growing food on campus for use in their dining halls or sale to their communities. The Bard College Farm is a 1.25 acre urban farm. It demonstrates the realities of small-scale organic farming and enriches the local food culture, along with growing produce for the campus dining service. Along with Bard and Sewanee, check out what is happening at Kenyon Farm in Ohio, Trinity College Community Garden in Connecticut, Fribolin Farm at Hobart and William Smith Colleges in Upstate New York, and St. Barnabas Center for Agriculture in Haiti, to name just a few.

We need to be concerned about the decrease in the bee population due to colony collapse disorder. Pollinators, including bees, affect 35 percent of global agricultural land, supporting the production of 87 of the leading food crops worldwide. Great Cathedrals like Notre Dame of Paris and St John the Divine of New York City have bees, along with local congregations like St Peter's, Lebanon, Indiana. Another way is through planting pollinator gardens, like St. Luke's, Atlanta.

A variety of the assets of two St. Paul, Minnesota, congregations, St. John's and Holy Apostles, were brought together years ago for a Farmers Market. Many of the farmers selling are congregants of the predominantly Hmong Episcopal Church, Holy Apostles.

Ascension School in Cove, Oregon, is the site of the Diocese of Eastern Oregon's office, camp and conference center. Eighty-five acres that they had previously rented to local farmers has been returned to diocesan stewardship. They have begun the process of restoring most of it to native grasses, trees and shrubs and native food sources utilized by the indigenous peoples of this region for millennia. Farm churches are starting to pop up. Examples include Abundant Table Farm Church in the Diocese of Los Angeles, Austin Farm Church in the Diocese of Texas, Plainsong Farm & Ministry in the Diocese of Western Michigan; and Sycamore Commons in Powell River, B.C.

Look around your community and diocese – you can find wonderful examples of land stewardship for the benefit of the community, as well as under-utilized land that can be stewarded in a way that brings abundance to your community.

Brian Sellers-Petersen, author of Harvesting Abundance: Local Initiatives of Food and Faith, currently serves as Missioner for Agrarian Ministry in the Episcopal Diocese of Olympia. His work is dedicated to church and missional agriculture, land stewardship, food ministry, environmental justice and civil society engagement. Through 17 years of ministry with Episcopal Relief & Development, Brian has a breadth of knowledge to share on agriculture that includes farmers markets, church gardens, farms with community supported agriculture (CSA) operations, indoor hydroponic gardens, parking lot gardens, apiaries and community garden education. Brian also works to continue to build the movement for strengthening and expanding small-scale, sustainable agriculture as a member of the General Convention Task Force on Creation Care and Environmental Racism and upcoming Podcast, HarvestingAbundance.com.

Resources:

- Church with Garden and Food Pantry Seeks Same by Nathan Davis, Vestry Papers, March 2015
- Homegrown Communion: Faith, Land and Neighbor an ECF webinar presented by Sarah Nolan, September 26, 2013
- Meeting God in a Faith Garden by Timothy Goldman, Vestry Papers, March 2011

Inspiration and help

- Harvesting Abundance: Local Initiatives of Food and Faith
- Harvesting Abundance Podcast
- Cultivate: Episcopal Food Movement
- Christian Food Movement
- Episcopal Beekeeping

New ways to grow food

- Parking lot gardens

- [Roof gardens](#)
- [Vertical gardens](#)
- [Indoor hydroponic gardens](#)

A strategic approach to community development

- [Asset Based Community Development \(ABCD\)](#)
- [Called to Transformation](#), (explains applying ABCD to engaging your church and community)

Land stewardship examples from dioceses, congregations and other church institutions

- [Shepherd Farm Church of the Good Shepherd](#), Town and Country, Missouri
- [Organic Vegetable Garden St. Andrew's](#), Seattle
- [Domain at The University of the South Tennessee](#)
- [Thistle and Bee](#) West Tennessee
- [Crazy Chile Farm](#) Transfiguration, Mesa, Arizona
- [Honore Farm and Mill Bishop's Ranch](#), Healdsburg, California
- [Shima of Navajoland Good Shepherd](#), Fort Defiance, Arizona
- [Harbor Roots Farm CSA](#) Grays Harbor County, Washington
- [Edendale Grove Parish Garden and the Living Labyrinth](#) Diocese of LA
- [Bellwether Farm](#) Ohio
- [Diocese of Iowa's Pocket Prairies St. Mary's](#) in West Columbia
- [Trinity Parish Wall Street's grants program and conference center, farm and donkey sanctuary](#)
- [Bard College Farm](#) New York
- [Kenyon Farm](#) Ohio
- [Trinity College Community Garden](#) Connecticut
- [Fribolin Farm at Hobart and William Smith Colleges](#) upstate New York
- [St. Barnabas Center for Agriculture](#) Haiti
- [Notre Dame Paris](#), [St John the Divine](#) New York City, and [St Peter's Lebanon](#), Indiana, beekeeping; [St. Luke's](#), Atlanta, pollinator gardens
- [Farmers Market Holy Apostles and St. John's](#), St. Paul, Minnesota
- Eastern Oregon's [diocesan stewardship project at Ascension School](#)
- [Abundant Table Farm Church](#) Los Angeles
- [Austin Farm Church](#) Diocese of Texas
- [Plainsong Farm & Ministry](#) Diocese of Western Michigan
- [Sycamore Commons](#), Powell River, B.C.

The Top Five Stewardship Myths

Bill Campbell

The word *myth* is often used to describe ideas or beliefs that are false or just plain wrong, but widely regarded as true. That definition fits lots of ideas about stewardship that circulate around the Church. Below, I take on the five most commonly held views, describe just how unhelpful they are and offer better ways to teach and address stewardship in our congregations.

1. Stewardship is just about money

This is a pervasive myth. It's so easy to use stewardship as a shorthand for fundraising, but true congregational stewardship is so much more. There are plenty of old models that get to the heart of this issue, and a favorite in The Episcopal Church has been "Time, Talent, Treasure." In this model, stewardship is defined as *all* the things you bring to your church – including your time and your talents, as well as your treasure.

We also need to develop a more holistic understanding of stewardship that includes the environment and our lifestyles. How we care for God's creation as stewards of the world is an important aspect of our life as disciples of Jesus Christ. Likewise, the way we live says a great deal about how we are living out our call to follow Jesus. Gandhi's famous quote, "Live simply so that others may simply live," provides a touchstone for lifestyle stewardship. An example would be examining the ways you support businesses that have harmful effects on the world.

Stewardship campaigns are discipleship campaigns. Everything we do in our Church points towards a more fulfilling life in Jesus Christ. For stewardship to help us enter into a deeper relationship with Jesus, we need to think more holistically about what it means.

2. Knowing your congregation's giving history will affect your ability to be its pastor

Will knowing a person's giving history and current pledge change your pastoral response to that congregant? If so, there are other issues at play. I can certainly understand the frustration you might feel if a member of your church cuts their pledge in half over an issue you think petty. But would that really prevent you from appearing at their side in the midst of a crisis? The same is true with regard to major donors. We love having people who have much to give and will give back to God in big ways, but should that really effect your pastoral response to the rest of your congregation?

It's important to think about the information you miss if you don't track people's giving. It is an unfortunate truth that many people air their grievances through their pledge card. If you don't know that one of your most stable congregants just turned in a pledge card for \$1.00, you've missed a huge communication!

Being above reproach is important. We don't want our parishioners to think that their giving has anything to do with the way they are treated in their faith community. However, I think there are many ways to accomplish that without leaving yourself blind to details that are important to the life of your congregation.

3. Fundraising is easier for big churches

Yes, big churches bring in more money. They have more people giving and more people giving usually translates into larger total giving numbers. I don't think that means it's easier, though.

Something that we hardly ever talk about in church fundraising is Return on Investment (ROI). Alumni development officers at your university track ROI very closely. The question boils down to, *how much did it cost you to raise one dollar?* What seems to be a good marker for the industry is

about 24 cents for every dollar raised. I would hope that our churches could get that number a little lower, but there is no real data supporting an industry standard ROI for churches.

Smaller churches should have a relatively low ROI. That means your small church congregation will spend less to raise needed funds. Look at some of the resource-sized parishes in the Episcopal Church. Some of these churches spend as much on their stewardship campaign as smaller churches spend on their whole budget! Something that a smaller church can promise is that more of a congregant's hard-earned treasure is going back into the community and back to the ministry of the Church.

4. Endowments are the enemy

I love this one: "If we create an endowment, it will kill this church!" Everyone seems to have a horror story, where a church was going along fine and then they started an endowment and everything fell apart. I'd just like to say correlation is not causation.

Yes, I have seen churches that have experienced setbacks about the time their endowments reached a particular size. I just have never walked away convinced that the endowment was the actual reason for those setbacks. Poor leadership, troubled relations between ministries, a total inability to deal with conflict – those things create trouble. Sometimes the trouble comes from arguments over what to do with the endowment, but that's not the fault of the endowment. That's just people being people.

The inverse of this argument is also a myth. Some people think that endowments will fix everything. Recently the podcast, *Future Perfect*, released a series on the problems with large endowments that exist far beyond their intended life span. It was a fascinating look into the difficulties that can come with creating pools of money that might outlast us all. Endowments are tools that can be extraordinarily powerful under the right management. Getting the management right is critical.

5. Shrinking pledges, shrinking numbers, dying church

This one is tough, and it's a real problem for more and more churches. You see a consistent decline in all your numbers. There are fewer people in your pews, and they are giving less. There are fewer people who are giving. You think your church is dying.

Your church might be dying. I'm not going to be able to judge that for you in this short article. However, your church just might be changing. That might be okay. The metric I think we should always fall back on is this: *Are you forming disciples of Jesus Christ, regardless of the age of the people sitting in the pews?*

If you have a church that only has 25 people and they are all over the age of 65, are you forming those amazing boomers to be followers of Jesus? Are you providing them with spiritual food and pushing them to increase the boundaries of their love? Are you tending to their needs and giving them the tools they need to deepen their spiritual life? Are you able to do those things with the resources the church is providing?

The last question is really where it all comes apart. You might say yes to every question and then say no at the last one. If so, then it might be time for part-time leadership, or even lay leadership, at your church. That doesn't mean the church is dying, it just means it's changing.

Good stewardship means taking a real hard look at your church's situation. Yes, some churches will need to close down. I don't have a great way to blunt that truth. However, if your community is still fired up about being disciples of Jesus Christ, then maybe there is some life still left!

Bill Campbell is the Executive Director of [Forma | The Network for Christian Formation](#). He is now a program director at ECF through a collaboration between ECF and Forma that combines the best discipleship practices and networks of Forma with the amazing leadership resources and networks of ECF.

Resources:

- [Dollars and Discipleship](#) by Julie Simonton, Vestry Papers, March 2019
- [We're Building a Mission Here](#) by Greg Syler, Vestry Papers, September 2018
- [Mindful Stewardship](#) by Lisa Fischbeck, Vestry Papers, September 2018
- [Christian Stewardship](#) by Sandra T. Montes, Vestry Papers, September 2017

Turning Burdens Into Blessings

Demi Prentiss

The story is increasingly familiar. Mom has been in her home for years – the house she and Dad bought decades ago, when they were starting a family. The kids grew up there, then married and moved away. The family multiplied, and visits with kids and grandkids imprinted the home with more happy memories. Then, after Dad died, Mom found the big old place more and more of a burden, while the neighborhood filled with a new generation of growing families. Now that she needs round-the-clock care, that well-loved home is just too much to manage. And the kids can't take care of her or the home by long distance.

And there's another version of the story. Jim and Nancy have worked hard and lived frugally. Jim's career brought lots of success, with promotions and raises. Without children, the couple built a tight network of friends and stayed in the old neighborhood, watching their nest egg grow and property values increase. They even bought a vacation home, and lovingly made it their get-away. They've managed to grow old together and have decided to move to a retirement community. Whether they sell or retain the properties, the taxes on their beloved homes are a major consideration. And they could use some assistance in funding their life in their new community.

In both cases, homeowners are entering a new stage of life, one where assets that had brought great joy and fulfilled an important purpose for years, have become more of a burden than a blessing.

No matter what generation you represent – older homeowners, their friends and relatives, or their children – you’ve likely encountered such stories. Many people, especially those who wish to include a charitable donation in their planning, do not realize that these scenarios offer opportunities to multiply assets and to benefit people and communities far beyond the ownership circle.

From dilemma to creative solution

The [Charitable Remainder Unitrust](#) (called a “CRUT”) can provide an attractive solution. The CRUT is an irrevocable trust that generates a potential income stream for a beneficiary for a period of time, with the remaining balance then distributed to charity. The way many CRUTs are structured, the trust offers tax advantages to the donor at the time of the gift, provides an income stream for the donor’s lifetime, and then benefits one or more charities of the donor’s choice. Choosing to create a CRUT can turn a dilemma like the one in the first scenario above into a creative solution that benefits both the donor and the charities she chooses to support.

Jim Murphy with Episcopal Church Foundation (ECF) has assisted numerous donors in setting up a CRUT. “It’s a way of making property no longer a burden but a benefit both to yourself and to the charities you love and support,” Murphy said. He offered an example of a woman whose health was failing. Her expensive in-home care was depleting her resources. She created a CRUT, using her longtime residence to fund the trust. The home had appreciated considerably over her lifetime. The proceeds were sufficient to create an income that paid for her nursing home care until her death. At that time, the remainder of the funds paid substantial gifts to three charities she had named, one of which was her home parish.

Unlike some other charitable gift instruments, a CRUT can be funded using real property. Murphy cautions that the real estate – often a home or a second home – must be unencumbered. There can be no mortgage or lien or other encumbrance on the property. It must be free and clear to be transferred to the trust. That date of transfer is the determining date for any tax benefits from such a donation.

In addition, the allowable charitable deduction must be based on a certified independent appraisal of the property, and there can be no pre-arranged sale. The sale must occur after the property has transferred to the trust.

Josh Anderson, also with ECF, recalls helping a couple that was unaware of the distinct advantages of some charitable gift instruments. They mailed an information request form to ECF, and it landed on his desk. “We shepherded them through the process of understanding the options available to fulfill both their personal and philanthropic goals,” he says. “I was glad to be able to help them address their individual financial needs and also benefit charities they cared about.”

ECF, like many other non-profit organizations, offers to serve as trustee for donors who want to set up a CRUT. Potential donors are welcome to reach out to ECF for assistance. If a CRUT seems desirable, ECF can provide the initial trust document for review and revision by the donor and the donor’s attorney. Before making any charitable gift, donors should seek their own legal and tax advice.

Decisions about charitable gifts, especially legacy gifts, requires time and repeated exposure to dependable information. You can offer inspiration and support to potential donors by keeping planned giving brochures available with other accessible, informational materials in your church. At least one of ECF's larger charitable trusts was set in motion by a brochure on a tract rack. Keep your congregation – and your planned giving advocates – well supplied with the information that donors might be seeking.

***Demi Prentiss** is a Program Consultant in the Endowment Management Solutions division of Episcopal Church Foundation (ECF), offering support to dioceses and congregations in structuring and growing their endowments. Previously, she served five years as ministry developer for the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth as they reorganized, partnering with individuals and congregations to re-imagine how to be the church. She has served a brief stint on the Presiding Bishop's staff as Program Officer for Lay Leadership, and spent many years as a ministry developer in congregations varying from family to resource size. She holds degrees from Seabury-Western and Harvard, and is author, with Fletcher Lowe, of Radical Sending: Go to Love and Serve. She lives in Denton, TX, where she has built a practice as a life and leadership coach for leaders in congregations and non-profit organizations.*

Resources:

- [Making a Planned Gift to Your Parish](#) an ECF webinar presented by Jim Murphy, December 1, 2015
- [Closing the Planning Gap](#) by David Farrand, Vestry Papers, January 2011
- [What is the Best Gift for Me?](#) an ECF webinar presented by Jim Murphy, Josh Anderson and Brad Roberts, April 9, 2019
- [Planning for the End of Life](#) an ECF Vital Practices tool
- [Vital Practices Digest: Five Resources for Planned Giving](#) by Brendon Hunter, ECF Vital Practices blog, August 19, 2015

Extension Ministries and Risk

Steve Follos

Many Episcopal churches are looking for potential new sources of income as they worry about how to bridge the gap between declining plate contributions and rising operating costs. And because churches often include multiple buildings, it makes sense to look at ways to maximize the use of these properties.

As a result, it's now increasingly common for churches to provide a range of activities and services such as babysitting nights, mothers' days out, community classes, cook-offs, fairs or dog sitting, as well as hosting daycare centers, preschools, community farming, shelters, soup kitchens, thrift stores or sports clubs.

While these activities can potentially attract new congregants and generate more revenue than traditional pledges and giving at Sunday services, they can also increase the likelihood of accidents and mishaps. Traditional uses of church spaces such as book or quilting clubs probably don't increase the risk you take as an organization, but others, like daycare and preschools, should certainly lead you to reassess the level of protection you need to safeguard your people and physical assets.

For example, if you lease your community hall to a weekly karate club and they don't have adequate — or any — insurance, what will the consequences be for you if a student injures another during practice on your premises?

Some things to consider when signing a lease agreement

It's critical that any organization with which you sign a lease agreement has acceptable insurance coverage. The typical requirement for such an organization is a minimum of \$1 million in liability protection. Moreover, the organization's insurance must be primary to yours; meaning that it will be liable for any claims, regardless of fault, while the organization has care, custody and control of the facility.

It's also vital to make sure you're not signing away essential rights. If the lessee has an attorney draw up the agreement, it's possible that you will be asked that the lessee not be held responsible for any damage caused to the property or for injuries that happen while using it — a so-called, 'hold harmless' clause that would, at a minimum, result in a waiver of your rights.

You should not agree to such a clause.

The lessee organization may also try to get you to give up the right to subrogation — that is, the right of an insurance company, after it pays a claim, to seek to recover the money from anyone who may have caused, contributed to or insured the loss. For example, suppose a couple of those karate kids are tossing a football around your community hall and one of them hits a ceiling light fixture, which crashes down on the wood floor, damaging it. If you make a claim on your policy, your insurer may then seek reimbursement from the carrier of the at-fault party, the karate club.

Your diocesan chancellor, whose role is to act as legal counsel for the diocese or parish, can review the lease and point out any necessary revisions that you should seek. Alternatively, you may know a congregant with sufficient legal experience to advise you, likely on a pro bono basis.

Balancing risk and benefit

While everyone is in favor of churches extending their ministries to better serve their communities, grow their parishes and hopefully, improve their economic positions, vestries must understand that with more activity comes greater risk, and greater risk requires more protection.

When considering adding activities or services, church leaders should spend time assessing risk to determine if a sponsored event will be safe. Is the building fit for the purpose? Are handrails solid and lighting adequate? Do the premises meet fire code requirements?

If the extension ministry is church-sponsored, reassess whether your liability limits are adequate. Extra peace of mind can come from augmenting the typical \$1 million of general liability coverage with \$1 million, \$5 million or \$10 million of additional protection from an excess or umbrella policy.

If the activity isn't church sponsored — for example, if you enter an agreement to allow a professional counseling service to operate on your premises — that entity may be a separately incorporated for-profit organization or a tax-exempt charity, in which case you should consider a separate policy from a carrier that understands the specific needs and risks of such arrangements.

Such careful thought and planning can pay off in the long run. Mitigating risk can, over time, help reduce insurance premiums by reducing the number of claims filed.

Of course, Church Insurance Companies is ready to field any risk management-related questions about expanding a ministry's footprint. No matter which provider you choose, you can review our checklists and tip sheets on risk management at www.cpg.org/CIC or contact us at 800-293-3525. We're here to help.

Steve Follos serves as General Manager of Church Insurance Agency Corporation. For more than 90 years, the Church Insurance Companies have focused on fulfilling its mission to protect the people, property and finances of the Episcopal Church, seeking to provide organizations the broadest cost-effective coverage available in the marketplace in a financially sustainable way.

Resources:

- [Managing Resources, Part 2: Administration](#) by Nancy Davidge and Susan Elliott, Vestry Papers, November 2015
- [For Things Done and Left Undone](#) by Steve Follos, Vestry Papers, May 2014
- [Help When You Need It](#) by Steve Follos, Vestry Papers, May 2014
- [Assessing Risk to People and Property](#), by Barbara Ballenger, ECF Vital Practices blog, September 13, 2013

Los cinco mitos principales de la mayordomía

Bill Campbell

La palabra *mito* se emplea a menudo para describir ideas o creencias falsas o erróneas, pero que se consideran ampliamente como verdades. Esa definición coincide con muchas ideas sobre la mayordomía que circulan por la Iglesia. A continuación, tomo las creencias más generalizadas, describo lo poco o nada que ayudan y ofrezco mejores maneras de enseñar y tratar la mayordomía en nuestras congregaciones.

1. La mayordomía se trata solo de dinero

Este es un mito generalizado. Es muy fácil emplear la mayordomía como una manera de recaudar fondos, pero la verdadera mayordomía a nivel de feligresía es muchísimo más. Hay muchos modelos viejos que van al meollo de la cuestión y el favorito en la Iglesia Episcopal es “Tiempo, Talento, Tesoro”. En este modelo, la mayordomía se define como *todas* las cosas que usted aporta a su iglesia, incluyendo su tiempo, talento y tesoro.

También necesitamos desarrollar una comprensión holística de la mayordomía que incluya el medioambiente y nuestros estilos de vida. Cómo cuidamos la creación de Dios como administradores del mundo es un aspecto importante de nuestra vida como discípulos de Jesucristo. Asimismo, la manera en que vivimos dice mucho sobre cómo estamos viviendo nuestro llamado a seguir a Jesús. La famosa cita de Gandhi, “Vive simplemente para que otros puedan simplemente vivir” es una piedra de toque para un estilo de vida de mayordomía. Un ejemplo sería examinar las maneras en que apoyamos las empresas que afectan nocivamente al mundo.

Las campañas de mayordomía son campañas de discipulado. Todo lo que hacemos en nuestra Iglesia apunta hacia una vida más plena en Jesucristo. Para que la mayordomía nos ayude a entrar en una relación más profunda con Jesús tenemos que pensar más holísticamente sobre lo que ello significa.

2. Mantenerse al tanto de los antecedentes de donativos de su congregación afecta su habilidad de ser su pastor

¿Estar al tanto de los antecedentes de donativos de alguien y su compromiso actual cambia su reacción pastoral a ese/a congregante? En caso afirmativo, hay otras cosas en juego. Ciertamente puedo entender la frustración que puede sentir si un(a) miembro de su iglesia reduce su compromiso de dar a la mitad a causa de algo que usted considera insignificante, ¿pero eso prevendría que usted esté de su lado en medio de una crisis? Lo mismo es cierto sobre los/as grandes donantes. Nos encanta tener gente que tienen mucho que dar y dan mucho a Dios, ¿pero debe eso realmente afectar su reacción pastoral al resto de la congregación?

Es importante que piense en la información que pierde si no da seguimiento a los donativos de la gente. Es una triste realidad que mucha gente expresa sus quejas mediante su compromiso con el diezmo y sus ofrendas. ¡Si usted no sabe que uno(a) de sus congregantes más estables acaba de hacer un compromiso de dar \$1.00, ha perdido una enorme comunicación!

Ser irreprochable también es importante. No queremos que nuestros feligreses piensen que sus donativos tengan algo que ver con la manera en que se les trata en su comunidad de fe. Sin embargo, pienso que hay muchas maneras de lograr eso sin quedar a ciegas de los detalles importantes para la vida de su congregación.

3. Recaudar fondos es más fácil para las iglesias grandes

Sí, las iglesias grandes recaudan más dinero. Tener más donantes por lo general redundará en mayores cantidades, pero no me parece que eso signifique que sea más fácil.

Algo de lo que casi nunca hablamos sobre la recaudación de fondos en la iglesia es el retorno de la inversión. Los funcionarios de desarrollo de exalumnos/as de sus universidades observan muy de cerca el retorno de la inversión. El interrogante se resume a *¿cuánto le costó recaudar un dólar?* Lo que parece ser un buen indicador para la industria es aproximadamente 24 centavos por cada dólar recaudado. Me gustaría que nuestras iglesias redujeran un poco esa cantidad, pero no hay datos concretos que respalden un indicador de retorno de la inversión para las iglesias.

Por lo general, las iglesias más pequeñas deben tener un retorno de la inversión relativamente bajo. Eso significa que su pequeña congregación gastará menos en recaudar fondos necesarios. Fíjese en las congregaciones más grandes de la Iglesia Episcopal. ¡Algunas de estas iglesias gastan tanto en sus campañas de mayordomía como lo que las iglesias más pequeñas gastan en su presupuesto total! Algo que una iglesia más pequeña puede prometer es que el tesoro que tanto les cuesta ganar a sus congregantes volverá a la comunidad y al ministerio de la Iglesia.

4. Los legados son el enemigo

Esto me encanta: “¡Si creamos un legado, matará a esta iglesia!”. Todos parecen tener una historia horripilante en la que a una iglesia le iba muy bien hasta que inició un legado y todo se desmoronó. Yo diría que la correlación no es la causalidad.

Sí, he visto iglesias que sufrieron contratiempos alrededor del momento en que sus legados alcanzaron un tamaño determinado. Pero nunca salí convencido de que el legado fue el verdadero motivo de esos contratiempos. El liderazgo deficiente, las relaciones problemáticas entre ministerios y la total inhabilidad de lidiar con los conflictos, todas esas cosas crean problemas. A veces el problema proviene de discusiones sobre qué hacer sobre el legado, pero eso no es culpa del legado. Es sencillamente gente siendo gente.

Lo opuesto de este argumento también es un mito. Alguna gente cree que los legados arreglarán todo. Los legados son herramientas que pueden ser extraordinariamente poderosas si se los administra bien. Contar con una buena administración es imprescindible.

5. Menores compromisos de donativos, menores cantidades, iglesia moribunda

Este es difícil y es un verdadero problema para más y más iglesias. Usted ve una reducción constante de sus cifras. Menos gente asiste a la iglesia y los/as que quedan donan menos. Usted piensa que su iglesia está moribunda.

Puede ser que su iglesia esté moribunda. Sin embargo, puede ser que su iglesia simplemente esté cambiando y eso puede ser algo bueno. Creo que lo que debemos preguntarnos siempre acerca de esto es: *¿Está formando discípulos de Jesucristo, independientemente de la edad de los/as que se sientan en los bancos de su iglesia?*

Si tiene una iglesia con solo 25 personas y todas ellas son mayores de 65 años de edad, ¿está formando a los/as de esa magnífica generación para que sean seguidores de Jesús? ¿Les está proporcionando alimento espiritual y les está empujando para que expandan los límites de su amor? ¿Está atendiendo sus necesidades y les está proporcionando las herramientas que necesitan

para profundizar su vida espiritual? ¿Puede hacer esas cosas con los recursos que le está proveyendo la iglesia?

La última pregunta es la más importante. Usted puede decir sí a todas las preguntas y decir no a la última. Si ese es el caso, tal vez ha llegado el momento para que haya liderazgo a tiempo parcial o liderazgo laico en su iglesia. Eso no significa que la iglesia esté moribunda, sino simplemente que está cambiando.

La buena mayordomía significa analizar a fondo la situación de su iglesia. Sí, algunas iglesias tendrán que cerrar sus puertas. No tengo una buena manera de suavizar esta verdad. ¡Sin embargo, si su comunidad sigue estando entusiasmada por ser discípulos/as de Jesucristo, entonces puede ser que todavía le quede vida!

Bill Campbell es director ejecutivo de [Forma | The Network for Christian Formation](#) (Forma /La red para la formación cristiana). En la actualidad es director de programas de la ECF mediante una colaboración entre la ECF y Forma que combina las mejores prácticas de discipulado y las redes de Forma con los notables recursos de liderazgo y las redes de la ECF.

Recursos:

- [La Mayordomía Cristiana](#) por Sandra T. Montes, Vestry Papers, septiembre 2017
- [Conversaciones sobre la mayordomía](#) un webinar de ECF presentado por Sandra T. Montes y Juan Ángel Monge, 23 de agosto 2016
- [Una Nueva Manera de Encarar la Mayordomía](#) por Greg Syler, Vestry Papers, septiembre 2012
- [Hablando de la Mayordomía](#) por Miguel Escobar, 24 de mayo 2011

An Audacious Spirit of Abundance

Sandy Webb

A spirit of scarcity can tear a parish down. A spirit of abundance can build one up.

In 2013, Church of the Holy Communion had lost a third of its attendance over a ten-year period and pledge giving had fallen more than fifteen percent in five years. The often-told story of church decline seemed to be writing itself again in Memphis, Tennessee.

In that difficult time, we looked to the Old Testament wilderness narrative for inspiration. We studied the Israelites' wilderness journey and especially its ending. In Joshua, when it was time to enter the Promised Land, God did not part the waters of the Jordan River until the leaders of the community stepped out into the river. The Israelites needed the courage to do their part before God did his part. We felt led to do the same.

Our first step into the Jordan was establishing the Audacity Fund – roughly \$7,500 drawn from our cash reserves that we made available to support special projects. When someone came up with a

new idea that could push the church forward, the Audacity Fund would provide the money. There were two rules: The fund would not provide for anything that we had ever done before, and every Audacity Fund project had to be as big and bold as we could manage.

Our first Audacity Fund project was a community concert. Memphis is a music town, and Holy Communion has a large front lawn on a major thoroughfare. We rented a tent, made a sign and put up a temporary fence to keep kids from running into traffic. Sloan River Project (the Kanuga and Episcopal Youth Event house band at the time) added us to their tour that year, and pianist Benton Stokes came from Nashville to be the opening act. Local food trucks assembled to sell food for dinner, providing a source of free advertising within their networks. Aside from an ill-timed rain shower, it was a perfect evening.

The lawn concert reminded us that we were able to tackle big projects, and that they might not be as expensive as we thought. When the concert was over, the Audacity Fund still had money left over, and parishioners had begun sending unsolicited donations to replenish it. Everyone wanted to know what we were going to do next.

A year later, the Audacity Fund hosted a festival of three sacred arts. The initial idea was to revive a then-defunct diocesan choir festival, but we expanded on that by commissioning a new parish hymn. Music professor Bill Roberts from Virginia Theological Seminary wrote the score, Lutheran hymn writer Susan Cherwien provided the text, and Episcopal artist Mel Ahlborn created a beautiful illumination of the first verse. All three artists came to Memphis for the festival and spent the weekend teaching their crafts to people from our parish, our neighborhood and our diocese.

Slowly, one project at a time, the impossible began to seem possible. The waters began to part, and the Promised Land came into view.

Our third Audacity Fund project was a ministry project with some of our urban partners – “ministry with” being the key phrase rather than “ministry to.” We asked our friends at Emmanuel Center, a longstanding Episcopal youth development center in Memphis’s urban core, what sorts of projects they needed to have done, and we recruited volunteers from both communities to carry them out, employing neighborhood tradespeople to do the skilled work. Theologian Kathy Grieb came from Virginia Theological Seminary to offer theological reflections – and to wield a paint brush! – as the weekend went along. Every work team had people from Holy Communion and people from Emmanuel Center. We began with a shared meal at Holy Communion on Friday evening and concluded with shared worship services at Emmanuel Center on Sunday morning. Good work was done and good friendships were forged.

After we completed three major projects in as many years, the Audacity Fund faded away. It had done its job, reminding us of what was possible when we focused on what we had and what we could do, rather than on what we did not have and what we could not do.

As the spirit of abundance grew at Church of the Holy Communion, stewardship giving began to grow as well. We used our first new dollars to make visible investments in our facilities. We replaced peeling wallpaper and removed stained carpets. We moved the large portraits of former rectors out of our entryway and installed acrylic frames to display colorful photographs from recent

parish events. Within a few years, the church's building started to convey the newfound energy and hopefulness of the congregation.

Since 2013, Church of the Holy Communion's vibrancy has increased dramatically. We reversed our decline in attendance and grew our stewardship budget by a sustained 34.5 percent. We have just finished a major capital campaign and will soon have all of our facilities completely restored. Reclaiming Christ's spirit of abundance breathed new life into Church of the Holy Communion, and we are excited to discover what audacious things God will ask us to do next.

The first verse of our parish hymn captures the present spirit of our community well:

This, the gold of all our hoping:
God is making all things new.
Alleluia be our measure;
Alleluias mark our days;
May each breath, each deed, each pleasure,
Choir to God our heartfelt praise.

*The Reverend **Sandy Webb** has served as rector of Church of the Holy Communion and a trustee of St. Mary's Episcopal School in Memphis, Tennessee, since 2013. Previously, he was associate rector at St. John's Episcopal Church in Roanoke, Virginia, and chaplain to Roanoke Fire-EMS. He served for fifteen years as a worship planner for the General Convention of the Episcopal Church.*

Resources:

- [Sharing the Bounty of God's Garden](#) by Bill Eakins, Vestry Papers, November 2018
- [Creating a Culture of Giving](#) by Angela Emerson, ECF Vital Practices blog, January 27, 2012
- [From Scarcity to Generosity](#) by Mary MacGregor, Vestry Papers, September 2015
- [Testing Mammon: Learning Financial Discipleship](#) an ECF webinar presented by Steven Tomlinson, April 25, 2018

Uncovering Hidden Treasure

Demi Prentiss

There's a special kind of thrill in witnessing the discovery of hidden, unexpected treasure, even if the loot doesn't belong to you. Look at what PBS has done with those "big reveal" moments on *Antiques Roadshow*. That horrid old vase inherited from Grandma is worth hundreds of thousands of dollars! Just imagine what you could do with that kind of money! And she bought it at a junk store! A thrill for the viewers as much as for the owner and the appraiser.

With consistent pledging increasingly uncertain, and with the growing emphasis on putting church assets toward serving the larger community, increasing numbers of Episcopal churches are beginning to ferret out their underutilized assets. And they're discovering that they, too, may have treasures hiding in plain sight. Congregations become encouraged and energized to learn that they

have untapped resources, often overlooked for decades, that can both improve the church's financial position and better serve the surrounding community.

Hiding in plain sight

Dean René John was called to Trinity Cathedral in Trenton, New Jersey, in 2007. Several years ago, the cathedral's leaders raised the question: Looking at all our assets, might there be some we're not using, and could we convert those unused assets into more useful resources? The cathedral's 40,000 square foot physical plant was requiring more and more of the budget.

At the instigation of Georgia Koenig, a much-respected lay leader, the cathedral invited a long-time member who worked for Sotheby's to walk through the cathedral along with its lay leaders and the dean. He spotted nothing especially remarkable, until two paintings at the back of the church in unceremonial frames caught his eye. "I think we could get \$60,000 to \$70,000 for each of those," he said, to everyone's astonishment. Making good on their promise to keep the congregation informed at every step, the vestry moved through a process of voting to have the paintings appraised and ultimately sold at Sotheby's. The pair brought a total of nearly \$200,000. The proceeds created an endowed "arts fund," so named as a reminder of the source of the money. The return from that investment is used to fund the cathedral's outreach projects and to balance the budget, especially helping with the vast maintenance needs.

As a part of the cathedral's agreement with Sotheby's, the church received digital prints of the two paintings, which were hung where the originals had been placed. John chuckles telling the story of one of his parishioners, who saw the prints hanging at the back of the church and asked him, "What happened? Did the deal fall through?" She was unable to tell that she was looking at prints, not the originals.

This happy outcome fell into place only after many conversations and a months-long process of detailing every step to the congregation at large. Similarly, Trinity Church in Stoughton, Massachusetts, undertook a long process of fact-finding, listening, discernment, information-sharing and careful planning in order to turn a potential liability into a much-needed asset.

Reassessing real estate

Harry Walton, rector at Trinity Stoughton since 2014, recognized that real estate all around the community was becoming prime property. After a ten-year period of congregational dissent and talk of closing early in the 2000's, Trinity had rebounded. The church's leaders were looking carefully at how they might make the most of their assets. The rectory had been rented as a residence for many years, but the below-market rate failed to cover needed repairs and there was much deferred maintenance. Thinking, "We don't want to be a slumlord," Walton feared the rectory property might possibly bankrupt the parish, if events unfolded badly.

Adam Dawkins, senior warden from 2016 to early 2019, urged the congregation to take an inventory of its assets, "to see what is advancing our mission and what is not." He shared Walton's concern over potential liabilities, as well. A member of the congregation, a realtor, believed that the time was right to sell the rectory. While the rent from the home supplemented the parish's

operating budget, a careful analysis of actual costs associated with the property was not favorable. The vestry's ultimate vote to sell the rectory was greeted with applause from the congregation.

After an extended legal process to evict their tenants, the congregation spent two major workdays painting and fixing up the property. The rectory was sold to a couple who are dedicated to reviving its former glory, and the sale proceeds created an endowment. The four percent quarterly draw on the endowment fund generates slightly less than the rental profits but without the maintenance headaches. "And," Dawkin adds, "stewardship has increased dramatically. We were very, very deliberate about every step of the way" – engaging the congregation, creating an endowment, and ensuring that the endowment would be treated as an investment. "I think the whole process increased our understanding about the intricacies of parish finance. Now, with an endowment, we're having conversations about planned giving and legacy giving."

Another congregation that Walton pastors, Trinity Canton, recently renewed an existing cell-tower lease on their property. With the increase in cellular traffic since the original lease was signed some 20 years ago, the senior warden negotiated a 25-year term along with a sizeable up-front payment.

What are our communities asking for?

Starting about seven years ago, with the arrival of new rector Michelle (Chellie) White, Christ Episcopal Church (CEC), Teaneck, New Jersey, began to examine their vast, underutilized facility. They saw potential for connecting with their neighborhood, which struggles with food insecurity and under-resourced schools. White remarked, "They don't come to us – so we need to go out and get them. People must know that God loves them." The congregation started with supplying snack packs and warm clothes to address children's needs, along with sponsoring family-oriented events and community meals. Those services and the love that parishioners demonstrated for their neighbors, began to build CEC's reputation for helping. And White worked to build relationships with the school superintendent, local religious leaders and other non-profits that were willing to raise funds and offer resources to the children.

About two years ago, a New Jersey initiative called on state agencies to link with nonprofits as partners. The initiative resulted in a \$200,000 state grant to the school district, and CEC's 3,000 square foot undercroft was remodeled to house a public preschool. The renovations included new lights, flooring, doors and internet installation. The preschool is now beginning its second year of operation at CEC. While the church charges below market rates to the school and other tenants, that income plus donations fills gaps in the budget and enables more outreach.

CEC makes a concentrated effort to put other underutilized spaces to work. A chapel has become home for a Spanish congregation, a play yard was built by a charitable donation and a "start-up church" meets in a Sunday school classroom. CEC is partnering with a local theatre group to start a children's theatre program. "We just keep asking," White explains. "CEC has become the mouthpiece for the needs of the community. We have credibility because we serve."

Dean Nathan LeRud, who serves at Trinity Cathedral in Portland, Oregon, sees putting church spaces to work in service of the community as an imperative. The cathedral has been intentional over the last few years about diversifying its income streams. "We had been increasing our annual

giving campaign by a slight amount every year, and we had a sense that we were growing. The budget was growing, too, and at a rate that that was going to outpace where we thought our giving was going to be. So we knew we were heading for a cliff. We didn't know when it was going to hit us, and we didn't know how big it would be."

With number-crunching help from a congregation member who was a Nike executive, the vestry learned that cliff was likely to hit "like next year." That analysis increased LeRud's conviction that Trinity was overly dependent on annual giving, which accounted for about 60 percent of revenue when LeRud became acting dean in 2014. He likes to imagine the possibility of Trinity's income in another 20 years coming from three about-equal sources: annual giving, endowment/development income and charges for facility use.

To shift the income-stream in that direction, LeRud explained that the vestry has embraced the process of examining two specific questions:

- What can we monetize? That is, what are we giving away for free that could be charged for?
- Is it okay to think about our space as a community resource and invite organizations with considerable resources to pay to use those spaces?

A discernment task force is charged with examining each possible income stream and reporting on potential income, as well as positives and negatives for the congregation. Increased use of the spaces has required implementing reservation policies and developing security protocols to ensure safety for everyone. And tracking room use and maintenance needs has increased administrative needs. The vestry started with charging for parking and increasing rates for room rentals, and has recently begun charging for using Trinity as a wedding venue, even for members. LeRud reports that the vestry is embracing this work and has shown a strong commitment to this not-uncontroversial process.

"On the West Coast, our challenge is that few congregations have an endowment of any size at all. We are very dependent on the immediate generosity of the people in our pews, which is a great privilege and opportunity. We're the ones who have to make things happen," Rudd explains, casting the annual campaign as an opportunity for joyful giving. "The liability for us is that that doesn't feel sustainable. I'm pretty sure we won't be running an annual campaign 20 or 30 years from now. How can we be nimble enough to respond to a very different world?"

For LeRud and the other leaders at Trinity, the careful budget analysis and examination of how Trinity uses and charges for the use of its spaces has set in motion important conversations about money: How might God intend Trinity to use its assets for transformation? How might Trinity foster a culture that sees money differently, with less shame and more creativity? How might the church as a whole need to re-think the language of giving to speak to people in the 21[1] century?

Arwen Myers, director of communications and marketing at Trinity Cathedral notes that through this diversification process she has seen a "shift in the culture here, thinking a little bit more outward. This is not just a cathedral for the people who go here. We are neighbors, and we have a resource that is a great blessing. That means opening our doors and letting our neighbors in this building. This is missional work."

***Demi Prentiss** is a Program Consultant in the Endowment Management Solutions division of Episcopal Church Foundation (ECF), offering support to dioceses and congregations in structuring and growing their endowments. Previously, she served five years as ministry developer for the Episcopal Diocese of Fort Worth as they reorganized, partnering with individuals and congregations to re-imagine how to be the church. She has served a brief stint on the Presiding Bishop's staff as Program Officer for Lay Leadership, and spent many years as a ministry developer in congregations varying from family to resource size. She holds degrees from Seabury-Western and Harvard, and is author, with Fletcher Lowe, of *Radical Sending: Go to Love and Serve*. She lives in Denton, TX, where she has built a practice as a life and leadership coach for leaders in congregations and non-profit organizations.*

Resources:

- [The Gift of Volunteers](#) by Brad Agry, ECF Vital Practices blog, June 21, 2013
- [Why Merge?](#) by Greg Syler, ECF Vital Practices blog, April 23, 2019
- [Being at the Edge](#) by Lori Hale Babcock, Vestry Papers, January 2013
- [Tenants and Friends](#) by Anna Olson, ECF Vital Practices blog, March 3, 2016

Nostalgia Is a Disease

Kirk Berlenbach

“We need to bring in families with young children.” Every struggling church recites this mantra. It’s no surprise. They are shrinking and graying and face a painful choice, change or die.

Unfortunately, it is not as simple as attracting a single demographic. Reversing systemic decline can be just as long and complex as the factors that contributed to it. Seismic shifts in our culture and technology have affected church attendance and participation across the denominational spectrum.

Out-dated standards for success

Businesses and other institutions have managed to adapt to these same changes and trends, often reinventing themselves in the process. Yet church leaders continue to hold themselves to models and standards of success that haven’t been viable for decades. For example, Sunday morning worship should be full. There should be a large choir and an organist. The church school should be thriving, because what family would choose soccer over church? There should be dozens of ministries and plenty of retirees who each give ten hours a week to the altar guild or finance committee. A successful parish should be self-contained and self-sufficient and replenish its membership through births, as opposed to evangelism.

Today, that same once-thriving church has just a fraction of the people and money it had formerly. An ever-shrinking group of volunteers is trying to balance the demands of multiple ministries, unable to let any one of them go. They may have some of those coveted families with young children, but they only attend once a month so it is impossible to get to the critical mass needed for

an organized church school. Yet despite limited resources, they are held captive by nostalgia and continue to define success only in terms of the lofty standards of the past.

[Sweat](#) is a play set in Reading, Pennsylvania. It chronicles the gradual collapse of a thriving blue-collar town into what became the [poorest city in America](#). The story revolves around a factory and the people who work there. As the plant slashes wages and brings in non-union labor, the whole community is thrown into chaos and conflict. Some want to fight, while others are willing to accept the loss of pay and pension. With the strike and lockout come inevitable hardships, and although people do their best to stand together, inevitably friendships come unraveled. It is an incredibly powerful commentary on some of the forces that have shaped our current political landscape. Yet out of all that moved and troubled me, there was one line that truly stood out, “Nostalgia is a disease.”

Breaking out of the nostalgia trap

As Episcopalians our past helps define us. Our traditions, liturgy and hymns are part of who we are. Yet the past can also imprison us, cutting us off from new possibilities. This is where I and other staff members at the Diocese of Pennsylvania offer help. By reframing the situation, we help congregations break free from the yoke of nostalgia and redefine what it means to be “successful” as a parish.

Letting go of institutions and practices that are no longer effective can be painful, but it is also liberating. Ending the annual Fondue Festival may be hard, but it may also be a relief to volunteers who felt they had no choice but to keep it going, even though it attracts just a fraction of the people it used to in its heyday. What once brought life now imprisons.

Look inward and then out to the community for God’s call today

It is only by letting go of those past notions of what a church “should” be and do, that our parishes can begin to consider who God is calling them to be now. Such a fundamental shift usually begins by taking stock of ourselves. Who are we – not in fantasy or memory – but in reality? What are our needs? What are we really able to do and do well?

The next step is to look outwards to the surrounding community. Who lives there? What are their needs? What does the church have to offer them? Meaningfully connecting with neighbors must be part of any parish’s identity and mission. Therefore, it is often helpful to compile and analyze demographic information from [Executive Insite](#) and [Datastory](#). While there is no substitute for building relationships face-to-face, good data can give a vestry a place to start identifying opportunities for ministry.

But churches want more than just data. They want proof that a parish like theirs can actually turn things around. Therefore, whether they are drawn from written articles or from my own experience, real-life examples are one of the most powerful tools I have to offer. They not only provide inspiration, they offer hope.

Once church leaders have been reoriented, encouraged and equipped with information about their community, the next step is to enter into prayerful conversation to discern a new sense of identity and call. I like to come back after the vestry has had some time to reflect and then help them articulate that.

While this process can mean crafting a new mission and vision statement, what really matters is that they articulate one or two missional priorities. They don't have to be huge. It is often better to identify something modest yet achievable, rather than attempt some grand gesture. One new ministry or small success can be the catalyst that energizes the congregation and creates a meaningful connection in the community. This, in turn, can help lead more people to the church, creating new life and energy.

Of course, there is no guarantee that a new endeavor will ultimately work out – but as my bishop, Daniel Gutiérrez, is fond of saying, “we should be failing often, so long as we fail early and fail cheap.”

Sometimes that new idea doesn't succeed. If it doesn't, then we go back and discern again what God may be calling us to do.

Navigating all this change and venturing out into the unknown is hard. We are so rooted in the past that it can be difficult to let go, even when we know that the way we have always been doing it is no longer working. At such times it is important to remember that [Jesus had no time for nostalgia](#). Instead, Christ calls us out of bondage into freedom and through the grace of God, despair and stagnation can give way to hope and possibility.

Jesus offers us the new wine. It is up to us to help reshape our churches into new wineskins so that we may share his Gospel freely and fully with the world around us.

***Kirk Berlenbach** serves as Canon for Growth and Support in the Diocese of Pennsylvania. He works with congregations to help shift their focus outward to the community, connect with people who might not otherwise attend, and make the best and fullest use of their buildings. A veteran of parish ministry, he was also heavily involved in Diocesan governance and the boards of a number of community nonprofits. Prior to parish ministry he worked in behavioral health and in hospital and hospice chaplaincy. He loves reading, music, gardening, cooking, craft beer and studies Aikido. He is happily married with three children in college. You can follow him @canonkirk and read some of his musings at barpriest.wordpress.com*

Resources:

- [Letting Go](#) by Annette Buchanan, ECF Vital Practices blog, July 3, 2018
- [Nostalgia and Remembering the Why Behind Change](#) by Richelle Thompson, ECF Vital Practices blog, July 26, 2016
- [Change is Possible](#) by Richelle Thompson, ECF Vital Practices blog, December 2, 2016
- [New Leadership for a Changing Church](#) by Donald V. Romanik, Vestry Papers, January 2017

Putting Our Buildings to Work

David Robinson

In the last half of the nineteenth century, renewed interest in religion and the social gospel sparked a movement. Gatherings that began in homes to worship and pray led to the formation of new Episcopal congregations. With the support of their bishops, land was purchased and churches were built. Those buildings became focal points for their cities and communities.

That's our history. These buildings are an asset. We record them on our balance sheet. We insure them against peril and natural disasters. We know they have value. But how do we use our buildings in this modern society? How can we use them the other six days of the week? Finally, how can we monetize our assets?

Creative ideas for using our land and buildings

Speaking with churches across the country, we hear many creative ideas on how we can use our buildings and receive a financial benefit from them. Here are a few ideas:

- Community garden: this works in urban, rural and suburban areas
- Parking lot rental: imagine your church on football or soccer Saturdays
- Commercial kitchens: partner with a local small business incubator to lease out your kitchens to entrepreneurs needing space to start their businesses
- Coffee shop: located in a downtown or college community, it can provide a welcoming and inviting space to meet and engage with the community
- 5k and half marathon refreshment area: offer your church or parking lot as a stop on the racecourse
- Private daycare: contract with a daycare program and lease classroom space
- Not for profit office space: lease classroom and office space at reasonable rates to organizations that can benefit from well-maintained facilities
- Convocation: partner with local schools (public and private) to hold events at your church
- Election day: churches offer a perfect polling location in some communities
- Concerts on the green: serves as an opportunity to showcase talents young and old

Congregations and communities both benefit when our buildings provide needed services

There are also wonderful stories of churches serving the community. One church in rural Ohio transforms itself weekly so the medical community can come in and volunteer its time to provide free medical and dental services.

Another church, with an after-school homework group for Hispanic students, now partners with local law enforcement to offer basic Spanish for first responders.

A third church, on the brink of closing with only nine members, was revitalized when a community daycare leased the lower level of their education building. The financial benefit from the

arrangement brought a renewed sense of purpose to the congregation and the freedom to reach out to the community.

Working with the diocesan chancellor or parish attorney, agreements can be crafted to document the relationship with these partners and outline the financial benefit to the parish. Careful attention should be paid to potential tax issues, but those concerns can be reduced.

The benefits that can come from allowing our building assets to work for the parish are boundless. The untapped potential is amazing.

David Robinson has been the chief financial officer of the Diocese of Southern Ohio for ten years, handling the financial and accounting aspects of the diocese's diverse operations and endowments. Additionally, he works with the 74 diocesan congregations, supporting and advising them on their buildings and other facilities. Growing out of his work in the diocese, David sits of the boards of St. Augustine University (Raleigh, North Carolina) and the Church Investment Group (NYC). He has also served on the board of directors of the CinFed Credit Union for the last 24 years.

Resources:

- [Church Building Use](#) by Annette Buchanan, ECF Vital Practices blog, May 31, 2017
- [A Tale of Three Buildings](#) by Janet Lombardo, ECF Vital Practices blog, February 18, 2019
- [Sharing the Bounty of God's Garden](#) by Bill Eakins, Vestry Papers, November 2018
- [Homegrown Communion: Faith, Land and Neighbor](#) an ECF webinar presented by Sarah Nolan, September 26, 2013

Un espíritu audaz de abundancia

Sandy Webb

Un espíritu de escasez puede desmoronar una parroquia, mientras que un espíritu de abundancia la puede edificar.

En 2013, la Iglesia Holy Communion había perdido la tercera parte de sus feligreses, a lo largo de un período de diez años, y las promesas de donativos se habían reducido en más de un quince por ciento en un plazo de cinco años. La historia narrada a menudo sobre la decadencia de iglesias parecía estar escribiéndose a sí misma nuevamente en Memphis, Tennessee.

En esa época difícil, buscamos inspiración en la historia del Antiguo Testamento sobre la peregrinación de los israelitas por el desierto, especialmente en su finalización. En Josué, cuando había llegado el momento de entrar a la Tierra Prometida, Dios no partió las aguas del río Jordán hasta que los líderes de la comunidad entraron en el río. Los israelitas necesitaban tener la valentía de hacer su parte antes de que Dios hiciera su parte. Nos sentimos inspirados a hacer lo mismo

Nuestro primer paso en el Jordán fue establecer el Fondo *Audacity*: aproximadamente \$7,500 extraídos de nuestras reservas de efectivo que pusimos a disposición para apoyar proyectos

especiales. Cuando a alguien se le ocurriera una nueva idea que pudiera impulsar la iglesia, el Fondo *Audacity* proporcionaría el dinero. Había dos reglas: el fondo no proporcionaría dinero para nada que hubiéramos hecho anteriormente y todos los proyectos del Fondo *Audacity* tenían que ser lo más grandes y audaces que pudiéramos manejar.

Nuestro primer proyecto del Fondo *Audacity* fue un concierto comunitario. Memphis es una ciudad de música y la iglesia Holy Communion tiene un gran jardín frente a una calle principal. Alquilamos una tienda, hicimos un letrero y pusimos una cerca temporal para evitar que los niños salieran a la calle. El Proyecto Sloan River (en ese entonces la banda de Kanuga y del Evento de Jóvenes Episcopales) nos incluyó en su gira ese año, y el pianista Benton Stokes vino de Nashville para ser el acto de apertura. Camiones de comida locales vinieron a vender comida para la cena, proporcionando una fuente de publicidad gratuita dentro de sus redes. Aparte del tiempo lluvioso, fue una noche perfecta.

El concierto sobre el césped nos recordó que podíamos encarar grandes proyectos con menores costos que los esperados. Cuando terminó el concierto, aunque al Fondo *Audacity* le había quedado dinero, los feligreses comenzaron a enviar donaciones no solicitadas para reabastecerlo. Todos querían saber qué sería lo próximo que haríamos.

Un año después, el Fondo *Audacity* organizó un festival de tres artes sagradas. La idea inicial era revivir un festival de un coro diocesano que ya no existía, pero la expandimos al encargar un nuevo himno parroquial. El profesor de música Bill Roberts, del Seminario Teológico de Virginia, escribió la partitura, la escritora de himnos luteranos Susan Cherwien proporcionó el texto, y el artista episcopal Mel Ahlborn creó una hermosa ilustración de la primera estrofa. Los tres artistas vinieron a Memphis para el festival y pasaron el fin de semana enseñando sus destrezas a gente de nuestra parroquia, nuestro vecindario y nuestra diócesis.

Poco a poco, proyecto por proyecto, lo imposible empezó a parecer posible. Las aguas comenzaron a partirse y vislumbramos la Tierra Prometida.

Nuestro tercer proyecto del Fondo *Audacity* fue un proyecto ministerial con algunos de nuestros socios urbanos en el que la frase clave era “ministerio con” en lugar de “ministerio para”. Les preguntamos a nuestros amigos del Centro Emmanuel, un centro de desarrollo juvenil episcopal en el núcleo urbano de Memphis, qué tipo de proyectos necesitaban que se realizaran y reclutamos voluntarios de ambas comunidades para llevarlos a cabo, empleando a comerciantes del vecindario para que realizaran los trabajos especializados. ¡La teóloga Kathy Grieb vino del Seminario Teológico de Virginia para ofrecer reflexiones teológicas y a ayudarnos a pintar! Todos los equipos de trabajo tenían gente de Holy Communion y del Centro Emmanuel. Comenzamos con una comida compartida en Holy Communion el viernes por la noche y concluimos con servicios de adoración compartidos en el Centro Emmanuel el domingo por la mañana. Se hizo un buen trabajo y se forjaron buenas amistades.

Después de completar tres proyectos importantes en ese mismo número de años, el Fondo *Audacity* fue desapareciendo paulatinamente. Había hecho su trabajo y nos recordó lo que podíamos hacer si nos concentrábamos en lo que teníamos y podíamos hacer, en lugar de en lo que no teníamos y no podíamos hacer.

A medida que el espíritu de abundancia crecía en la Iglesia Holy Communion, las donaciones de mayordomía también comenzaron a crecer. Utilizamos nuestros primeros dólares nuevos para hacer inversiones visibles en nuestras instalaciones. Reemplazamos el papel de la pared que se estaba despegando y quitamos las alfombras manchadas. Movimos los grandes retratos de antiguos rectores fuera de nuestra entrada e instalamos marcos de acrílico con fotografías coloridas de eventos parroquiales recientes. En pocos años, el edificio de la iglesia comenzó a transmitir la nueva energía y las esperanzas de la feligresía.

Desde 2013, la vitalidad de la Iglesia de Holy Communion aumentó exponencialmente. La asistencia a nuestra iglesia aumentó, al igual que nuestro presupuesto de mayordomía, en un 34.5 por ciento sostenido. Acabamos de terminar una importante campaña de capital y dentro de poco nuestras instalaciones estarán completamente restauradas. Retomar el espíritu de abundancia de Cristo dio nueva vida a Holy Communion y estamos ansiosos por descubrir qué serán las próximas cosas audaces que Dios nos pedirá que realicemos.

La primera estrofa de nuestro himno parroquial capta el espíritu actual de nuestra comunidad:

Este, el oro de todas nuestras esperanzas:
Dios está haciendo todo nuevo.
Que Aleluya sea nuestro compás;
Que los Aleluyas marquen nuestros días;
Que todo aliento, toda obra, todo placer,
Cante nuestras más sinceras alabanzas a Dios.

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Recursos:

- [Metodos para vivir en abundancia](#) por Sandra Montes, Vestry Papers, septiembre 2015
- [Hablar con auténtica firmeza](#) por Dick Kurth, Vestry Papers, noviembre 2003
- [La mayordomía es un estilo de vida](#) por José Leonel Ortez, Vestry Papers, septiembre 2016