



Vital Practices

for leading congregations

**PRACTICING
GENEROSITY**

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Cosi, Cosi, Iyaphela

BY LISA MEEDER TURNBULL

My favorite thing about African storytelling is how the story ends.

In the European tradition, we say, “the end” as if the story has no life outside of that moment. Cinderella and Prince Charming live happily ever after. The end. There’s nothing more to say.

But in African storytelling, we say, “Cosi, Cosi Iyaphela—Here I rest my story.” It is the story that has life. The speaker merely picks it up for a while, holds it, and shapes it for a time.

In this season of financial stewardship, many of us will be telling the story of our congregation’s mission and ministry. Which story will we choose to tell?

This one?

Once upon a time a church needed money. The leaders wrote a budget and held a congrega-

tional meeting to explain how they would pay the staff, fulfill diocesan obligations, support overhead and operations and fund the current program. They handed out pledge cards, made visits and phone calls, and held an ingathering. No one was particularly excited, but most people gave at least what they had given last year. After deferring some maintenance and holding a special appeal, it all worked out. The End.

Or...?

Once, not so long ago, a church stood on the village green. The other buildings wondered, “Why do you work so hard? You are old! You’ve earned your place.”

“Ah,” said the church, “but then I would become an idol. I would take the people’s offerings into myself and they would focus on caring for me.

"I would rather be a vessel. When people bring glad gifts, my systems are maintained to offer warmth and cool respite in season. My foundation is sure and my roof is tight, so that worship and meetings and suppers can nurture. My beautiful doors are accessible. My walls know laughter, and weeping, and the depths of the human heart.

"My story rests in this generation of faithful stewards. Yes, I have lived a great deal. I will live a great deal more in the care of others."

There is no right answer: The story you tell will be the story that's right for your congregation. Will it be a maintenance story or a mission story? A story of fundraising or a story of stewardship? A story that worries about making ends meet or that delights in God's creative abundance?

Some of the parish leaders I work with in the Diocese of Maine are experimenting with a budget narrative that tells a mission story by inviting clergy and lay staff to estimate the percentage of their time that is committed to each ministry area. They study building usage in a similar way. Taking the dollar amounts from the compensation and operations sections of the traditional budget draft, they pro rate the costs so that the narrative is organized around total resources committed to various

ministry threads.

To organize such a narrative, many simply use the existing program categories from their traditional budgets. Some find it helpful to use the **SWEEPS** acronym—**S**ervice and Outreach, **W**orship, **E**ducation, **E**vangelism, **P**astoral Care, and **S**tewardship—to be sure they've captured everything. One very creative priest organized her time according to the ordination vows found in the Book of Common Prayer! Again, there's no right answer; the right answer is the one that speaks most deeply to your congregation.

In addition to shifting the conversation from maintenance to mission, this approach to the narrative budget has three distinct "side effects" that feed a broader approach to holistic stewardship in the congregation.

First, it is both humbling and affirming to see a full list of parish ministries. Whenever I ask a vestry to list all the church's committees, ministries, and programs, there is always that moment when they step back, speechless, at how the Holy Spirit works in their midst. Imagine how striking this would be for those who are not as in tune with the life of the church!

Second, some costs do not fit in obvious categories of ministry,

creating moments of conversation and education. The most common example is the congregation's support of the diocese. In Maine, many of our new members are received from the Roman Catholic tradition. In their experience, the diocese supports the parish, while in our tradition the opposite applies. And for all communicants, there is value in exploring how our common life is enriched through the diocese—visitations, confirmations, ordinations, aid to mission congregations, outreach to our companion diocese, youth ministry, insurance and legal support, etc.

Finally, a focus on mission and ministry invites the congregation into whole and healthy stewardship in all seasons. By showing people how the Holy Spirit is using their financial offerings through mission and ministry, we invite them into further discernment of their gifts and inspire them to explore how they are called to make glad gifts in their non-financial offerings as well—prayer, presence, effort, dedication, time, talent, love, compassion, and service. This can be an energizing and life-giving moment for the congregation.

And now I say with an open and joyful heart: *cosi, cosi, iyaphela*—here I rest my story knowing that

you will take sparks of ideas and make them your own. You will shape your own story, for your own congregation. It will be a story that has life, a story that lives in the world without end. Amen, and amen.

<http://www.tens.org/resources/free-resources/free-resources-blog/three-stewardship-notions?category=Congregational+Leaders>

***Lisa Meeder Turnbull** is a member of the Diocese of Maine's Congregational Consultants Network and former missionary for stewardship for the diocese. Her blog mainestewards.wordpress.com offers reflections on all aspects of stewardship and baptismal ministry. These reflections will draw upon the weekly lectionary readings, the diocesan cycle of prayer, and issues in our common life as they relate to financial, non-financial, and legacy stewardship.*

Resources

- MaineStewards blog: <http://mainestewards.wordpress.com>
- Narrative Budget Template: <http://www.ecfvp.org/cms/content/yourturn/narrative-budget-template>
- The Toughest Topic: Talking About Money: <http://www.tens.org/newsletter/newsletter-blog/the-toughest-topic-talking-about-money/>
- Three Stewardship Notions:

Editor's Letter

“Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God”
(Hebrews 13:16)

Sharing is one of the early lessons we receive as toddlers. Most of us resist – sometimes kicking and screaming ‘Mine!’ – until we gradually learn that sharing is useful skill when we live in community.

Sharing – and by extension generosity – are skills that get easier with practice.

The beginning of the new program year seems to be the right time for ECF Vital Practices to share all we’ve been collecting related to generosity. Over the next two months, we’ll be sharing stories, resources, and best practices from congregations and congregational leaders who have adopted

In September and October, our contributors are sharing these best practices:

- In “Reframing Stewardship,” Greg Syler shares how his congregation changed the way it thinks about money and finances, so that it no longer “confuses stewardship with money.”
- Doreen Rice from St. Aidan’s Episcopal Church in Kansas offers her congregation’s “Recipe for Spiritual Growth.”
- In “Legacy & Generosity,” Celeste Ventura passes on the lessons in generosity her father shared with her as a young girl.
- When the Diocese of Ohio committed to the Episcopal Church’s Rebuild Our Church in Haiti campaign, congregations were encouraged to think of ways to incorporate the experience of building into their programs. In “Brick by Brick,” Elizabeth McKay Moosbrugger shares ways congregations rose to the occasion.
- Recognizing there is often a disconnect between program based budgeting and a spiritual connection to giving, Angela Emerson invites congregations to join her in proclaiming “No More Pledge Cards - Please!” and instead consider a year round generosity program designed to strengthen our spiritual relationship with God.
- Charles LaFond visualizes the stewardship campaign chairperson as a coach in “Stewardship: Presence Making.” Drawing a parallel between the fitness coach whose encouragement helps transform unhealthy lifestyles to healthier ones, he sees the stewardship chair as someone who can help us transform an unhealthy addiction around money into a different understanding of giving and generosity.
- In “Generosidad,” Armantina Peláez invites us to think about generosity in terms of time and talent as well as treasure. Drawing upon her experience as a member of a Latino/a congregation, she shares how practicing generosity through shared experiences can enrich a congregation. This article is available in English as well as Spanish.
- Lisa Meeder Turnbull relates how she applies the African concept of “Cosi, Cosi Iyaphelaby,” to a congregation’s stewardship narrative.

Following each article is a list of resources offering additional information and/or practical tools. Additional resources may also be found at <http://www.ecfvp.org/posts/faithful-budgets-stronger-stewardship/> as well as by clicking on the ECF Vital Practices' Topics button and then clicking on Stewardship: <http://www.ecfvp.org/topics/>

a link' tool, insert our full URL - <http://www.ecfvp.org/>

I invite you to add to this content by sharing the ways your congregation practices generosity. Post your stories, tips, and resources in the Your Turn section and in the comments box at the end of each article, blog post, or resource.

Faithfully,

Nancy

Nancy Davidge

PS: To make it easier for congregational leaders to find the resources offered through ECF Vital Practices, please consider adding a link to ECF Vital Practices to your website. Here's how: Using your websites 'add

Re-Framing Stewardship

BY GREG SYLER

Stewardship is about life, the whole of life. It's living the life of God, in fact – living more generously, more boldly, and more faithfully. Stewardship is everything. This is why we don't have a stewardship drive at St. George's in Valley Lee, Maryland, the dynamic and growing congregation I serve. Instead, we have an annual pledge drive: An appeal for people's financial generosity.

Please don't think us crass. It's really the other way around.

At St. George's we do stewardship day in and day out. It should go without saying that our Eucharistic worship reveals the abundant, self-giving nature of God. And we form our lives in God's through sermons that deal with the whole of life, formation opportunities for all ages, sustained pastoral care, and church parties that bring together widely divergent people and call them, as one, the Body of Christ. That's stewardship. What's so special about that? Obviously nothing. Every church does that.

At St. George's, though, we've been working on a right spirit. We celebrate and give thanks.

Our leadership cares about the spirit with which we approach our common Christian life. Sure, we have green-eye-shade folks (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Green_eyeshade) and Chicken Little's, (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henny_Penny) but our leadership is not motivated by money. When I first arrived and money (or the lack thereof) was the biggest source of anxiety, I moved the treasurer's report to the end of the Vestry agenda, and told them why: we begin by listening to God and responding, regardless of money. If it was the other way around and we started with how much money we didn't have, we'd never do anything but fret, let alone grow. We've also developed an independent finance committee. They've come up with very creative budgeting ideas because the Vestry has set the stage for mission-based conversations and, in turn, empowers the committee. That has set the tone with money ever since.

And, we don't confuse stewardship with money. Financial generosity is one aspect of stewardship; talking about stewardship when you're really trying to raise money is duplicitous and deadens its true

meaning. Keeping the focus on the life of God and the call of discipleship matters more than anything else.

When congregations finally lift the veil and begin to talk about raising money, they often showcase an ominous, comprehensive, line-by-line Excel spreadsheet of a budget that on its own says nothing about the Body of Christ. Usually, the stewardship cheerleader gives the story behind the numbers. Some congregations attempt a narrative budget in which they present a pie chart of summary categories: outreach, education, administration, etc.

We tried all of that at St. George's and it just didn't work. For one, no one made a compelling case to *me* for the way a comprehensive budget reflects the mission of God. We fund things in budgets that are dead wood, and someone needs to be honest about naming these. And, every narrative budget ends up with two huge pieces of the pie: administration and personnel. Those are not appealing categories for raising money so costs may be redistributed – diocesan assessments are added to outreach and

rectors are asked to account for the specific minutes spent on pastoral care or sermon prep.

At St. George's, we've made our institutional operations teach the people of God what it means to live the life of God. A radically different budget is a necessary first step. We slashed our operating budget to the barest of essentials: energy costs, facilities expenses, modest administrative and altar guild stuff, and personnel. The annual pledge drive supports that operating budget, and we are audacious about claiming in real terms what it costs to have a physical plant and competent ministers. It forces our personnel, including me, to be pointedly clear about our focus, ministry, and commitment to the community. The budget is a lot shorter, so we can review every line item every year and ask whether it's serving the mission of God as we've discerned. Once, I described this budgeting approach to a high-level diocesan staff person (someone known to wear purple), to which Purple raised Purple's eyebrows as if that were the oddest thing Purple had heard, and wondered whether it would lead people to decrease their pledge. Not true. It's the opposite: since implementing this strategy, the average pledge increased to nearly \$2,000, from \$1,200 where it was several years ago.

The increase in giving is based on an increase in vibrancy and participation. We didn't so much *remove* line items from the budget but, rather, *freed* them to generate their own mission-potential. We encourage ministry groups to freely discern God's call at that moment in our life, to dream big, and to help the congregation become more nimble and responsive. I wagered that the money would come, and would certainly come to those groups with the most compelling imagination and charismatic involvement of the community. It has. More money for ministries has been raised independent of the centralized, operating budget than was raised under the old system. Our outreach committee used to get a meager \$1,300 in the old budget; now, they lead a fundraiser and bring in \$6,000. But it's not about money. It's about a radically different church in which power is shared, discernment is constant, money is diffuse, and mission runs through it all.

And fundraisers? Officially, we have only one, our Crab Cake Festival. It's really not a fundraiser but a FUNraiser – we create a festival atmosphere in which we celebrate one another and the heritage of southern Maryland. We've convinced (most of) the community that if we break even

financially we'll have accomplished our goal. It was especially surprising, when we made a lot more money than anyone thought possible.

As for the other fundraisers, even though they were motivated by the desire to do good and raise money, in reality they were driving more people away from the church than toward: they created too many chiefs, too many hurt feelings, too much burnout, and had too little to do with the mission of God.

We live with less money from fundraisers, although the income lost was slightly offset by expenses cut from the operating budget. We also left the idea of fundraisers on the table, useable by ministry groups if they want. It's been nice to watch various ministry groups of the congregation – or a newly formed group that's dreaming something – re-purpose these old events, turning them into FUNraisers, too. The money raised goes directly to their project or mission (with Vestry oversight and coordination), which lends a greater vibrancy to the work and has generated more participation from a wider range of parishioners. A win/win. Stewardship needs re-framing.

Our steady, institutional church, as well as our meaning-hungry

world, craves the message that the God we know is abundant, generous, and in love with His world, and that there are women and men who live that way, too. For the sake of the world, we who call ourselves the Body of Christ need to live more robustly a generous life. If we are to become more courageous and less anxious stewards we also need the institutional church to work for us, not against. We need the church to become that “school for God’s service:” to teach God’s people what stewardship is and what it is not, to inspire with hopefulness and creativity the best capacities of our spirits to give and give generously, not because we must but because we may. And because we know how much more whole our lives become when we do.

***Greg Syler** is rector of St. George’s in Valley Lee, Maryland. He co-chairs the Collaborative Ministries Exploration Group of Region 6 of the Diocese of Washington and served as part of the group developing a summer camp program.*

Resources

- Blessed to be a Blessing Stewardship Resources: [tin-materials](http://www.tens.org/resources/free-resources/free-resources-blog/blessed-to-be-a-blessing-bulle-</div><div data-bbox=)

- FUNraisers: <http://episcopal-digitalnetwork.com/ens/2012/06/05/funraisers/>
- A Stewardship Bible Study: <http://www.tens.org/resources/free-resources/free-resources-blog/a-stewardship-bible-study>
- Your Budget Shows You Limits and Could be an Opportunity for Grace: http://archive.episcopalchurch.org/80050_126937_ENG_HTML.htm

Recipe for Spiritual Growth

BY DOREEN RICE

Like virtually every Episcopal Church, the [2011-2012] stewardship committee of St. Aidan's Episcopal Church (Olathe, KS) sat down in the spring to strategize for the coming fall 2011 campaign. The ensuing conversation would no doubt be a familiar one to those involved in church stewardship. What is our theme for the year? Should we ask for a percentage increase in giving? What amount do we need to raise to meet next year's budget? Should we redesign the pledge card?

During the conversation, however, St. Aidan's rector – Juli Sifers – suggested the committee take a week or so to read Michael Durall's book *Creating Congregations of Generous People*. The next time the committee met, the conversation was entirely different. The thinking was certainly outside the box - or perhaps better said – outside the collection plate. Durall inspired a different look at stewardship and the understanding that stewardship is holistic and organic. Ministry is derivative from stewardship: Our care for our churches, our congregations, ourselves, and the world outside our front doors, is

all stewardship.

As a foundation for our congregation's stewardship plan, the committee used Durall's Recipe for Spiritual Growth. This recipe has several key ingredients, with congregations being called to:

- Worship regularly – at least once a week
- Meet God daily in a set time of prayer
- Participate in the congregation's educational program
- Engage in individual study regularly, for improvement of the mind, for enlargement of Christian experience, and in preparation for Christian service
- Serve regularly in the programs of this church and in the areas of Christian responsibility outside of this church
- Dedicate a tithe of income to the work of the Kingdom of God

(From *Creating Congregations of Generous People*, copyright 1999

by the Alban Institute, Inc.)

Even his use of the word recipe was inspirational, leading the committee to use the metaphor of the nourishing properties of bread as a central focus of our plan.

St. Aidan's stewardship committee developed the following plan:

- The word recipe inspired the metaphor of bread for stewardship and its nourishment of the heart, mind, and soul. Specifically, stewardship was likened to Friendship Bread. As you may know, Friendship Bread dough grows continually. It is designed to be separated and shared with friends. Each small lump of dough can go on to feed scores of people. Likewise, each response to God's call can nourish hearts, minds, and souls in countless ways.
- Stewardship letters would contain no mention of the annual budget, meeting the budget, or the need to fund the budget.
- A ministry booklet was created. Each activity within the church

was classified using the points within the *Recipe for Spiritual Growth*.

- The stewardship effort was kicked off at a ministry fair. The ministry booklet was distributed and leaders of each activity were on hand. The congregation was encouraged to sign up for ministries of interest.
- Freshly baked bread was served at the fair. And Friendship Bread starter dough was distributed to attendees. Members were asked to bake a loaf of Friendship Bread to bring back to church on Ingathering Sunday, where the bread would be blessed and donated to a local food pantry.
- The dough continues to be used as part of the church's bread ministry. Loaves are baked each weekend and delivered to the homes of visitors to the church or people who receive weekly visits by Lay Eucharistic Visitors.
- Durall's *Recipe for Spiritual Growth* is included in the bulletin each week.

The 2011-2012 stewardship campaign was a success, but did require a third, more direct letter. The committee realized and

learned later from the congregation that the pledge card and instructions for its return were not clear. This resulted in a number of pledges not being renewed until the final letter was mailed and follow-up phone calls made.

St. Aidan's stewardship conversation continues with articles in the monthly newsletter and regular celebration of the results of our stewardship. Although the church's campaign was not necessarily unique or novel, it did help reinforce the fact that vision drives stewardship. The vision is our response to God's call and the stewardship of God's kingdom.

Doreen Rice has been a professional fundraiser for nearly 25 years. She is also studying for the priesthood and is very active within her congregation as a member of the stewardship committee and as a lay Eucharistic minister and visitor.

Resources

- Creating Congregations of Generous People by Michael Durall: <http://www.alban.org/bookdetails.aspx?id=548>
- St. Aidan's Ministry booklet: <http://www.ecfvp.org/your-turn/theres-a-place-for-you-at-the-table/>

- St. Aidan's Stewardship letters: <http://www.ecfvp.org/your-turn/sample-stewardship-letters/>

Legacy and Generosity

BY CELESTE VENTURA

Understanding Backwards and Living Forwards

"It is quite true what philosophy says: life must be understood backwards. But then one forgets the other principle: that it must be lived forwards."

Søren Kierkegaard, 19th century Danish philosopher, theologian and author

Once a week, at the dinner table, my dad would ask me how my stocks were doing. Nothing unusual you might say, but I was 12 years old at the time. I dearly loved him; however at times I did think Dad was a little strange. No other family I knew had this type of dinner conversation.

Dad had given me \$2,000 in play money (as a child, I never actually invested) and my charge was to come up with a plan for what stocks to buy and when to sell. He taught me how to read the Wall Street Journal, to understand and follow corporate news, to know what dividends and PE ratios were, and to chart the stocks I "picked." Once a week, during dinner, I would give him a report. Were the stocks up or down; did the company declare a dividend; what was

the news? Without the Internet, this meant I actually read the newspaper on a fairly regular basis. Not highly sophisticated but the practice took the form of a quest for knowledge.

As I reflect back, I am grateful for his guidance and the practice he instilled. It is part of my dad's legacy and now part of mine, living forward. That idea of legacy as the way we live, not simply the things we leave, is fundamental to ideas I have been privileged to present as a finance faculty member at CREDO conferences. The CREDO conferences consider the confluence of a holistic perspective on health that includes spiritual, vocational, and financial wellness, too.

Although the legal world views legacy as something tangible, CREDO views legacy as something we live, not simply the things we leave. Legacy can be expressed intangibly, passed either intentionally or unintentionally, from one generation to another in the form of beliefs and values, forgiveness given, forgiveness received, experiences shared, memories made, and stories told. You can choose to have generosity as a core value, and be part of the

legacy you live and the legacy you leave.

A vivid memory of those dinners with my father came to me during the summer of 2011. A group from our parish in the Diocese of El Camino Real was working and living for a week at Our Little Roses, in San Pedro Sula, Honduras. <http://www.ourlittleroses.org> Nuestras Pequeñas Rosas provides a safe, nurturing home and education for Honduran girls who have been born into poverty and whose lives have been marked by physical and emotional abuse. One day, we took them on an outing, to the beach a few hours away. We brought bags and gloves so that before swimming and lunch, we could have a beach clean-up party. The girls had never experienced any thing like this and in fact, they thought we were a little strange, just like I remembered thinking of my father.

As I thought about my father, it was not stocks I thought about but rather his legacy. I wondered if we were encouraging and passing on a practice that might become a norm— as Dad had done for me. I wondered if the simple act of

having a beach cleanup party might encourage the girls of Our Little Roses to adopt this as a generous practice for their environment. I wondered if learning was taking place from one generation to another: Would the kids look back and see this experience as an entrée to being stewards of God's creation or would they remember it at all? Were we laying a foundation, however thin, for these young Hondurans to care for their stunningly beautiful country and to be the next generation of people in relationship throughout the Anglican Communion?

As you reflect on your own legacy and the place of generosity as a core value, integral to your spiritual well being and the well being of others, I offer you some questions for reflection. What are the practices you are living forward and what do you understand about practice, generosity and legacy by looking back? Is your legacy, as reflected in your financial plans and action, congruent with, and integrally a part of, the wholeness of God's image in which we were created? Who has been a model of generosity in your life, a model of living life with integrity? I encourage you to share your stories of legacy with the next generation and together make memories that will become generous models for the following generation.

Celeste Ventura is a member of the CREDO faculty and writes a financial wellness blog called Next\$ Steps.

Resources

- CREDO: <http://episcopalcredo.org/>
- CREDO Conferences: <http://episcopalcredo.org/conferences/>
- Financial Planning Resources: <http://episcopalcredo.org/wellness/financial-resources/continuing-credo/financial-planning/>
- Next Step\$ Financial Blog: <http://episcopalcredo.org/wellness/credo-blogs/next-step/>
- Recommended Reading: <http://episcopalcredo.org/wellness/financial-resources/faculty-recommendations/>
- Our Little Roses in Honduras <http://www.ourlittleroses.org>

Una Nueva Manera de Encarar la Mayordomía

BY GREG SYLER

La mayordomía es sobre la vida, la vida entera. Es vivir la vida de Dios: vivir con más generosidad, valentía y fe. La mayordomía lo abarca todo. Es por eso que no tenemos una campaña de mayordomía en St. George's en Valley Lee, Maryland, la dinámica y creciente feligresía en la que sirvo. En lugar de ello tenemos una campaña anual de donativos: un llamado a la generosidad financiera de la gente.

Por favor no piensen que somos vulgares. En realidad, es lo opuesto.

En St. George's hacemos mayordomía todo el tiempo. De más está decir que nuestro culto eucarístico revela la abundante y generosa naturaleza de Dios. Y formamos nuestra vida en Dios por medio de sermones que tienen que ver con la vida en pleno, de oportunidades de formación para todas las edades, de cuidado pastoral sostenido y de fiestas en la iglesia que unen a personas muy diferentes y las llaman, como si fueran una sola, al Cuerpo de Cristo. Eso es mayordomía. ¿Qué tiene de especial todo eso? Evidentemente nada. Todas las iglesias lo hacen.

En St. George's, sin embargo,

no hemos estado esforzando en alcanzar un espíritu correcto. Celebramos y damos gracias. Nuestro liderazgo se interesa en el espíritu con el que abordamos nuestra vida cristiana común. Por supuesto que tenemos gente demasiado preocupada por el aspecto pecuniario o por los pequeños detalles y gente que siempre cree que ocurrirá alguna calamidad, pero nuestro liderazgo no está motivado por el dinero. Cuando recién llegué y el dinero (o la falta de él) era la principal fuente de preocupación, puse el informe del tesorero al final del orden del día de la junta parroquial y les dije por qué: empezamos escuchando a Dios y respondiendo, independientemente del dinero. Si fuera de otra manera y empezáramos por cuánto dinero no teníamos, lo único que haríamos sería preocuparnos y atrofiar nuestro crecimiento. También creamos un comité de finanzas independiente que presentó muchas ideas creativas sobre el presupuesto, entre ellas tener conversaciones sobre nuestras misiones. Desde entonces hemos abordado el tema del dinero de esa manera.

Y no confundamos la mayordomía

con el dinero. La generosidad financiera es un aspecto de la mayordomía; hablar sobre mayordomía cuando lo que en realidad se está haciendo es recaudar fondos es artero y oscurece su verdadero significado. Mantener la concentración en la vida de Dios y el llamado a ser discípulos importa más que ninguna otra cosa.

Cuando las feligresías finalmente levantan el velo y empiezan a hablar sobre recaudar fondos, a menudo presentan una página electrónica Excel nefasta con un presupuesto que por sí solo no dice nada sobre el Cuerpo de Cristo. Por lo general, un defensor de la mayordomía narra la historia detrás de los números. Algunas feligresías intentan presentar un presupuesto narrativo con forma de gráfica circular con categorías como extensión, educación, administración, etc.

Probamos todo eso en St. George's y no funcionó. Para empezar, nadie logró persuadirme que un presupuesto detallado refleja la misión de Dios. Asignamos fondos a cosas en los presupuestos que son madera muerta y alguien tiene que ser honesto al nombrarlas. Y todos los

presupuestos narrativos terminan con dos grandes partes de la gráfica circular: administración y personal. Esas no son categorías agradables para recaudar fondos, así que los costos se tienden a redistribuir: se añaden evaluaciones diocesanas a la extensión y se pide a los rectores que rindan cuentas de los minutos específicos que pasaron en cuidados pastorales o en preparación de sermones.

En St. George's hicimos que nuestras operaciones institucionales enseñen al pueblo de Dios lo que significa vivir la vida de Dios. Un presupuesto radicalmente diferente es un primer paso necesario. Redujimos nuestro presupuesto de operaciones a lo más esencial: costos de energía, gastos de instalaciones, asignaciones administrativas modestas, cofradía del altar y personal. La campaña anual de recaudación de fondos apoya el presupuesto de operaciones y decimos abiertamente lo que cuesta en tiempo real tener una planta física y ministros competentes. Fuerza a nuestro personal, incluyéndome a mí, a ser muy claros sobre nuestra concentración, ministerio y dedicación a la comunidad. El presupuesto es mucho más breve, para permitirnos ver cada línea todos los años y preguntar si está sirviendo la misión de Dios como la discernimos. En una ocasión

describí esta manera de abordar el presupuesto a una miembro del personal diocesano de alto nivel que frecuentemente se vestía de violeta. Violeta levantó las cejas, abrió los ojos de par en par, me miró como si fuera la cosa más extraña que hubiera oído jamás y me preguntó si causaría que la gente donara menos. En realidad fue exactamente lo opuesto: desde que pusimos en práctica esta estrategia los donativos prometidos promedio aumentaron a cerca de \$2,000, de los \$1,200 de hace varios años.

El aumento de los donativos proviene de una mayor vitalidad y participación en nuestra iglesia. No quitamos ítems del presupuesto, sino que más bien los liberamos para que generaran su propio potencial de misión. Estimulamos a los grupos de ministerios a que discernieran libremente la llamada de Dios en ese momento de sus vidas, para que soñaran a lo grande y ayudaran a que la feligresía fuera más ágil y receptiva. Aposté que el dinero vendría y que sin duda vendría a los grupos con la imaginación más persuasiva y la participación más carismática en la comunidad. Y así fue. Se han recaudado más fondos para ministerios aparte del presupuesto de operaciones centralizado que con el sistema anterior. Nuestro comité de extensión solía obtener

unos míseros \$1,300 en el viejo presupuesto, pero ahora realizan una campaña de recaudación de fondos y aportan \$6,000. Pero no es sólo sobre dinero. Es sobre una iglesia radicalmente diferente en la que se comparte el poder, el discernimiento es constante, el dinero es difuso y la misión lo permea todo.

¿Y las actividades para recaudar fondos? Oficialmente tenemos una sola, nuestro Festival de Pasteles de Cangrejo. En el festival creamos un ambiente divertido en el que nos celebramos los unos a los otros, así como la herencia del sur de Maryland. Hemos convencido a la comunidad (o a la mayoría de ella) que si terminamos sin deudas ni superávits hemos alcanzado nuestro objetivo. Fue especialmente sorprendente cuando ganamos mucho más dinero que lo que ninguno hubiera supuesto posible.

En cuando a las otras actividades para recaudar fondos, si bien estaban motivadas por el deseo de hacer el bien y de recaudar fondos, en realidad estaban más alejando a la gente de la iglesia que acercándola: creaban demasiados jefes, herían demasiados sentimientos, agotaban a la gente y tenían poco y nada que ver con la misión de Dios.

Vivimos con menos dinero pro-

veniente de actividades de recaudación de fondos, si bien el ingreso que perdimos estuvo ligeramente contrarrestado por recortes de gastos del presupuesto de operaciones. No descartamos del todo las actividades de recaudación de fondos, más bien las dejamos en manos de los grupos de ministerios. Ha sido muy gratificante observar a los diversos grupos de ministerios de la feligresía – o a un nuevo grupo lleno de sueños – modificar los propósitos de viejos eventos y convertirlos en algo divertido. El dinero recaudado va directamente a su proyecto o misión (con supervisión y coordinación de la junta parroquial), lo que brinda vitalidad a su labor y genera la participación de una gama más amplia de feligreses. Un ganar/ganar.

Es necesario encarar la mayordomía de otra manera. Nuestra iglesia, estable e institucional, así como nuestro mundo hambriento de significado, anhelan recibir el mensaje de que el Dios que conocemos es abundante, generoso y enamorado de Su mundo, y además que hay hombres y mujeres que viven de esa manera. Por el bien de nuestro mundo, nosotros los que nos llamamos el Cuerpo de Cristo tenemos que vivir una vida generosa más robustamente. Si nos vamos

a convertir en mayordomos más valientes y menos temerosos también necesitamos que la iglesia institucional trabaje para nosotros, no en contra nuestra. Necesitamos que la iglesia se convierta en “esa escuela para el servicio de Dios” para enseñar al pueblo de Dios lo que es y no es la mayordomía, para inspirar con esperanzas y creatividad las mejores capacidades de nuestros espíritus de dar y dar generosamente, no porque tenemos que hacerlo, sino porque tenemos ese poder. Y porque sabemos lo mucho más plenas que son nuestras vidas cuando lo hacemos.

Greg Syler *es rector de St. George's in Valley Lee, Maryland. Es copresidente del Grupo de Exploración de Ministerios Colaborativos (Collaborative Ministries Exploration Group) de la Región 6 de la Diócesis de Washington y fue parte del grupo que creó un programa de campamentos de verano.*

Resources

- Blessed to be a Blessing Stewardship Resources: <http://www.tens.org/resources/free-resources/free-resources-blog/blessed-to-be-a-blessing-bulletin-materials>

- FUNraisers: <http://episcopal-digitalnetwork.com/resources/2012/06/05/funraisers/>
- A Stewardship Bible Study: <http://www.tens.org/resources/free-resources/free-resources-blog/a-stewardship-bible-study>
- Your Budget Shows Your Limits and Could be an Opportunity for Grace: http://archive.episcopalchurch.org/80050_126937_ENG_HTML.htm

Brick by Brick

BY ELIZABETH MCKAY MOOSBRUGGER

How do you get people to say yes?
First you say yes.

When we hear of a tragedy near or far, we all want to help. Our first response is to want to write check. And that's good. But as leaders, we can't stop there. Leaders have to teach and inspire and bring others along in the mission. We are leaders in our Church. People are counting on us to help. When you stand up and lead, others will follow.

Last year, in the Diocese of Ohio, we explored what it means to be Episcopalian through acts of service. Joining the Episcopal Church's "Rebuilding Our Church in Haiti" (ROCH) campaign, we began to help rebuild earthquake ravaged Holy Trinity Cathedral in Port au Prince brick by brick. We weren't laying bricks. We were raising money by having people "buy bricks."

The intention was to do something in which everyone could participate. Most people have \$10. Rather than going for large donations, we wanted large numbers of people to buy a \$10 brick. Our goal was to sell a brick for each of the 7600 communicants in the diocese.

We raised over \$86,000. Our diocese was loaded with resources. Under the leadership of Terri Mathes, who led the Rebuilding Our Church in Haiti campaign for the Episcopal Church Foundation, coordinators at the diocesan and parish level received training, materials, and ideas for raising funds. With that framework in place, people began to put their own mark on the project in each parish.

Here are just a few of the creative ways congregations participated:

- Church of Our Saviour, Akron has a well organized outreach group with adult and teen leaders. They built a Lego Cathedral representing the earthquake damage and the new church to come. They held multiple events to engage all ages and interests of the parish and used press releases to engage the local community.
- Some people were inspired to try new things. Wendy Wilson Walker, a self avowed noncrafty person, of Trinity Cathedral, Cleveland, went to the craft store and bought materials.

She surprised herself by building a beautiful representation of the cathedral to use as a talking point and visual reminder for people in the campaign. Mike Booth, St-Michael's-in-the-Hills, Toledo, had his first foray into cooking. He made and sold "Brownie Bricks." At one point, Mike had about 40 pounds of brownie batter going in his kitchen!

- • St. Luke's, Cleveland, is a small inner city mission based church. Many of their parishioners are on some form of government aid. For the children of the parish, the notion that there might be someone poorer than them was surprising. They were even more surprised to find out they could help! The children held a walk-a-thon. With the help of some adults, they asked people for contributions at their parish and another small local parish. Women from St. Matthew's, Brecksville, 20 minutes away, heard about the walkathon at an ECW meeting and were inspired to sponsor the kids. The children were thrilled and empowered as the pile of model bricks stacked up

against the walls of the church basement grew, marking the money they raised.

What did we learn?

- Find the compelling story and tell it, over and over again. Include two or three specific ways that people can help.
- Ask others to get involved, a lot of others. Some people will jump in with just the story. Others respond to a direct ask. People who say yes are your leaders. In spite of self doubt and busy schedules, somehow they feel called to do this. We were able to equip them with resources and set them free.
- Let people lead according to their gifts. When parish coordinators were set free with resources to tailor the program to their church and their skills, their creativity helped them be on fire and inspire others.
- Cheerlead, affirm, and share stories all along the way. Every week, parish coordinators sent me updates on what they were doing and how it was going. I would turn that into a quick weekly email to all the coordinators to share their stories and inspire one another. Mike Booth was inspired to make the “Brownie Bricks” after reading

about a youth group doing it in another part of the diocese.

- Build momentum. Every two or three weeks another email went to clergy and lay leaders with the growing list of parishes involved and some of the cool projects and pictures. With the support of diocesan staff preaching about it on visitations, we were able to recruit 68 parishes to join the effort. Small struggling parishes were invigorated by the notion that people could buy a \$10 brick and make a significant difference for the people in the church in Haiti. When people hear about something successful, they want to be a part of it.
- Get support: There were days where I felt overwhelmed, frustrated, or disheartened. I called Terri or the other diocesan coordinators to get perspective and a boost. Other days I reveled in amazement as the Holy Spirit blazed a spirit of connection across our diocese.

Through intense and frequent communication, and lots of story sharing, the Holy Spirit lifted us up and brought us together to help rebuild the church.

Elizabeth McKay Moosbrugger is an active member at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church in Cleveland

Heights, Ohio. She served on the vestry for six years including four years as clerk. She currently serves on the Standing Committee for the Diocese of Ohio. When she is not volunteering for the church, she is on the faculty for CREDO, has a small feeding ministry, and is a life coach. She recently received the “Transformational Stewardship Award” from TENS for her work as Diocesan Coordinator for Rebuilding Our Church in Haiti campaign for the Diocese of Ohio.

Resources

- Apostle in Stewardship video: <http://vimeo.com/46372701>
- Grateful and Generous Hearts by John H. Westerhoff, III: <https://www.churchpublishing.org/products/index.cfm?fuseaction=productDetail&productID=1739>
- Rebuild Our Church in Haiti campaign: <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/rebuild-our-church-haiti>

No More Pledge Cards – Please!

BY ANGELA EMERSON

I want to issue a challenge to stewardship leaders across the country. Let's start a campaign "NO MORE PLEDGE CARDS!"

Seriously!

Our focus on distributing pledge cards has become a distraction from the central purpose of a stewardship season or campaign. Too often financial leadership in our congregations focuses on the budget instead of our spiritual relationship to wealth and our vision for ministry. The notion that the budget tells the story of our vision is completely eclipsed by the methodology of constructing a line item budget.

Few people in the pews make the connection between their faith in God and the practice of giving a portion of what they have to the church or to others. I often hear, "We are a small congregation and we have heard each other's stories." Really?! What does it say about our deepening and ongoing relationship with God if we have only one, unchanging, story to tell?

If we begin developing new strategies now that leave out the pledge

card the greater the chance of success. So imagine with me how a congregation might incorporate a year round focus on stewardship into their common life.

- Congregations might start during Lent with a reflection series that focuses on how we understand Psalm 24: *"The earth is the Lord's and all that is in it, the world and those who live in it."* Everyone is invited to select a very ordinary but "essential" object in his or her life: a car, refrigerator, bicycle, bed, or a favorite tie or pair of shoes. A special altar is set up in the church to receive a symbol or picture of this object for everyone to see. Every day during Lent each person takes a moment of silence while touching the object and intentionally praying, *"Thank you God for providing me with this _____. May I use it to your glory this day and every day."* All are asked to make short note of what the experience is like and to share it as a family at the end of each week. Perhaps the children can draw a picture of the experience. Insights from those family discussions are

then shared in both in writing and orally in as many places as possible. All are preserved for later use in the stewardship season.

- During the Easter season each family is asked to give \$.50 per person per week (representing the 50 days of Easter) in a special offering. The offering is accompanied by a suggestion of an organization, cause, or need that might receive the special offering. The suggestion is accompanied by a story of how the family understands that God is working in the family and in that organization or cause. These stories are shared with the congregation and the vestry or outreach committee makes a decision as to who will receive this special offering, with the decision announced on Trinity Sunday.
- • During Pentecost there is teaching from the pulpit about one or more marks of Christian giving: Intentional, Regular, Proportional, Cheerful, Generous, First. Examples are shared of how the vestry practices these marks of giving as

they practice good stewardship of the churches assets. Parishioners are invited to write down and offer their own stories of how each of these characteristics is lived out. Time for reflection and writing down the stories is provided during worship.

- The stewardship campaign itself utilizes all of the insights and stories of the year to help us grow spiritually. The first week of the campaign is reflecting on God as the owner of all that we have and all that we are. How are we different when we understand as stewards and not as owners? The second week is focused on recognizing the abundance that God has given to each of us individually and as a faith community. What are the assets that we overlook or are underappreciated that we need to celebrate? The third week is focused on God's grace. How do we experience that grace and what is our response to that grace? The last week is about nurturing generosity. "Grace yields gratitude which yield generosity." How does the Church as a community of faith respond to God's grace with its own practice of generosity? Each year these questions are given a specific focus and responses can be offered

on a card during Sunday worship, via email, Facebook, website, or any other form. All of this culminates in a glorious and colorful celebration during which people write down their monetary offering along with a prayer for God's help in growing their spirit of generosity.

It has been a delight to hear from people across the country who are trying to develop new kinds of stewardship programs designed to nurture and grow spiritually mature Christians who practice generosity. Please, let's continue to share our ideas and journeys in this incredible movement toward generosity.

Angela Emerson is the minister of stewardship development in the Diocese of Vermont. Actively involved with TENS, The Episcopal Network for Stewardship, she currently serves as a board member and and blogs regularly for TENS. (<http://www.tens.org>)

Resources

- Revolution in Generosity: Transforming Stewards To Be Rich Toward God by Wesley K. Willmer <http://revolutionin-generosity.com/book.html>
- Stewardship of Life website: <http://www.stewardshipoflife.org/>
- TENS - The Episcopal Network for Stewardship website: <http://www.stewardshipoflife.org/>
- Annual Campaign Timeline: <http://www.ecfvp.org/tools/annual-campaign-timeline/>
- Generous Giving website: <http://www.generousgiving.org/>

Stewardship Presence-Making

BY CHARLES LAFOND

Living in a society engulfed in self-centered spending, debilitating debt, wracking fears, and relentless media encouragement to spend, spend, spend – why do we think our society will find it easy to give their money away to God or to anything or anyone else?

Too often, stewardship campaign chairpersons may perceive themselves as the “beggar” or the “nagger” or the “scolder” of the wider congregation. Might we instead suggest a self-perception of “coach” or “encourager” or “cheerleader?”

If you are working in stewardship or fundraising (or, as I am proposing –in both!) then you are in a ministry of presence-making if you do this right and by being in that ministry you are not raising money – you are changing lives. And that is a good thing. And when your rec-tor gets cranky about complaints or your vestry shrinks back in reservations you just stand firm and remember your calling to be present to those congregants who need help to do what they know – deep down – is good for them.

Here’s a short parable to illustrate this notion of stewardship chair-

person as coach.

When working at the YMCA I was about 30 pounds overweight. I was in my 20s, doing communications, marketing, and development work for 12 YMCA’s, a camp and conference center, and 39 childcare facilities. Each YMCA was different and each was a client of mine in a \$12.4 million capital campaign. It was a time of great joy for me but also one of considerable stress. As a way to cope with the stress, I tended to move fast, sleep little, work long, and eat badly.

Given that I was a corporate YMCA leader, my boss and I had some conversations in which he gently suggested that my weight could be dealt with at the YMCA. He would model good behavior by saying a cheerful hello on his way out for his run.

Eventually I met with a fitness trainer from the downtown YMCA and asked for help losing weight. He listened with deep compassion and strength. He explained the basics of weight-loss exercise and then showed me my “road-master,” a rubber-belted running treadmill exercise machine that loomed in

front of me like a medieval implement of torture. He handed me a towel and a water bottle and asked me to get on the machine. He pushed some buttons to program my exercise routine and pressed start. The belt beneath my feet began to move rather too fast for my liking. I was on level one and after only 10 minutes I was willing to confess to just about anything. “It was me! I was on the grassy knoll!” “Let me off this machine and take me away!”

My fitness trainer met me at 12:10 daily at my pre-reserved treadmill. He programmed the buttons and started the machine. And every day I ran and ran and ran. Gradually he increased my speed and length as my stamina increased and my frequency at the McDonald’s drive-through decreased. I was losing weight, and my body began to feel good again. I was sleeping well, eating well, and looked great in my clothes. I was clear headed and cheerful and my work improved. Every day he met me at that treadmill and every day he stood there throughout my work out.

Those early days were hard and

painful and he never stopped encouraging me. He told me repeatedly that I was doing well, that I could do this. He kept telling me that I would one day end up thin and healthy. And I kept telling him that he would one day end up fired if he did not stop this machine and order take-out immediately. But he persisted and because he persisted so too did I.

Months later I was thin again. My fitness trainer, whom I hated at first for making me do what I said I wanted to do, never left my side. I wanted to quit so often. But he coached me, encouraged me, cajoled me, and by his presence, got me to do what we both knew was good for me. He helped me do the hard work of getting right with my body and my health.

Similarly, a good church fundraiser – lay or ordained - is just that...a coach! Like my fitness instructor, you help the people of your church to do a hard, counter-cultural thing. Your congregants may be angry with you and your team at first for kicking up all this dust about money in church. They may resent you ramping up the rhetoric about giving. They may hate the new things you are doing to move from a wimpy rector's stewardship letter to a full campaign.

They might get tired and want to quit all this talk of money in church. Some will even leave the church (though they are using stewardship as an excuse!) And just as I was short-tempered with my fitness instructor when he increased the speed of my treadmill, your congregants may be short-tempered with you as you move from a flaccid budget-centered stewardship season to a strong, healthy, vibrant conversation about money, giving, standards of living, choice-making, rule of life, and all the many other things which go into a robust stewardship campaign.

But also like my experience on the treadmill, you will begin to see people become stronger. Just as my fitness instructor exhibited the ministry of presence-making to me, so too you are exhibiting the ministry of presence-making to the people you are helping as they consider letting go of their fears and exercising their giving muscles.

They will start giving more and more as you do better work in asking for money, telling the church's story, and thanking people for giving. They will start out saying what most people say, "I am already giving as much as I can!" because at the time they truly believe that (and for a very few it is true!) But over time, as you get better and better at

presence-making around giving and as they become better and better at seeing their own bounty – things will change and a new spiritual health will begin to dawn.

And remember that my weight loss affected not only my heart and my waistline but also transformed many other connected parts of my life – my sleep, my work, my play, my relationships, my energy levels. And similarly, when your congregation begins the process of transformation that is inherent in solid spiritual teaching and effective leadership in fundraising – then your congregants will be as transformed as Ebenezer Scrooge was on Christmas morning. And not only will they, as stewards be transformed – but also your resources for your church's mission will be transformed, sending the smiles out in rings around your church like the rings of a stone tossed in a pool.

That fitness trainer did only one thing. He stood there. He waited with me just like Mary and John waited with Jesus on the cross. He told me I could do it when I thought I could not. He told me I could go one more mile when I was sure I could not. When I missed a day – he stood there... waiting... and word got back to me that while I was falling off

the food wagon at McDonalds, he was waiting for me at that empty treadmill. I never missed another treadmill session. It was hard work and transforming work and so often I wanted to quit. But his presence making made the difference for me.

And when things get really hard and you despair – and you will – then remember Mary and John at the cross and ask Jesus for the strength to do for your congregation what Mary and John did for him.

This article was originally published as a blog on the TENS website and is reprinted with permission. It has been shortened and edited for ECF Vital Practices.

Charles D. LaFond is canon for congregational life in the Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire and a TENS board member. His current ministry combines 25 years as a fundraiser and nonprofit management executive and a decade as a priest and monk.

Read his more about Charles here.
http://www.nhepiscopal.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=99&Itemid=54

Resources

- Generations of Stewardship:
<http://www.tens.org/resources/free-resources/free-resourc->

[es-blog/generations-of-stewardship1com/2010/04/5-tools-church-designers-need-teamwork/](http://www.tens.org/resources/free-resources/free-resourc-es-blog/generations-of-stewardship1com/2010/04/5-tools-church-designers-need-teamwork/)

- The Whys and Hows of Money Leadership curriculum: http://archive.elca.org/stewardship/money_leadership/index.html
- What Does it Mean to be a Good Steward (video): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ecnWuTXmsJc&feature=related>
- Will Our Children be Stewards? Books to read with children: <http://www.tens.org/resources/free-resources/free-resources-blog/will-our-children-be-stewards-books-to-read-with-children>

Generosidad

BY ARMANTINA R. PELÁEZ

Los latinoamericanos en este país donan dinero y aportan generosamente su liderazgo y talento a la iglesia. Sin embargo, desean saber que su tiempo y dinero se usan con prudencia y que realmente contribuye al bienestar de la comunidad y de su iglesia. Por lo general hay que dedicar tiempo a pedirles y a explicar las razones de su contribución. Muchos feligreses de bajos ingresos prefieren donar su tiempo y talento y donar según sus medios económicos, en lugar de ceñirse al diezmo. La cosa se complica porque medir el tiempo en dinero no es una práctica usada por la Iglesia, sino más bien por el mundo comercial. Pero si decimos como los americanos que “el tiempo es oro”, vemos que cuando el feligrés latinoamericano ofrece sus servicios al canto, a la música, a limpiar la iglesia, a servir de recepcionista, a pintar los salones de reuniones, a organizar bazares, o ser maestros de educación religiosa, vemos cómo esas horas además de ser un verdadero ministerio ahorran mucho dinero a las iglesias.

A veces es necesario saber pedirles y explicarles claramente por qué les pedimos. Por lo general, el latinoamericano prefieren tener

la oportunidad de ayudar a una familia pobre llevándole personalmente el saco de arroz y las latas de habichuelas, en lugar de poner sus donativos en una cesta en el altar. Sin embargo, tal vez se puedan usar ambos conceptos y añadir una cesta en la que puedan poner el nombre de una familia a la que ayudaron durante la semana o que necesite una cesta de alimentos, que se puede distribuir al final de la misa. En esos casos, ayudar a los pobres en general tiene un sentido más claro que donar una lata de frijoles o habichuelas. Por lo general los latinoamericanos en este país son generosos y humanitarios, y están muy conscientes de su responsabilidad de aportar a la Iglesia y a la comunidad.

Debido a que los latinoamericanos están pasando a ser una parte significativa de la población de Estados Unidos, vale la pena dedicar parte de este artículo a explicar quiénes son y a mencionar algunas de sus hermosas tradiciones religiosas.

Además de su tiempo y dinero, los hispanos o latinos, como los llama el Departamento del Censo, han estado aportando su cultura y

tradiciones a esta parte del mundo desde los años 1500. Los latinos que residen actualmente en Estados Unidos provienen de diferentes países, así como de zonas urbanas y rurales. La mayoría de ellos es hispanohablante, aunque algunos conservan sus lenguas indígenas. Al igual que los inmigrantes europeos, los latinoamericanos inmigraron mayormente por motivos políticos y económicos. Muchos de los jóvenes latinos nacidos en este país son bilingües o mezclaron el inglés y el español, creando lo que se conoce como “spanglish”. Y al igual que los europeos, algunos latinos de segunda y tercera generación se asimilaron o anhelan encontrar sus raíces latinoamericanas. Pero también hay jóvenes que han sabido vivir en dos culturas y dos idiomas. La mayoría de los latinos son católicos o protestantes, si bien una minoría busca el significado de su fe en religiones como el budismo o el islam.

Para la mayoría de los Latinos los valores familiares y religiosos una parte importante de su vida cotidiana. Es algo que se ve a diario, por ejemplo en los envíos de dinero a sus familias en sus

países de origen. Muchos latinos trabajan largas horas y hacen grandes sacrificios para poder enviar esas remesas a sus familias en Latinoamérica. Pero el aporte de los inmigrantes latinos no se limita a enviar remesas importantes para la economía de esos países, sino que también contribuyen a la economía y a la sociedad de Estados Unidos al crear empresas que generan empleos y al realizar trabajos que otros no desean realizar, como cosechar las frutas y hortalizas que todos consumimos a diario.

Hay muchos ejemplos de la manera en que la religiosidad popular de estos pueblos ha perdurado a lo largo de las generaciones de latinoamericanos residentes en Estados Unidos, tales como la Fiesta de los Muertos, el Día de todos los Santos y el Día de los Fieles Difuntos. El Día de los Muertos se celebra con comidas especiales, tales como panes con calaveras y otros signos que representan la muerte. Las fiestas navideñas comienzan el 16 de diciembre con las posadas y culminan en la Nochebuena, el 24 de diciembre. La Navidad se espera con música, baile y reuniones en diferentes casas, imitando a la Sagrada Familia, que fue de casa en casa buscando amparo. En muchas partes de los Estados Unidos se celebra la

misa del gallo, a medianoche o al amanecer del 25 de diciembre. Muchas familias regresan de esa misa para tomar chocolate caliente con churros y abrir regalos. Sin embargo, en muchos hogares perdura la fiesta de los Reyes Magos, cuando según la Sagrada Escritura llegaron los reyes Melchor, Baltazar y Gaspar siguiendo la estrella a Belén hasta el pesebre donde nació Jesús. Entre el 25 de diciembre y el 6 de enero algunos latinoamericanos celebran lo que se conoce como las Octavitas, oraciones especiales en las casas o en las iglesias.

Estas bellas prácticas religiosas, llenas de tradiciones y encanto, enriquecen tanto a los latinoamericanos como a los nativos de este país.

Armantina R. Peláez es feligresa y miembro de la Junta Parroquial de la Comunidad Episcopal Anglicana de San Pablo, en Paterson, Nueva Jersey.

Recursos

- Bendecidos para Ser una Bendición: <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/es/page/bendecidos-para-ser-una-bendición>
- Blessed to be a Blessing resources (English, Chinese, Korean): <http://www.episco->

palchurch.org/page/blessed-be-blessing

- Para información en otros recursos de Prácticas Vitales ECF disponibles en correo electrónico español Miguel Escobar enmescoar@episcopalfoundation.org

Generosity: A Latina Perspective

BY ARMANTINA R. PELÁEZ

Latin Americans in the United States generously donate money, leadership, and talent to the Church. It's important for them to see their resources being used prudently and to know that they're truly contributing to the welfare of their church community. Many of their contributions are not financial but as the saying goes "time is gold" and it is clear that parishioners offering services—from singing and playing music to cleaning the church, serving as a receptionist, painting meeting rooms, organizing rummage sales, or teaching religious education—do indeed save the church a great deal of money. It is also a way for low-income parishioners to contribute comfortably and meaningfully.

Encouraging Latinos to donate to the church through weekly pledge envelopes may involve some explanation. Hispanics traditionally tend to focus their aid on one poor family that they have a personal relationship with. They tend to donate goods in times of need, like sacks of rice, cans of beans, etc., rather than placing donations in a basket by the altar.

However, both approaches to giv-

ing may be utilized. For example, give parishioners an opportunity to donate a basket to a specific family or let them know that you'll use their funds to donate needed food items after the service. These actions speak more directly to the Hispanic sense of generosity while also letting them fulfill their sense of responsibility toward the church and community at large.

Latin Americans are a significant part of the American population, it's important to understand who they are and to honor their warm religious traditions. I will take a moment to give some background.

Aside from their time and money, Hispanics or Latinos, as the Census Bureau calls them, have been contributing their culture and traditions to North America since the 1500's. Latinos who now live in the United States come from different countries, as well as from urban and rural areas. Most of them are Spanish speaking, but some have kept their Indian languages. Much like European immigrants, Latin Americans emigrated mainly for political and financial reasons. Many of the young Latinos born in this country are bilingual or speak

a mix of Spanish and English creating what is known a "Spanglish". Many second and third generation Latinos who have thoroughly assimilated over time are now eager to learn of their roots while others have been able to maintain their culture and language becoming bilingual and bicultural. The majority of Latinos are Catholics or Protestants.

For most Latinos, family and religious values are central to their daily life. A clear example of this is in the money that many Latin Americans send to their families in their countries of origin. Many Latinos work long hours and make great sacrifices to be able help support their extended families in Latin America. However, their contributions are not limited to sending funds abroad, they also contribute to the American economy by creating businesses that generate employment and by doing jobs that others don't want to do, such as picking the fruits and vegetables consumed by Americans every day.

There are many examples of how popular religiosity among Latinos has carried through generations of Latin Americans residing in the

United States, such as the Day of the Dead, All Saints, and All Souls days. The Day of the Dead is celebrated with special food items, such as buns with skulls imprinted on them and other representations of death. The celebration of Christmas starts December 16 with the posadas and ends on Christmas Eve, on December 24. Christmas is greeted with music, dance, and parties that move from one house to another, imitating the Sacred Family's journey to find shelter. In many parts of the US they celebrate Midnight Mass. Many families drink hot chocolate and churros and open presents when they return from church, while some families still celebrate the Feast of the Three Kings, when according to the Holy Scripture Kings Melchior, Balthazar, and Gaspar followed the star to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born. Between December 25 and January 6 some Latin Americans celebrate what is known as the Octavitas, special prayers and festivities in houses or churches.

These lovely religious practices, full of tradition and charm, enrich both Latin and North Americans.

Armantina R. Peláez is a parishioner and member of the Vestry of the Comunidad Episcopal Anglicana de San Pablo, in

Paterson, New Jersey.

Resources

- Blessed to be a Blessing resources (English, Spanish, Chinese, Korean): <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/page/blessed-be-blessing>
- The Episcopal Church's Latino/Hispanic Ministries: <http://www.episcopalchurch.org/latino>
- Spanish language tools & resources: <http://www.ecfvp.org/topics/topic/espaol/>