

Cultivating Generous People

WE GIVE BECAUSE GOD FIRST GAVE TO US.

“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life” (John 3:16, NRSV).

Church leaders can cultivate a spirit and culture of generosity that includes giving from all of one’s resources – resources that include time, talent, money and others.

The Old Testament tells of God’s people being asked to give the first and the finest offerings. An apropos question for laity and clergy alike today is, “Are we giving God our best? What are we sacrificing? How are we making ourselves uncomfortable – stretching ourselves to give – to be able to serve God and neighbor?”



Here are some ideas for beginning to shift a congregations’ culture around generosity:

1. **Tell stories.** The Message has a beautiful retelling of Matthew 13:10-17 and why storytelling matters: “A lot of people, prophets and humble believers among them, would have given anything to see what you are seeing, to hear what you are hearing, but never had the change.”
2. **Inspire don’t guilt trip.** Coercion and guilt are not good bases for giving or creating environments where the Holy Spirit can move. Rather than focus on a dire financial situation, present opportunities to give time and resources to allow the congregation to offer hope through the church’s ministries. People of faith and hope do not allow fear to dictate their actions. Show that we are people who have faith in a God bigger than our fears.
3. **Increase the number of ways you ask people to give.** Put yourself in the pew. What does the average churchgoer in your congregation hear about giving? If they were to come just six times a year, what would they infer about how to participate in the life of the church? They might hear of your fall and spring stewardship campaigns, automatic deductions for their monthly tithe and online giving. Would they also hear of opportunities to serve through the church, opportunities to lead and ways their generosity extends beyond the church building?

Author Sophia Agtarap