

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