FUND RAISING IS MINISTRY

Picture a room full of people figuratively wearing their campus ministry hats. They are concerned about the downturn of dollars for the campus ministry they hold dear. They are here because they are realists and because they have been given some responsibility as staff or board members to DO something about funding. We've worked through the various steps of visioning, communication, setting up the annual fund, planning for major gifts, etc. etc. Then I see the look in their eyes, the question, the disconnect. Finally someone says it: "Why are we only talking about money; can't we just talk about Jesus!"

The first time I heard the comment/question/exclamation, I was a bit taken aback. Didn't anyone understand what I had just spent hours trying to explain? Weren't the connections obvious? Sure, I was using secular fund raising language and constructs, but couldn't they just provide the translation themselves? Now in these latter days, I have learned a couple of things.

One is that people don't automatically connect Jesus and his mission with the dollars to make it happen. Yet it's unmistakable if you read the New Testament. Jesus talked a lot more about money than he did about sex, for example. He challenged those with personal riches to give to the poor and stop hoarding it for themselves. He sent away a rich young ruler and praised the sacrificial gift of a woman with only two coins. Furthermore, Paul was continually admonishing, then thanking, his missional communities to/for their support for the ongoing work of the gospel. Paul was a visionary preacher, a skillful organizer, a tireless teacher, and an unapologetic fund raiser in the best sense of the term. He asked for support for widows and orphans. He also knew the needs of fledgling faith communities and was not reluctant to ask believers with means to support the work he was about in Jesus' name. I'm not telling you anything new; I'm just suggesting that we often miss the connections and could realistically assume that others do too. In your ministry as a fund raiser, be sure to help your folks make the connection.

The second thing I have learned from these conversations is that people tend to view their possessions as something they have earned and, therefore, hold on to them in a tight-fisted way that makes it seem that you are "after" their wealth, and maybe what defines them, if you suggest that parting with what they "own" is a grace rather than a gimmee. The NPR program I listened to on the way into work this morning centered on the writing of Ralph Waldo Emerson. He warned against thinking that we can hold on to the earth, because in the end it's the earth that holds us. Literally. We become so identified with what we own that it often becomes our identity. So when we are asked to share what we have, it's like loping off part of who we are. If we only talk about sharing gifts, without talking about the blessing of being part of the community that bears Christ's name, we are simply practicing another kind of legalism, without offering an encounter with the one who by grace grants our true identity.

Third, I have come to realize that a lot of stewardship talk is more about management than it is about our life-response to the Good News. We refer quickly to Jesus' parable of the talents and lift up the way in which the good management skills of the ones who had the most got them even more. Here's what I have said on occasion: "From the Christian perspective, fund raising is essentially stewardship—gratitude for what God has done among us in Jesus Christ. It is our desire to manage carefully and responsibly the gifts that God has given us. Biblically speaking, the steward is the manager of the household. We assume that role when we are employed as staff or serve as members of boards and committees." True enough, I think, but it doesn't go far enough. We are not just managers of resources; we are disciples of the One God sent. And as Jesus-followers, we might just be called on to make tough decisions about those resources we call "our own" or "our ministry's own." Managers come and go, but disciples are in it for the long haul. Disciple-managers are not confused about priorities, about identity, or about ownership of resources. Steward-disciples know that inviting a gift is really an invitation to live in God's realm. It invites soul-searching. It offers new life.

Henri Nouwen has said this more eloquently.[1] In September 1992, he was asked to speak to the *Marguerite Bourgeous Family Service Foundation* about fund raising. It was an informal address that came from his heart, without benefit of manuscript. It was taped, however, and only recently transcribed into print in a booklet titled, "The Spirituality of Fund-Raising." He acknowledged that in his earlier years he saw fund raising as a "necessary but unpleasant activity to support spiritual things." Only as he worked through the relationship between ministry and money was he able to finally say, "Fund raising is first and foremost a form of ministry."

> "Fund raising is as spiritual as giving a sermon, entering a time of prayer, visiting the sick, or feeding the hungry." Nouwen

Nouwen came to see that fund raising, as a gospel activity, includes proclamation, invitation, and conversion. It is proclaiming what we believe in such a way that others are drawn to our vision and given an opportunity to participate with us in this God-given mission. "Fund raising is always a call to conversion." People are called into a new, more spiritual relationship with their needs and their resources. They are invited to invest themselves through what God has given them—energy, time, prayers, and money—in the work that God calls us to. It invites those with money into a new relationship with their wealth. And it invites those who need money to lay aside the role of beggar to claim the rich inheritance of the new creation. The question is not how to get money; rather, it is a question about our relationship with money. If money touches our relationships with family members and others in the wider world, it also reaches into our own inner, spiritual life. Nouwen offers, "If our security is totally in God, then we are free to ask for money. Only when we are free from money can we ask freely for others to give it. This is the conversion to which fund raising as ministry calls us."

The ministry of fund raising finds life in the realm of God's abundance, where all gifts are overflowing—new freedom, new relationships, a new communion. That we might have new resources for doing ministry should not surprise us. We might come to expect it—or ask for it. "We are all gathered on the holy ground of God's generous disposition toward us." Here fund raising is grounded in prayer and undertaken in gratitude. Here the radical nature of fund raising becomes clear. While all sorts of people who raise funds might ask others to help the productivity and success of their organization, in the Christian community those goals are only the by-products of a deeper, creative energy—that of love planted and nurtured in the lives of people in and through our relationship with Jesus.

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[1] A copy of this booklet may still be available free by contacting the Henri Nouwen Society at www.HenriNouwen.org and following the links.

He concludes, “Fund raising is a very rich and beautiful activity. It is a confident, joyful, and hope-filled expression of ministry. In ministering to each other, each from the riches that he or she possesses, we work together for the full coming of God’s kingdom.”

Nouwen provides us with helpful thinking and good theology. May it inform your ministry as fund raisers as you prepare your annual fall appeal or consider conversation with a donor. Shared mission, shared vision, shared resources—all God’s gift and task. Invite others to give; it’s ministry.

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EMBRACE THE CHANGE

Change is perhaps the only constant in our lives. We older folks know that through experience. The sureties we established in our younger years no longer look like what we envisioned. Society is not the same; the church is not the same; ministry is not the same. The way that I learned to do ministry in my seminary days is very different from what is required and expected today. Hymnals change, pastoral roles change, and the missional focus of the church changes. For good, I trust (but not always).

Certainly the life of campus ministry changes, often from year to year. Programs that worked in the 1980s will not draw much interest these days. Vocational discernment is in; protest marches are out (mostly). Worship styles ebb and flow, moving from what we considered "contemporary" to a new attention to historic liturgical patterns. Campus pastors are expected to be more in touch with faith and science issues, conversant about world religions, technologically savvy, and able to coordinate mission trips flawlessly. "Back in the Time" most of the funding for campus ministry came through a national system, supported of course by synod/district benevolence. Very little fund raising was done locally, from either individual donors or from congregations. In 1985, when "We Care for the Future" presented us in campus ministry with a new challenge to build endowments and prepare for a leaner funding future, few were prepared to embrace the task. Many resisted, piously stating that if the church calls them to serve, the church would provide the resources. However, many others saw the change on the horizon and bent their shoulders to the work ahead. Fund raising for campus ministry is one of the major changes in the 100 year history of our important work on campus.

"Financial vibrancy is the capacity of an organization to make the transition from one sustainable moment to the next."

This pithy quote comes from an article about change in organizations by Gayle Gifford.[1] In the article she waves the flag that I am waving, pointing to change as a constant, and encouraging organizations to see this never-ending flux as a way to keeping their mission sharp and their goals focused. Referring to the quote, she says that "its brilliance lies in its ability to succinctly capture the complex and unfolding dynamic that each or our organizations negotiates over its lifetime."

She urges us to give ourselves credit for agility and the ability to survive and adapt in a rapidly changing landscape. One would think that she refers to campus ministry specifically. We feel appropriately named, as one of those organizations that are still around after 100 years, because of our nimble ability to foresee change, name it, and adapt to it. We have changed the way we staff our ministries, moving from traveling lay "counselors" and pastors who were like campus circuit riders in the early years, to a more traditional stable of staff who provided solid Lutheran word and sacrament ministry in the middle years, to a time when we are now looking at new alliances with congregations and ecumenical partners. We have moved through a variety of facility styles, from houses to chapels to storefronts. Campus ministry has been agile and adaptable in the midst of change.

[1] *Contributions*, volume 21, number 2, 2007

It's helpful to think about your campus ministry organization in terms of its "lifetime." We recognize that we change as people and our bodies and minds transform themselves over time. In many ways we are not the same people we were when we graduated from high school. Organizations, too, cycle through stages of adolescent turmoil, maturity, and generativity. It's not necessarily a linear progression, like the process of aging itself, but a cycle where our organizational growth may be plotted in terms of its success, its ability to make decisions, its conflict manifestations, and its enduring legacy. Change motivates us organizationally from one stage to another, and not always smoothly.

For example, news of a shortfall of funding in the next fiscal year may cause an organization to panic, spend down the encumbered funds, and slide into a survival mode. An exhausted board may simply give up or turn up the volume on the "way we did it before." A mature response would be to face the change head on and develop a strategy for inviting new gifts from new donors, while strengthening communication about a new vision for the ministry. A new development committee may need to be formed. A new database of donors may need to be established. New ways of communicating with both key and potential donors may need to be put into action. New relationships may need to be built with area congregations and synodical leaders. How change is received and embraced says a lot about your board and the willingness of the leadership to make appropriate adaptive moves.

Gifford states in her article, "Our organizations will rise and fall and rise again with the availability of and our ability to capture—even if only for a brief organizational moment—many different kinds of funding." That is a key concept. In times of change, those organizations that endure will not place their funding eggs in one basket. They will not only have a strong annual fund, they will be hard at work securing larger gifts, even as they invite legacy gifts to build an endowment. Strategic gift planning is one of the necessary tasks of a contemporary campus ministry board. They will need to be adept at reading the landscape, as they plan for what kinds of financial support will be required to navigate that landscape. It will not work to simply keep sending out one newsletter per year hoping to garner enough income to sustain the ministry another year. A multiplicity of strategies must be put into place. It will require carefully judged and quickly executed tactics to keep the ministry viable through the current wave of change.

Marking that sense of change in the philanthropic world is the report of a recent study by the Prime Group of the DonorTrends©[2] survey of the Baby Boomer generation. Boomers, born between 1946 and 1964, are now surpassing the previous generation in terms of the percentage of their income given to non-profit organizations. Data from an online survey of 2,333 adults indicates that Boomers give on average $1,361 per year, compared to $1,138 for older adults. Late Boomers give a higher percentage than early Boomers. Like their elders, Boomers give about 75% to traditional charities in the fields of health, education, social needs, disaster relief, arts, and culture, while the remaining 25% goes to issue advocacy and political campaigns. Religion was not mentioned in the survey, but other studies indicate that this is still a high percentage.

The higher levels of giving and the sheer number of Boomers shifts the center of the fundraising university radically, the report indicates. And what may be even more significant, members of Generations X and Y signal even larger gift potential. (Contrary to the conventional suspicion that these post-Boomers were "lost to the philanthropic world) Post-Boomers currently give on average $791 per year, but 56% assert that they intend to give more in the future. Furthermore, we already sense that the

[2] The DonorTrends Project is a collaborative effort of Craver, Mathews, Smith and Company and The Prime Group.

preference for making gifts by this cohort is online, and not through the usual patterns of response to mailings and newsletters. The study indicates that 19% of post-Boomers have made online contributions, while only 13% of Boomers and 9% of pre-Boomers have done so. However, the study indicates that only 15% of post-Boomers prefer to be solicited by e-mail rather than by conventional mail. If relationships are important to the post-Boomer crowd, we will have to find new ways to personalize our contact with them in order to secure their gifts.

It is also important to note that post-Boomers are more culturally diverse and that there is little fund raising history with this under 40 group. Their giving priorities may turn out to be very different from those of their parents. Right now they seem to be as interested in family values as in women's rights, suggesting more political diversity. As they gain more life experience, their values may shift as a result. The question is whether post-Boomer giving will morph into traditional patterns as they grow in years and experience, or whether that experience will radically reshape their values and their willingness to support those values with their contributions. Finally, what could turn out to be very significant is the way in which post-Boomers are open to hearing about groups and causes they aren't familiar with, while at the same time they are not familiar with groups that are working on causes that they care about. The study says that "Non-profit 'brands' are not yet established with post-Boomers; the competition for shares of their giving wallets has barely begun." Donor loyalty is not a given; if you get them once, can you keep them for the long haul?

Gifford encourages us to consider organizational transformation. The ones that survive are those with the courage to look forward, as they hold on to their core values, and make the shifts that are necessary in these turbulent times. Bob Dylan sang years ago that "the times they are a-changin'." It's still true today. Be organizationally alert. Change is on the horizon. Will you and your organization be ready? Will you become "financially vibrant?"

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RAISING GREEN STUFF IN A BLUE ECONOMY

You know that the economy is fragile when even movie stars have to take pay cuts! The March 4, 2010 issue of the *New York Times* reports that movie stars, who in the past vied to make between $20 million and $25 million per picture, have seen their upfront salaries diminish with the sale of DVDs and low box office income. George Clooney, for example, received only 10% of his typical upfront take for *Up in the Air*. The difference is that formerly stars received a percentage of so-called first-dollar receipts (sharing the profits when the first ticket was sold), while now studios often wait until they have recouped expenses before sharing the profits ("cash-break zero"). Actor Sam Worthington stated, "Every actor fears unemployment." He said that he takes whatever he can get these days, because it "beats sitting there waiting for the phone to ring thinking, give me some work. I've got bills to pay."

This sounds chillingly real to many of us serving in campus ministry these days. Although we are not alone in our financial angst, knowing that many in the life of the church and in the greater society are stressed, anxious, and facing unemployment, campus ministry has taken some heavy hits in the past few months. Positions on the churchwide level have been eliminated and we are continuing to live into how these responsibilities can best be handled in new configurations. Most recently, many synods have reported a significant downturn in benevolence income, which in turn affects their own staffing patterns and, beyond that, affects the partner ministries of the synods. Ultimately this shortfall in benevolence has a deleterious effect on churchwide support.

Ask this question to a dozen of your friends or professional acquaintances: "Is this a good time to be raising money?" I would wager that the overwhelming response would be, "No, this is a terrible time to raise money!" They would cite the job market, their 401K that tanked, the meager profits, if any, by American business—and the hand wringing would go on and on. The common assumption, even "myth" if you would, is that in tough economic times giving decreases and people become more reluctant to let go of their hard-earned cash, for fear that they might need every penny of it if the walls come crashing down around their own heads or if someone near and dear to them needs some assistance to get back on their own feet. The general assumption is that hard times make people stingy and protective of what it theirs, instead of making them more generous and willing to share from the blessings that they have received.

Those who have studied giving trends during recessions/depressions have been intrigued by what they have discovered. Amazingly enough, giving continues or even increases when times are hard, especially to religious organizations. The change, however, is that donors focus on fewer causes and want to be sure that their gift, no matter the size, is really needed and is going to make a difference. Jerry Panas, who has been a professional fundraiser for decades, says that he and his associates often surprise organizations when they say, "We find that economic conditions aren't a prime element in determining the success of a campaign. Philanthropy has been one of the most stable factors in our economy, year in and year out. From the time we've been keeping records, philanthropy has increased steadily, each year more than the year before."[1]

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[1] Jerold Panas, "Times Are Tough," CONTRIBUTIONS MAGAZINE, January, 2010

In July, 2009 the Giving USA Foundation[2] released the 54th annual report that analyzes who gives what to whom in the United States. Religion is one of nine public sectors studied in compiling this report. While giving in general in 2008 exceeded $300 billion, an increase over the previous year, overall charitable giving decreased by 2%. However, in the religious sector, giving increased by 5.5%, the highest percent increase of all the subsectors of charitable giving, representing 35% of the total. The report goes on to note that in the twelve recessions since 1967, the average decline in giving to religion, when adjusted for inflation, is only 0.1%.

The Lake Institute on Faith & Giving at the Center on Philanthropy notes four lessons that can be learned from those coping with the present economy.

- Amidst a crisis, **leadership has an obligation** to consider actions which would otherwise be considered politically and logistically untenable.
- A **congregation's agreement as to who it is and why it exists** will make tough financial decisions more manageable and less controversial.
- A **strategic plan** can help a congregation identify activities that are less central to its mission and therefore less eligible for continued financial support.
- **Plan for the future!** Seize this as the opportune time to reposition your congregation for a healthy and robust future. This recession will pass.[3]

Later in 2009, the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving published another study, this time also in partnership with the Alban Institute. The study was titled, "The 2009 Congregational Economic Impact Study."[4] This was a study of over 1,500 congregations across the country, which led to the conclusion: "The study underscores the resilience and vitality of American congregations, unmasking the selfless and imaginative ways in which churches are reaching out to address the needs of the communities of which they are a part." The key findings are:

- The majority of congregations have not seen a decline in giving, with nearly 37% reporting an increase in giving for the first half of 2009, while 34% remained the same.
- Only one-third of the congregations made significant budget cuts in 2009.
- The recession provided congregations with a teachable moment to talk about money and the faithful use of possessions.

The congregations in this study that did not do well were those that were small, survival-oriented, maintenance-oriented, and/or served those with low or fixed incomes.

This study presents several tips for planning the budget in these tough times:

1. Communicate, communicate, communicate! Congregation members need to know the honest truth about the state of the budget and where the need is the greatest.
2. Be wary of budgeting your optimism. Don't be bullish without a strategic plan.
3. Recessions are not sprints, they are endurance events. Economic recovery takes time; don't be discouraged too easily.
4. Protect your core mission. Prioritize your goals and keep them in line with your mission. If need be, reduce spending on those goals that are less critical.

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[2] Research for the Giving USA Foundation is provided by the Center for Philanthropy at Indiana University. The full report is available at *www.givingusa.org*

[3] INSIGHTS ON FAITH AND GIVING, *www.philanthropy.iupui.edu/LakeFamilyInstitute/*

[4] INSIGHTS ON FAITH AND GIVING, *https://www.philanthropy.iupui.edu/LakeFamilyInstitute/economyGiving.aspx*

5. Be a good steward of your endowment. Don't plan to spend all of your endowment income if you don't need to. Use it to continue to grow the endowment. Resist all movements to turn your endowment into spending cash, even if it's legal, which in most cases it's not.
6. Revisit your "gift pyramid." Donors in the mid-range are probably most affected by the economic downturn. Be sure that you continue to nurture and communicate with these donors, even though they may not be able to do for you now what they've done in the past.
7. Remember to say "thank you." All donors need to feel appreciated, perhaps even more so when they can't give your organization what they have been able to in prior years.

Jerry Panas, once again, has some helpful commentary. He says that if your fundraising program is not properly prepared, you are doomed to failure—in good times and in bad. "Is there a good time for your organization to raise money? Yes. When you are ready. That is a good time to raise money. Not one day before."[5] He goes on to state that the only way to really know if you're ready is to conduct a feasibility study, particularly if you are entering into a major capital campaign for the first time. It will tell you not only *if* you are ready, but *how much* you will be able to raise. Panas again, "When you look at the data, it appears quite clear that giving is not based on the economy. . . . As the economy rises, giving rises with it, but seldom as fast as the economy. Now here's what's interesting. When the economy declines, philanthropy continues to increase, but at a slower pace. . . . In boom periods Americans give a lower percentage of their income, but in tough times they give more."

Panas cites five actual advantages to raising money in tough times:

1. You will plan more carefully.
2. You will settle only on first-choice leaders.
3. Your leaders will take their responsibilities more seriously.
4. There will be fewer competing campaigns.
5. The fact that you are raising funds in challenging times underlines the importance and urgency of your cause.[6]

Kathryn W. Miree, writing in *Planned Giving Today*[7], has some thoughts about navigating the "turbulent environment." She acknowledges that donor capacity is shrinking as financial markets contract, and that donors are giving, but more cautiously and to fewer charities. She also notes that foundations and corporations have fewer assets, as do government grants. This means that our key strategic messages have to be even more carefully scrutinized she says, so that those who engage with our organizations have reasons to give and to stick around for the long haul. She offers six critical messages that will "engage, inspire, and anchor donors."

1. The community has an extraordinary, critical need for the services we provide.
2. Our charity has the unique ability to address these critical needs, which are unserved by other organizations.
3. Our organization engages in strategic planning to ensure that we work effectively and are positioned to meet the needs and demands of the future.
4. Our organization focuses on measurable goals and outcomes, working to maximize the

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[5] Jerry Panas, RAISING FUNDS IN TOUGH TIMES, *ideas@panaslinzy.com*
[6] Ibid.
[7] Kathryn W. Miree, "Turbulent Times and Critical Donor Messages." *Planned Giving Today,* February, 2010 (Volume XXI, Number 2), page 1f.

effectiveness of the services we provide.

5. The critical needs of the community cannot be met without your financial help. You are partners in our success.
6. Our organization is committed to transparency, accountability, and integrity in using the gifts you have contributed.

The Meaning for Campus Ministry

It's not news to anyone that our campus ministries are expected to do more with less. Nearly every local ministry now raises its own program funds and, beyond that, may raise money for facilities and support staff. Only recently have fulltime staffed ministries had to face budget cuts of 10% to 25%. Many boards and staff are not prepared or equipped to handle shortfalls of $10,000 additional dollars with only a few months' notice. Yet, if the local ministry is to survive and flourish in the long run, some radical adjustments will need to be made to the priorities of the ministry, the way that it is staffed, and perhaps about the facility out of which it operates.

While the study by the Lake Institute cited above is primarily about congregational giving, it's not too difficult to translate some of the observations into campus ministry fundraising. Our donors and friends need to know what our core mission is and that we are being faithful to it. They want to know that their gift, no matter how small, will make a difference, that it will be used properly, and that it can be accounted for. They will want to know what is urgent and significant and how they can be invited to be part of the solution to create a better future. They will need to be thanked and nurtured. They will want to feel good about the possible sacrifice they have made to help your mission continue. In some ways the bottom line doesn't change from good times to bad. Perhaps the difference is that as leaders of organizations that depend on the generosity of others we are more focused, more creative, and more responsive these days than ever before.

It is also a time in the life of campus ministry to rethink how important our linkages are with congregations. Congregations, and the individuals who comprise them, are looking for ways to support organizations that make a difference. As the studies show, giving to religious causes continues to be strong even in tough economic times. Campus ministry will be wise to position itself as one of the worthy, faithful ministries that has an urgent mission that directly impacts the life of congregations. It connects, in fact, with the very future of the church.

Furthermore, there are direct implications in Miree's above list of critical messages that are important for campus ministries to understand. We need to focus more of our vision and our message about that vision on meeting critical human needs. We need to lift up the joys and struggles of young adults on campus, as we make the case for why the church needs to be on campus to accompany, support, and challenge these young hearts and minds. Each new generation is important to the life of the church and the life of the world. What would it mean if the church were not there at these critical life junctures? What may be different if the church neglects this opportunity? What might happen if we doubled our efforts and our financial support? Is our ministry on campus critical and vital? If so, we need to communicate it with messages that aren't whining or defeatist, but are positive and persuasive. We need to expand this message to include reasons why the church is in an academic environment. What is our contribution? What do we do "better" than any other organization or social group? What is the "mark" that we are expected to make on the academic scene?

Second, donors these days want to know that their generous, yet carefully given, gifts are well spent and well cared for. They want the campus ministries to which they give to be well organized, have a strategic plan, attainable goals, and means to evaluate effectiveness. They want to know that there is accountability and that gifts given will be used properly and for the purposes named. Have you ever stated in a newsletter that the "annual financial review has given our campus ministry a bill of good health." You don't have to publish numbers, but you can give some indication that there is good management. By the way, you should also be able to indicate that 100% of the board members have contributed to the ministry in the past year. Certainly the board needs to give before it asks.

Third, it needs to be stated clearly and unequivocally that campus ministry is a partnership that cannot be done without the merger of hearts, prayers, and financial contributions. If the "Pastor's Page" takes up half of the newsletter, it is clearly about what the pastor thinks and what the pastor has accomplished. The message needs to be focused on the mutuality of mission. Can donors recognize themselves in the mission? Can they see how it will not happen without their support? Does your mission seek to touch their hearts and invite their participation? Be urgent about your need for support and don't give the impression that "someone, someway" will get the job done. While it's true that people don't give to calamity and needs, they will respond if you can invite them to share in a positive future—one that they can help you envision and support. If changes need to be made in the ministry, be forthcoming about why those changes are necessary and how they will strengthen the ministry for the future. Treat your donors as stakeholders—those who have a vested interest in your ministry and a right to know about it at many levels. Share your excitement and your vision, as well as your struggles with your donors. They are your partners, perhaps even considered to be your extended family.

From another quarter comes more advice about withstanding the current financial woes. Ted Grossnickle and Derrick Feldmann present nine actions that you can take to keep your focus on doing effective work in these challenging times.[8] I have taken the liberty to expand on each action to address our campus ministry situation.

1. **Perform an annual review.** This is an important step for board, staff, and students to take. It involves an assessment of what is truly important, an audit of your core values, to see if you are doing ministry from the perspective of what is important or what is simply tradition or happenstance. This may involve looking at the expense records to see how program funds are being spent or having focus groups talk about what the needs of the academic community are and how the church can most effectively address these needs. Don't compromise; lead from the strength of your mission.
2. **Be proactive.** If there is a crisis, state it up front and clearly. Don't feel like you have to "protect" your donors. They are extended family and will want to share your struggles with you. Don't catastrophize or whine. But don't withhold information either. Say, "Here's how we plan to address this crisis." If change is inevitable, embrace it. Let your vision drive the change, however, and don't present your organization as a victim that can only react to bad circumstances. Stay positive.
3. **Refine your message.** Make sure that your supporters know why your ministry exists and why the academic community can't do without it. Clearly ask, "What fundamental, compelling message do our donors need to remember about your campus ministry? Now, more than ever,

[8] Ted Grossnickle and Derrick Feldmann, "Today's Challenges, Tomorrow's Strengths," *Fundraising Success*, June 5, 2009. *www.fundraisingsuccessmag.com*

your supporters need to know why your ministry exists. Synods need to know. Students need to know. Congregations and their members need to know. Donors who are alums and friends need to know. Tell them—clearly, succinctly, strongly.

4. **Cultivate.** Provide ways for your donors to know you better. Plan events where they can rub shoulders with students and catch the electricity of your ministry. Find ways to engage congregations. Invite people to give time ("the one resource they can afford to give") as well as money to your ministry. Nurture relationships so that there is a deepening level of involvement of your mission and, therefore, a deepening understanding and appreciation.
5. **Communicate.** Let those who love you and support you know about changes that are happening. Keep them posted about the implications of budget shortfalls and the ways you are handling these issues. The more they know, the more likely they are to get involved at some new levels and support you with additional gifts. Be proactive and you will gain their respect; be reactive and you will only receive their pity. Nobody wants a pity gift.
6. **Keep fundraising.** When times are lean and mean, many organizations cut off contact with donors, sending fewer newsletters and personal correspondence, giving the impression that the ship is really too far gone not to sink. Instead, consider cranking up your personal contact with donors. Visit them. Call them. Find ways to connect with them more frequently. Even if the connection is not for a gift, make it anyway, simply to inform and thank them. Let them know that, in fact, your ship is sailing fine and together you will find a way to navigate the choppy waters.
7. **Find answers.** Hand-ringing does not motivate generosity. Those who love and support your ministry are looking to you and your leadership to provide insight and answers that will move the ministry off the rocks and forward toward the vision. Donors look for solutions to problems and are willing to join you in addressing those problems if you can identify convincing, compelling ways to make your ministry viable once again. Donors are realists, for the most part. They expect bumps in the road, budget slashes, and seismic programmatic shifts. They will stay with you if you can provide answers that realistically address the challenges set before you. Invite them to work on these answers with you. Not every good solution comes from "inside" the ministry.
8. **Partner.** There may be ways to connect with similar ministries to provide the base of support you need to continue. Ecumenical partnerships and covenant relationships with nearby congregations are obvious connections. Outdoor ministries and social service agencies could be explored, either for shared staff or facilities. The university itself might be interested in leasing part of your facility. Take some time to look around at other organizations that are in similar shape as yours and think about partnering possibilities that would be beneficial to both.
9. **Define a work plan.** Strategic plans are always important, but are supremely so in times when your future is uncertain and your time and energy are stretched ten different ways. A work/strategic plan charts out a course of action that you and your leadership can agree on. It moves you beyond survivalism, where any direction seems good and every choice a worthy goal. Work plans have limits and realistic expectations. They bring focus and clarity. They help you see progress and give you a sense of accomplishment while other concerns are being addressed. Short term work plans of six to twelve months duration are perhaps preferable to long term ten year plans in these times. With your leadership, ask what is necessary and doable in the next year and what it will take to attain these primary goals.

All of this said, the most important thing you can do to raise green stuff in this blue economy is to build a board that is strong, dedicated, and knows its responsibility for visioning and fundraising. You will need board members with special skills and gifts in these times. You will certainly need members who understand your ministry and mission. You will need members who tell the truth, who are not afraid to tackle tough problems, and who can configure bold solutions. Finally, you will need board members who live in hope, not despair, and who see their board work as a way of living out their vocations as disciples.

Are you ready? That appears to be the significant question. Have you and your leadership spent quality time on mission and core values? Have you developed a strategic plan and appropriate goals to get there? Have you tightened your budget belt, so that you plan to spend only on what is necessary? Do you communicate honestly and regularly with the friends and supporters of your ministry? Are your board members giving to the ministry—some would even ask if it is sacrificially? Are you and your leadership, including your student leaders, hopeful and positive? If so, this is a good time in campus ministry to be fund/friend raising!

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GENEROSITY MOTIVATES GIVING

The best kind of philanthropy is that which generously and willingly responds to the tangible needs of others out of a sense of gratitude and appreciation. Certainly that is a strong theme of our shared theologies across all religious lines. We laud a gracious and generous God, who in turn invites us to share what we have received with others in need. It's there from beginning to end in scripture. It pervades the life of the community of faith. It's the *mandate* of Holy Week. We love others and share with them because of the great love shown to us in Jesus Christ.

Yet, when we start talking about philanthropy, we often move quickly, too quickly, into a discussion of how we are going to "get" the gift and how we are going to segment, qualify, abstract, and even manipulate our database, so that we can be at the best "advantage" to extract a significant contribution. Conversely, good stewardship is about responsibly caring for the gifts God has given us and how to deploy them for the benefit of others.

A number of years ago I attended a conference where the speaker, James Gregory Lord, talked about the shifts that were happening in the fundraising world. Here are some of his thoughts, listed in two columns.

CONVENTIONAL FUNDRAISING	NEW FUNDRAISING
Problems attract donors	Vision attracts donors
Focus on negative experience	Focus on positive experience
Pessimistic/cynical	Optimistic/hopeful
Focus on the needs of the organization	Focus on the values of the organization
The "ask" as end in itself	Building a relationship with the donor
Survive	Thrive
Predatory	Cooperative
Focus on the donation	Focus on the donor
Organization wants to get something	Donor wants to do something
Beg/outfox/coerce	Influence/elicit/invite
Scarcity of resources	Abundance of resources

The list goes on in a considerably longer fashion. But you get the picture. The last comparison clues this new way of thinking best. It calls us to recognize that we are generously gifted by God in all that we do. There is an abundance of resources, and out of gratitude for this overwhelming providence, we respond willingly and generously to others.

In our campus ministry settings we often fall victim to the thinking represented in the column on the left. Our budgets are tight; our programs are lean. We feel the wolf's breath at the door. We can slide very quickly into survival mode, where we are desperate enough to plot to get the gift at any cost. It is about out needs and our crisis. It's not about the desire of the donor to do something of significance or on building an ongoing relationship with that donor. It's "hit-and-run" fundraising, getting the gift however we can, without concern for the giver. In the end, it's more about scarcity than abundance.

I invite you to think about the fundraising appeals you receive (and those you send). What/who is the focus of the appeal? As potential donor, how are you being treated and thought of? Is the group desperate, negative, or coercive? Are they operating out of gratitude and abundance or out of scarcity and manipulation? How will your gift be received, and how will it be used to enhance the lives of others?

I came across a new publication recently titled NEED[1]. Its uniqueness is that the content is dedicated to telling the stories of people whose acts of kindness and foresight nudge the world toward change. They are humble stories, but they are powerful examples of how one individual can respond to the real needs of others. The story that caught my eye was an article about Dr. Keith Taylor, who shares poignantly about his need and his plan to give back.[2] He talks about the time when he was a graduate student, scraping by on $800 a month, when he had to decide between fixing his car or paying rent. He chose the former because it got him to his work. Just days before he was going to be evicted, and literally put on the street, someone paid his rent. That gift kept him in school and focused on his career. This generosity made a deep impression on Taylor. He says, "The word 'philanthropy' has nothing to do with money itself. Suddenly I realized that what I'd been missing all of those years as I thought about helping others. They'd simply been compassionate and shared with me what they could when they knew it would make the greatest difference in my life." Philanthropy has to do with person-to-person care for the needs of others.

Soon after this epiphany, Taylor assessed his own finances, cut out unnecessary expenses, and started *Modest Needs*, an online charity that assists those in situations like his in former days. Based in New York City, it offers "self-sufficiency" grants to hundreds of economically vulnerable individuals who experience sudden, untimely misfortune. Someone in need submits an online application to *Modest Needs*. If approved, the request is posted online for the *Modest Needs* network to review. Donors respond, some very modestly, many because they have been helped themselves. Payment is made directly to a creditor or service provider on the applicant's behalf. Sixty-five percent of former recipients have donated back to *Modest Needs*, each giving what they can out of a sense of gratitude for the generosity of someone else.

Researcher W. Gerrod Parrott has isolated 135 different emotional states, each distinct enough to be instantly recognizable. Fundraiser Tom Ahern[3] identifies seven emotional triggers that most organizations use when they produce their materials. Some of these triggers are blatantly negative, while some are strongly positive. These triggers engage people's emotions and incite feelings. People like to feel good, or proud, or valued. They want to feel needed or soothed. The seven top emotional triggers, Ahern writes, are: anger, exclusivity, fear, flattery, greed, guilt, and salvation. Many of the ones that we would consider negative are used in the commercial world to motivate people to buy products or join a club.

Hopefully, the Christian community strives to rise above using the triggers of fear, exclusivity, guilt, and others like them. Yet, when we make our annual appeals and design our capital campaigns, we often slip into using these negative motivators. "Join the Thousand Friends Club." "It's too bad that when new students arrive, they have to sit in lounge chairs long overdue for the dumpster." "If we are

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[1] NEED Communications, 2303 Kennedy Street NE, Minneapolis, MN 55413 *www.needmagazine.com*
[2] "Generosity" A Little Goes a Long Way," Keith Taylor, NEED magazine, Issue 3, 2007.
[3] Tom Ahern is the author of *How To Write Fundraising Materials that Raise More Money: the Art, the Science, the Secrets.*

not able to raise $25,000 by the end of this year, we will have to cut our campus pastor's time back to 50%,"

I urge you to consider building your fundraising approach around positive motivators, such as: appreciation, abundance, vision, mutuality, and generosity. Invite those who have received much to give much in return. Go the extra mile to include all donors within the circle of your supporters, regardless of the size of their gifts. Say thank you with frequency and genuineness. Open your visioning process to a wide variety of participants; see their ideas and dreams as part of your abundance. Proclaim God's goodness. Celebrate generosity!

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WHAT MAKES YOUR MINISTRY GREAT?

Perhaps yours is one of those campus ministries that builds in an annual time for checking out how well you're doing. If so, that's commendable. While the four- year reviews that some denominations do are good ways of looking at the strong points of our ministries (and a few things that always need correcting), they are often quantum leaps in the evaluation process. What we need more often is to look at the smaller steps of our ministries, those day to day and month to month activities and decisions that plot the longer course for us. So maybe this is a good time to sit back and think about the question: what makes your ministry great?

You might want to think about the many ways in which your ministry is faithful to the calling of the Gospel on the campus where you serve. You might want to list those things that surfaced on your last review. You might want to imagine what students say about campus ministry to their parents or home congregation. With your board, you might find it helpful to develop a list of things you have accomplished this past year and can celebrate now that the academic year is over. Could you ask some students to write a personal paragraph about what campus ministry has meant to them this past year? If you had an hour to sit with your bishop over a cup of coffee, what would you like her/him to remember?

Kay Sprinkel Grace invites us to think about successful nonprofits.[1] She recognizes that you don't need to be venerable or rolling in dough to be successful. She says that new organizations with exciting visions and effective programs that meet community needs are certainly among those that can be called "successful" or great. Here are ten marks of those nonprofits, with some commentary I've added:

1. **Unwavering vision.** Through good times and bad, up cycles and downturns, the vision of the leadership doesn't falter. We certainly have those cycles in campus ministry. Some years we are bursting with active, eager students. Other years we can fit the worshipping community in our office. Budgets are fickle. Local congregations support us, and then ignore us. You know how it is. Good leadership keeps hold of the vision and doesn't panic when the years are lean. They advocate for the mission as strongly during those times as when we have lots to show for our labors. This is one of the primary tasks of the board—to keep the focus on the vision positive and steady.
2. **Confidence.** Organizations that are confident in their mission engender confidence among their constituents. When programs are delivered and services are provided as planned, the word gets out that campus ministry can accomplish what it sets out to do. Board members stand a little taller. Staff tackle the next idea with new muscle. And people around you who know your ministry nod their heads in affirmation. Success attracts potential new funders. There is new visibility for your ministry and new appreciation for your efforts. Like the little leaguer who whacked the ball out of the park, you will have greater confidence the next time you step up to the plate.

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[1] Kay Sprinkel Grace, *Contributions*, July-August, 2002, pp. 8-9, 15-16.

3. **No mission drift.** Mission drift is loosing sight of why you exist as an organization and focusing too much on your own issues. Its myopic, survival-oriented behavior. Leadership gets frustrated with always fussing about internal concerns like painting the bathroom, overseeing support staffer deciding what kind of food to serve at the picnic. There needs to be a regular, strong connection between the work of the leadership and the mission. Be sure you're looking through windows toward the community and not into mirrors, when you do your planning, fund raising and recruitment. Keep the mission in front of you.
4. **Clarity of values.** Successful organizations are clear about what they value. They know what's at the core of their mission. It’s woven into their vision and guides their staff and volunteers. Campus ministry needs to be clear about its core values and how they are communicated. What we do may be very different from what students expect, based on experiences with prior church life or parachurch groups. We can't assume that when we use "church-speak" people know what we mean by concepts like evangelism, hospitality, worship or grace. We need to be clear so that we can be clear with others.
5. **A sense of abundance.** As Christian communities, we should have this one right. But how often do we encounter whining about what we don't have, instead of thankfulness for what we do have. A sense of abundance moves us from a survival mentality to one of appreciation for the wealth of what we do have for doing ministry. Instead of focusing on the needs of your organization, focus instead on the needs you are meeting. The spirit of abundance is contagious.
6. **Courage.** While this is often characteristic of individual leaders and staff, it is true also of organizations. It takes courage to move in new directions or reassign resources to advance the success of your mission. It takes courage to make touch decisions about people and programs, especially if they have been in place for some time. It takes courage to talk honestly about finances and resource management. It takes courage to develop a new mission direction when the old one no longer serves realistically. It takes courage to advocate for certain issues or populations on campus. A "shy" ministry loses its voice and gives up its right to speak with and for young adults on campus.
7. **Transparency and regular communication.** A strong organization is transparent about its mission, performance, problems and achievements. Instead of putting up a successful image on all fronts, a transparent organization is willing and able to share with its constituents. Your donors, friends, alums, congregations, and the wider community want to understand and need to know what's going on. Strong organizations are not afraid to publish annual reports that are honest about participation and resources. If we truly view contributions as investments, we need to let our donors, the investors in our ministries, know our strengths and struggles.
8. **An emphasis on donor development, not just fund raising.** More and more we are realizing that the best fund raising is the development of solid relationships. Donor development/stewardship is the key to a strong, ongoing base of support. The time spent with current donors far outweighs the effort spent on acquiring new donors—although that, too, is important. Don't forget the friends you have as you search for new ones. Donor loyalty distinguishes successful organizations. In campus ministry our most loyal supporters are those students who have recently graduated. As they move from campus to new jobs, locations and loyalties, how can we keep them loyal and committed to the church on campus, from which they presumably benefited?
9. **Continual planning.** Successful organizations are always working on the planning process. There may be a "five year plan," but the horizon keeps moving ahead of you. A kind of "rolling base" planning process requires an annual evaluation of the current progress and an addition of

another year on the front end. Strategies change and priorities shift. Continual planning reflects these changes. Donors expect your organization to be sensitive to its environment and to be shaped somewhat by it. When a budget crunch hits the university, for example, how does that affect your strategic plan? What might you do differently if the university announces a shift to admitting more graduate students than undergrads?

10. **Respect, camaraderie and fun.** How wonderful it is to work with an organization that has respect for board members, volunteers and staff! There is a strong sense of team, where everyone's ideas are honored, and everyone has a valued voice. There is flexibility, honesty, encouragement, and, often joy. Ours is a serious work, but it’s also a place to celebrate with good fun. Anniversaries, completed projects, new or departing staffer board members, provide structured ways to show respect. How many other ways might you invite celebration into the life of your ministry?

We have great campus ministries. Yours is one of them. Take some time to celebrate your greatness and think about how it can become even greater. It will give you the energy you need to begin planning for what’s over the next hill.

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COMMUNICATING YOUR CAUSE

"I don't always say what I mean, but I say something like it." Attributed to Eugene Ormandy

Think about it for a minute. How do you communicate the core values and focus of your ministry? How do you highlight its creativity, its faithfulness, its struggles and triumphs? How do you go about helping "the best kept secret in the church" be more known and affirmed by those around you?

Some of us, I'm afraid, do something analogous to dropping fliers from an airplane, hoping that they land in an eagerly awaiting hand, to be read and digested gleefully. At least the roar of the plane might get some attention. Some of us are not that dramatic. We may quietly and infrequently send a rather plain newsletter with faint pictures and words in an eight-point font, almost daring the recipient to read the copy. Others may put a lot of flash and dash into our publications, only to stop short of asking anyone to respond or react to what we have presented so boldly.

Think with me for a bit about how we communicate our story to those who care and those who are able to respond with support and understanding.

Joseph Barbato, writing in *Contributions*[1], offers these general suggestions (with some of my added comments):

- Know your readers and what you want to communicate to them. He suggests having an advisory group to read through your publications prior to printing. Have them read it from the perspective of the person to whom you will send it. Ask them if your message matched their interests.
- Never forget that readers don't subscribe to your publications. Our newsletters are not like *Time* or *Road and Track* that they read avidly because it fulfills a need for knowledge or adventure. They do us a favor by opening our publications. So when they do, they should find something as interesting and challenging as the rags to which they subscribe. You may not be offering high adventure, but your stories should engage them and involve them in your ministry where hearts are changed and lives are saved.
- Get professional help. Barbato suggests that you spend some money on professional writers. That will probably not be possible for most of us. But you might have a university communications class do a design project for you. Find a volunteer who has done similar work for other organizations. Take a class in graphic design or computer publications. Be a collector of good quality publications that you come across and file them for future reference.
- Make good use of photographers and designers. Have them show you how to take creative photos that go beyond students in a food line or a smiling line-up at a retreat. An unusually creative photo catches a lot of attention. Now that digital cameras are readily available, you can take several shots of a particular scene and use the best.
- Do the unusual and useful. Print photos or articles that readers might be surprised to see, such as the university president eating pizza with your students or a student leader who happens to be your peer ministry. Excerpt an article from the college newspaper that points to an issue you're addressing, such as binge drinking. Highlight recent programs on topics

[1] Joseph Barbato, "What's This For?" *Contributions*, November-December, 2003, p. 4

like faith and science or inter-faith dialogue and point them to Web sites where they can find the full text.

- Be judicious about columns. "From the pastor" gets a ten on the dull scale almost every time (with some very notable exceptions among our folks). The newsletter should not be a soapbox for the staff, but a place where readers can learn more about the ministry and be drawn in closer through stories and pictures.
- Do a critique of each issue. This would be true for every piece of communications you send out from Web site to newspaper ads, from solicitation letters to newsletters. Evaluation helps you keep "on message."

Several months ago I participated in a "communications audit" conducted by our churchwide division, led by an outside consultant. It was a painful, yet helpful process. Each unit was asked to bring samples of anything and everything we had in print and online. The consultant gently fed back the results. No surprise to us, we were told that our favorite medium for communication was print. We were urged to greatly expand our thinking about how people can come to know our ministries beyond the tried and true ways of brochures and newsletters. We learned that our key messages should be found on all or our publications, including mission and vision statements and our goals. We were encouraged to think about "outcomes" for our communications. What do we want to have happen as a result of our story or our program report? Who is our audience and how are we trying to move them? We were asked to look over all of our communications tools to see if they fit together well enough to tell the whole story. Can a newsletter say it all? Do we ever contradict ourselves from one piece to another?

So having experienced this myself, let me urge you to consider a communications audit for your ministry. Gather a diverse group of your constituents, among them journalists and media specialists, and ask them help you design a holistic communications plan. Set up some timelines. Work on expanding your budget to accommodate new resources. Find some volunteers to help in the writing and production. Spend some good energy over the next year working on the ideas that come from the audit. Then evaluate again. I think you will be amazed at how this process will energize your work of interpretation and communication.

Another exercise you might do with your board and your advisory group is to develop a communications grid. On the vertical axis you would list your various audiences—those whom you want to understand and support your ministry. The list would include: students, parents, faculty and staff, alums and friends, bishops and synods, congregations, ecumenical colleagues, area merchants, and community "movers and shakers." On the horizontal axis list the widest possible variety of communication tools: newsletters, brochures, videos, newspapers, Web sites, email, telephone, displays, luncheon meetings, workshops, reports, general letters, and personal conversation. Then on the grid, place a check mark in the box that indicates which tool(s) best communicates to that particular audience. It will become quickly apparent that some tools are poor communicators to certain audiences. Email is better than a brochure for reaching students. A phone call or a conversation with a bishop might work miracles. Faculty and staff might be drawn to a workshop. Alums might visit a Web site easier that reading a newsletter. Make some decisions about how to expand your communications using new tools. You might even save some money in the long run if you think it through carefully.

Finally, Steve Hitchcock, who helped initiate the "We Care for the Future" endowment for ELCA Campus Ministry, writes helpfully about communications related to direct mail techniques. He's an expert; here's what he lists as practices to avoid:[2]

1. Avoid nonprofit stamps on the outer envelope. Donors say that they broadcast "junk mail," just like the bulk rate imprint does. Consider, instead, metered postage imprinted on your envelope. There's a better chance that your envelope will be opened, which, after all, is your first goal.
2. Avoid brochures or other inserts. He argues that it is more effective to add an extra page to your creative, personal letter, than stuff it with expensive brochures that are soon outdated. So save yourself some money and get a better response.
3. Avoid signatures in green or red ink. Use a bold, legible signature with your name and title printed below.
4. Avoid teasers on the outside envelope. Unless it's a very special mailing, such as an invitation or some kind of membership message, "You can make a difference," often does-it lowers the response rate to your mailing.
5. Avoid envelopes that are oversized, odd sized or use special paper stock. They cost a lot more money to use and often broadcast extravagance to your donors. You will not recoup your added expenses.
6. Avoid business reply envelopes. Test after test indicates that asking donors to use their own stamps gets the same or higher response. Also, you avoid the added cost of business reply mail, along with the fuss of working through that system with the post office.
7. Avoid the credit card option. Steve says that the tests show that this option doesn't lead to more gifts. There is the added cost to consider for setting up a credit card payment system—usually a monthly fee plus a percentage. Larger gifts come from personal contact. Smaller gifts usually don't come via credit card.
8. Avoid reply devices with gift options that range from $1000 to $10. Most new donors will open the door with a small gift-usually $10 to $25. Anything near $1000 will usually have to be asked for in person. For current donors, tailor your request to each individual, using only a couple of categories-their highest gift ever and one or two options higher.
9. Avoid muddy photos. We might have gotten away with this in years past, but the technology is now perfected to the point that clear pictures (and ones larger than a postage stamp) are what people want to see. Be careful of one-color photos, too. Nobody looks good in green or purple.

Good communication is the essence of good fundraising. Your donors must know about your mission and how you are living out this mission. They need poignant stories and reliable information in order to continue to cherish and cheer for your mission. Communication is the vital link between your ministry and those who affirm and support the important work that you do.

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[2] *Contributions,* September/October 2002

WHAT YOUR DONORS EXPECT TO HEAR

I'm a tough audience for the purveyors of newsletters and fund raising appeals. My round file is more than a little full of attempts to interest me in the latest compelling vision of the Fund for Retired Dog Catchers or the reasons why scholarships for the new university curling team will enhance the school's academic programs. I'm not easily enticed into reading something hastily assembled with my name misspelled on the crooked label on the back of a mutilated newsletter. I rush past the "pastor's page," glance at the headlines, and flip through the pictures scattered throughout, (most of them fuzzy and green-tinted, echoing the color of the paper). I'm not easily convinced that my time is worth it to continue.

Call me on the phone as part of a telethon (often during an evening meal), and I will politely tell you that I already know about your campaign (through your newsletter…), so please just send me a note and a return card in the mail. I'll respond in my own good time. Some of the reason for my hesitancy is because I need to consult with my wife about any donation I make, even smaller ones. But I am also aware that this is a solicitation call, and unless I am informed in advance, the call catches me sideways and unprepared for a response. The perky voice on the other end of the line says that she wants to invite me to the Homecoming gala or update my personal data, but I know that she really wants my contribution, insignificant as that may be. So why am I such a hard-sell, and what do I really expect to hear from such communications?

Primarily, I expect to be informed of the vitality of the organization in honest, straight-forward ways. I want to hear what's happening, or what's going to happen, that is consistent with the mission and the overall vision. I don't want it fluffed up or glossed over. If there are struggles, I want to know about it; maybe I can help. If there are things to celebrate, I want to cheer you on. Don't invite me to a party that has already happened. Tell me how I can be part of what's happening now.

Find ways to invite me into your ministry. Pictures do that to some extent, at least good ones. A well-crafted article by someone touched by the ministry through a mission trip or personal encounter opens doors of understanding. Lead me to your Web site so that I can see your creative work from another angle. Send me your email address so that I can correspond with you if I choose. Invite me to your Blog. Include me on the guest list for your next event and let me know that I'm welcome. If you count me as one of your supporters, help me to understand your daily struggles and successes, as well as your dreams for the future.

I have often said in fund raising workshops that most donors expect to be treated like "Aunt Martha and Uncle Harry." By that I mean that if they are dear to your heart (and you dear to theirs), they will want to hear from you frequently—more than a once-a-year newsletter or solicitation letter. They will want to know your ministry on a personal level. They will want to know how they can help. They will want to celebrate your progress and share your joys. And when they give you a gift to help you along, they will expect to be thanked as soon as possible in as personal a way as possible.

Communication with your donors is part of good stewardship. You take care of the gifts, but you also take care of the givers. Keeping them knowledgeably in touch is a responsibility you assume at the point that you cash their check. They give to your organization with the expectation that their donation will connect you both at a deeper level.

Kay Sprinkel Grace writes, "As donor expectations for transparency, accountability, and measurable impact increase, we find ourselves presented with new challenges and new opportunities in donor communications."[1] In her typical helpful, concise style, she lists ten things that donors want to hear. I offer them here, with commentary.

- **Whatever the message, frame it in gratitude.** Sincere gratitude is different from gratuitous thanks, however. Be sure your means of appreciation is appropriate to the gift. Don't send flowers to someone for a $50 gift. On the other hand, don't send a form letter in response to a $5,000 gift. Instead of a telethon asking for donations, think about holding a telethon to thank people for their gifts. You can't say "thank you" enough.

- **Mirror the donor's values in your messages.** You are trying to connect with the heart of the donor. While you may have many "reasonable" reasons to support your program, the one that they will respond to is the one that connects with their heart, their values. These values are best conveyed through stories and personal accounts. Reinforce your values through your messages. Help your donors hear the echoes in their lives.

- **Convey progress towards a shared vision.** A shared vision, along with shared values, is a primary motivator. You might say something like, "Our hope is that every student who comes to First State University will have an opportunity to hear the gospel first-hand." How will you do that? What will it take? How can they help? Then, at some point, report back on your success. Donors need to feel that they are participating in success. Let them know when progress is being made.

- **Communicate good news, even if out of cycle with regular communications.** Good news happens often when we least expect it. That should come as no surprise us in the church. So when your ministry gets good news, share it. Send a copy of a newspaper clipping announcing an event or word of a recognition for your staff or ministry. If you have email addresses for your donors, send a link to a Web site where the good news is available. Call your best donors by phone. Good news is urgent and needs to be shared immediately, even if it's not time for your regular communication.

- **Communicate bad news, too.** Certainly Aunt Martha and Uncle Harry want to know if you are struggling with issues or if the bottom has dropped out of your budget. Its part of the "transparency" concern named above. Your solid supporters will not love you less. Burying bad news indicates lack of trust in your supporters. Surprise them with good news, but not with bad news. Tell them in a timely manner. Honest communication keeps them invested.

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[1] Kay Sprinkel Grace, "Ten Things You Should Always Communicate to Your Donors," *Contributions*, January-February, 2006, pp. 7-8, 17.

- **Let them know how they can help.** Although a donor's gift is a sign of their trust and solidarity with your ministry, it's not the only thing that they can contribute. Perhaps they can offer their service as volunteer or serve on a focus group or participate in a visioning process. Even if they decline, they will appreciate being asked.

- **Tell them how important they are.** No gushing, please. However, do tell your supporters that they make a real difference. "We could not have made our financial goals last year without your help." "Our mission trip would have been cancelled except for last-minute gifts like yours." "Your prayers are cherished." Even though they may sense it, tell your supporters often how important they are to the ongoing work of your ministry.

- **Let them know how their support attracted the support of others.** Gifts invite other gifts. Grant-making organizations usually look at the breadth of support in making their decisions. Smaller gifts support larger gifts; while significant gifts encourage donations at all levels. Let your donors know that their gifts are magnets that attract the gifts of others.

- **Be sure they hear from a beneficiary of their giving at least once a year.** An easy way to do this is to include a story or quote in a letter or newsletter from someone served by your ministry. A photograph or a phone call makes the contact even more personal. Anecdotal feedback is a good way to keep the connection strong.

- **Let them know that they are your investors and stakeholders.** This language may sound a bit strange in church circles. It is accurate to say, however, that as church members they do have a "stake" in the outcome of your ministry. They "invest" in your ministry and they will want to know how their investment is playing out. They will come to view their participation in a more serious way. A "contributor" is finished when the check is in the mail, but an "investor" has an ongoing responsibility beyond the gift. Help them to see how to increase their investment.

REACHING YOUR AUDIENCE

My father was not what I would describe as an avid hunter. We lived in rural Iowa, so I would see him occasionally tramping through a cornfield in search of an elusive pheasant or rabbit. But he didn't have an orange jacket (or in those days a red flannel shirt), and our family dog was a Chihuahua for Pete's sake! He would have had better luck training a Holstein to flush out the birds. Nor did he have a gun appropriate to the task. He had an old single-shot .22 rifle, which could hit the broad side of the barn, but not likely a bird in flight. He did, however, come home with a tasty meal on occasion. One shot did the trick if it was aimed accurately.

I want to spend some time in this article thinking with you about the communication tools you use to reach your audience. From the looks of the newsletters and mailings I receive from many of you, you do a fine job communicating your campus ministry programs and priorities. Perhaps some of what I have to share can help you do it better or give you truer aim. Let's think first about "audience."

Those who are professionals in the marketing and communications world remind us continually about the necessity of knowing our audience. Dr. Judith Nichols has brought together her interest in culture and communications, as she helps us look at the generational differences in giving and dealing with money. She asks, "Are the marketing keys for reaching mid-life and younger donors different from those that reached donors who came of age during the Depression and lived through WW II?" The answer is a definite "yes." Back in 1994 she published a classic study titled, *Pinpointing Affluence* (Precept Press, Chicago)[1]. In that study she reported the different giving styles and preferences of five generations of givers. It's worth a serious read. She also writes a regular column called "Trend Watch" for *Contributions*.

Recently in another feature column called "My Nichol's Worth," she reports the results of a study titled "Boomers! Navigating the Generational Divide in Fundraising and Advocacy." The study was conducted in July, 2005 and is available online free at www.donortrends.com Interested? Here are some thumbnails from the report.

BABY BOOMERS

This is the largest percentage of adults in all developed nations. They are the "adult idealists" born between 1945 and 1964. They were told early on that they could do anything and that life was basically a journey of self-discovery. (Notice how much "journey" language we use in the church today?) They are inclined toward self-absorption, perfectionism, and individual self-esteem. They believe in changing the world, but not in changing themselves to fit the world. In mid-life they will be find virtue in austerity and a well-ordered inner life. They will also discover the importance of community values.

For the most part they have no memory of the Depression, only what they have heard from their elders. They understand that money is not to be saved, but put to use. Buy it, enjoy it—especially on credit. When all that money (or credit) will buy no longer satisfies, they will finally, in later life, turn to a spiritual quest for meaning.

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[1] Her newest books are *Growing from Good to Great* and *Global Demographics* (Precept Press). Her email is judnich@aol.com

GENERATION X

These "reactive" young adults were born between 1965 and 1977. They are rudely aware that life for them will not necessarily be better for them than it was for their parents. Instead of being perfectionists, they often feel that they can do nothing right. They are portrayed as latch-key kids who are the throw-aways of divorce and poverty. Conservative in many ways, they will look for indications that your organization is reliable and will not further complicate their lives.

They see their lives pragmatically and prefer a message that is blunt and brash. They want a fix, rather than a change. They search for intangibles such as a good family, a rewarding job, a chance to help others, and a deeper spiritual life. They are highly influenced by television and technology, and prefer a cashless financial world.

GENERATION NEXT (or Y)

These are the children of the Boomers, born between 1977 and 1985. They hold many civic values like their grandparents, but within a larger global context. They live in a world without boundaries, thanks in large part to technology. They are generally optimistic about the future and are amazingly confident about their financial future. Nearly one-third are convinced that they will be wealthy by their mid-thirties. They are not as concerned about pursuing a career as they are with experiencing the world. They prefer a communications style that is multi-layered and interactive.

The point that I want to make, with the considerable influence of Dr. Nichols, is that the age and experience of our audience is a primary factor in designing our communication style and content. For the most part we are used to sending out a "one size fits all" mailing or newsletter that we assume will address the interests and proclivities of our readership. I want to encourage us to step back from that process and consider the wider implications of the research done by Nichols and others. Before you launch your next newsletter, think about the audience. How can you speak to their life experiences? Their sense of how money is to be used? Their interest in investing in long term vs. short term projects? Their awareness of community, from global to individual? Their experience in the church or interest in spirituality? You might look into the possibility of "segmenting" your audience and sending a somewhat different letter to each generation. If you have a listing of alums, do you know when they graduated? How can you be more intentional about knowing your audience through the lens suggested above?

Obviously, you will also have to look at the vehicle for communication. Don't we assume that since a letter has worked for years it will continue to bear the impact of our ideas and dreams? M. Rex Miller, writing in *The Millennium Matrix* (Jossey-Bass, 2004), notes the shifts in communication media from the Oral Era to the Print Era to the Broadcast Era to the Digital Era. He charts it out like this:

	Oral Era	**Print Era**	**Broadcast Era**	**Digital Era**
Collective Memory	Bard	Book	Documentary	Database
Sense of Identity	Tribal Village	Independent individual	Crowded stranger	Cybersoul or anonymous intimacy

Building wealth	Land	Capital and manufacturing	Distribution and debt	Creativity and community

You can see the implications here; in fact, you live in these transitions yourself. The problem is that many of us haven't moved beyond the print era and we don't expect that our audience has either. The reality is that greater numbers of older Americans are online. A report titled, *Older Americans and the Internet*, based on a survey early in 2004, indicates that 22% of Americans 65 years or older have Internet access, up from 15% in 2000. By contrast, 58% of Americans age 50-64, 75% of 30-49 year olds, and 77% of 18-29 year olds currently go online for shopping, information, and communication.

The Non-Profit Times and Opinion Research Corporation (Advancing Philanthropy, September/October 2005) reports that 27% of those 45-55 and only 20% of those 55-64 go online to obtain more information before donating in response to a direct-mail solicitation. However, 31% of those under 34 and 34% of those between 35 and 44 do online information checks. The learning here is that your ministry needs to communicate at several levels. While a direct mailing will still get opened by a lot of people you send it to (especially if they know you and like what you're doing), the reality is that many of them will do further checking on your organization by going to your Web site. If you're wise, you will be sure to include your Web address in your letter, although you need to be sure that when you direct people there, your Web site is active, attractive, and shares crucial information (including good quality photos). The second part of the learning is that you need to find a way that allows people to donate to your ministry online.

Personality inventories have been in vogue for the past couple of decades. They are fine, useful tools for building teams and looking at individual styles of relating and engaging the wider world. They certainly make for more interesting conversation than "What's your sign?" or "Which village in Norway are you from?" Tom Ahern[2] has taken this soft science of describing personalities and preferences in a new direction. He has written some very helpful material about how to understand the various audience segments of the population that reads our publications—letters, email, newsletters, Web sites, etc. What does our audience look for in our communications? What excites them; what gets their attention? Ahern uses four personality types—Amiable, Expressive, Skeptic, and Bottom-line—to describe the potential makeup of our readership. A sampling of his approach is as follows.

The **Inner Amiable** empathizes with others.

To reach the Amiable use:

- Photos of faces, especially close-ups
- Anecdotes
- The word "you" in abundance

The **Inner Expressive** is easily excited, easily bored.

To reach the Expressive use:

- The word "new"
- Words and phrases that promise "secrets revealed"
- Brief, vivid, action-oriented verbs in your headlines

The **Inner Skeptic** demands proof.

To reach the Skeptic use:

- Credible testimonials from people who have used your services

[2] Thomas Ahern, *The Mercifully Brief Read World Guide to…Raising More Money with Newsletters Than You Ever Thought Possible* (Emerson & Church Publishers: Medford MA, 2005).

- Lots of background information
- Frank answers to frequently asked questions

The **Inner Bottom-liner** is impatient.

Reach the Bottom-liner fast by:

- Making every call to action easy to spot
- Making every call to action easy to do
- Making every call to action tightly focused.

As you sit at your computer screen, wondering just who is going to read what you have to say, imagine four faces looking back at you, each representing one of the four types mentioned above. What would you say to each person, how would you say it, how would you get your message across? Good stand up comics and good preachers know their audiences. The joke or the sermon has to be delivered in just the right way for it to be heard and appreciated by the audience. Otherwise the joke falls flat and the congregation is already looking up the next hymn. A good communicator knows how to reach her/his audience. It's no different with campus ministry publications. We have a message well worth sharing. We have stories, pictures, announcements, invitations, reports, visions, and tons of important news.

A professional newsletter editor and critic, Ahern says that nearly every newsletter he reads suffers from one or more of seven fatal flaws:

1. Failing the "you" test
2. Lacking emotional triggers
3. No news is not good news
4. Hogging the credit
5. Expecting people to read deep
6. Non- or feeble headlines
7. Stat crazy, anecdote light

Let's look at how another expert in the field of communications helps us to look at our problem. Peter Alexander, Executive Director of the Biodiversity Project writes about strategic communications in a recent series of articles offered by Grant Station.[3] He begins by acknowledging the place where most of us are—a worthy cause with limited resources and little time to communicate. This is the very reason, he suggests, that we need to "focus on reaching the people who can actually change things—your target audience (not the general public.)" Certainly we do have limited time and resources, as well as an urgent need to share the news about our ministries. Also, the word "strategic" is important, because it forces us to be careful in our use of the resources we have to reach those who will respond most favorably to our message.

What is the best way to reach that consistent group of donors who avidly support your ministry year after year?

What means will you use to encourage strong supporters to make a major contribution to a building campaign or endowment?

How will you communicate the core values of your ministry to parents, to new students, to university faculty and staff, to delegates to synod assembly, and to members of local congregations?

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[3] www.grantstation.com Alexander's series is titled, "How to Build Support for Your Cause."

When is it effective to make personal visits? When is a worth writing a letter? When will email suffice? How does a newsletter fit into your strategic communications plan?

Alexander writes, "When thinking about potential target audiences, keep one question front and center: 'How will reaching this audience help us achieve our goals?' Using your goals as a reference point this way will help ensure that you don't waste valuable time, energy, and resources trying to convince people who don't need convincing, or even worse, trying to 'convert' people who are ideologically opposed to your cause or viewpoint." Curiously, he says that communications professionals use the categories of "saved," save-ables," and "sinners" to designate those who are affirming of your message, those who might be convinced, and those beyond hope of ever understanding.

Defining your target audience is a crucial task in any communication project. You need to determine who your public is, what they care about, and what their core values are. Unless you are speaking directly to those core values—and aligning them with those of your ministry—you are missing the mark. You get to know the values of your audience by listening to them. Don't assume that everyone cares about the same things. Step back and listen, either in conversation or direct research, such as a questionnaire. Think about creating a focus group like those used by political candidates to tell you what they think and care about.

Give your audience a reason to care about your ministry by appealing to what you now understand to be common values. Help them to see how their concerns are addressed by your organization and how their commitments and contributions move forward your common agenda.

Once you realize that you have many very different segments to your audience, you can begin to plan for all the ways that are effective to reach them: letters, phone calls, personal visits, Web sites, newsletters, synod publications, or email. Make a grid, listing vertically all of the various audiences you need to reach, and horizontally all of the communication tools at your disposal. Then place a check mark under each audience type and align it with the appropriate tool. This may help clarify your communication strategy. It may end up saving you some precious dollars, too. For example, you may forgo expensive newsletters, that most people round file very quickly, in favor of well-placed personal mail. A phone call may be worth a dozen letters.

I hope that you're "hunting" with more than a single-shot .22 rifle and a Chihuahua these days. While there are some tried-and-true ways to share our vision and our programs with our wider audience, we need to expand our communication to include multi-faceted, multi-layered approaches. We need to know our audiences—all of them—in their various experiences and expectations.

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DONOR LOYALTY: KNOW WHEN TO HOLD 'EM

I was at a little neighborhood gathering recently, when the conversation topic turned to, "What's the best advice you have ever received?" Being quick to answer (and a bit flippant), I said that I probably heard my best byte of advice on a Kenny Rogers album. "You gotta know when to hold 'em, know when to fold 'em, know when to walk away, know when to run." I'm not a gambler by any stretch of the imagination. I never did well with schoolyard bullies. And while I love to drive all kinds of different vehicles, I hate the requisite bargaining process. So why would a church "bureaucrat" with responsibilities for fund raising resonate with this kind of advice?

What comes to mind is the subject of "donor retention." I have been in conversation with a number campus ministries who describe a common dilemma of most non-profit groups. They have a database of several hundred names, but they have not heard from a large percentage of those folks for years. It is likely that they were names inherited from a previous campus pastor's tenure (perhaps even her Christmas card list), and there is no longer any personal connection with those names. Each year when the annual appeal happens, there is a worthy debate about whether to include this mass of humanity in the next mailing, particularly if you are sending expensive newsletters or first class mail. It's a significant cost factor to include so many "friends of the ministry" who no longer resonate with your cause and who may have never contributed to your appeals. Do you hold 'em or fold 'em? When do you walk away and push the delete button on that cohort of "supporters" whose contribution over 10 years wouldn't even pay for the return postage?

Donor retention is a big deal these days. You know how hard it is to obtain viable names in the first place and then keep track of their every move. What happens between the time we place a new graduate on the alum list and the next annual appeal? The obvious secret of small gift fund raising is that an appreciable portion of the initial donors give again, and again, and again. They renew gifts, they become loyal, they develop "brand loyalty," they love us more each year. Let's look at the results of a recent study.

In 2005 the DonorTrends Project[1] surveyed 2,333 American adults and rubbed those results against 35 years of experience and observations of the sponsoring groups. In the survey responses, 59% claimed "high loyalty" to the causes or charity they support. This kind of loyalty surpasses loyalty to doctors, sports teams, and automobiles, by the way. Loyalty is a big deal when it comes to giving. Not surprisingly, as the size of the gift increases, the loyalty percentage increases as well. Of donors giving over $1,000 annually, 81% espouse loyalty as the key ingredient. Increased education on the part of the charity also increases donor response. Loyalty increases with the age of the donors: pre-Boomers (born before 1946) are generally more loyal than post-Boomers (born after 1964). Also, online donors indicate more loyalty than offline donors. Gender does not appear to play a role in loyalty.

These loyal donors are not often enticed to "shop around" for new causes to support, although more online donors admit to doing that because of the enticements of the internet. What is interesting,

[1] A collaboration of Craver, Mathews, Smith & Company (CMS) and The Prime Group, © 2006.

according to the CMS report, is that only 33% of loyal donors educate themselves about the charity they support. Only this group describes the feeling of "member," others see themselves merely as "contributors." Said differently, over two-thirds of your contributors are on the downhill path to informational and emotional disengagement with your organization. Building donor loyalty is an uphill battle to educate and involve your core donors in the things that matter about your ministry.

The online segment of donors is much more likely to stay informed, however. This may be hugely significant, in part because they have taken the time to connect with you, learn about you, make a gift to you, and have left an email address inviting you to contact them in return. The CMS study states, "Online engagement—starting with volunteering an email address—is the most significant indication available to an organization that an individual is open to a relationship, not just a one night stand."

The study reported that the reason most often given for a donor leaving an organization is, "I can no longer afford to contribute." The commentary on the report, however, argues that this is probably not the real reason, although it may certainly be true in some cases. It likely has to do with donor priorities. These days donors are increasingly discriminating, especially Boomers, online givers, and the "platinum" givers (who give more than $1000 a year). They are performance-oriented and judge the value of their gift against the overall accomplishments of the organization. They pick winners and tend to stay with them, unless they discover otherwise. In addition, they invite others to join them in a cause they find to be effective. They have a kind of "missionary zeal" for advancing your organization.

The CMS report notes four other trends that have implications for successful fund raising today.

1. Shaky public confidence in charitable organizations. When the reputations of the United Way or the Red Cross are tarnished because of mismanagement or poor accountability, we all get painted with the same brush. Four years after September 11, a study reported that public confidence in charitable organizations was at an all time low. Only 15% of Americans said they had strong confidence in public charities. There is no assurance that the gift once given gets to the people or purpose for which it is intended.
2. In a "personality culture," charities are defiantly faceless. The leaders of most charities cannot be named; they do not personify their causes. If the truism of fund raising is accurate—that people give to people, not programs—we will need to do a better job of personalizing our organizations. People have the capacity to inspire, generate trust, and encourage support. Newsletters and Web sites don't, unless we can find a way to present a personal face. Major donors bet on (and contribute to) known leaders. That is increasingly the case with smaller donors. They want to experience, to touch, and to relate to the leadership of the organization. In this day of podcasts, webcasts, and online videos, this is a new field to pursue.
3. Too much information is not enough. Surprisingly, many organizations do not report their accomplishments, and the "how of the successes," to their supporters. The concern is compounded when you realize that if it's hard keeping your loyal donors informed, it's a huge challenge to interest and educate new donors. It may be possible to experiment with different types of communication to see what reaches different segments best. One thing is absolutely true—a poorly designed newsletter sent once a year to a generically defined audience will not do the trick.
4. The competition is expanding rapidly. Every day new "brands" appear, vying for donor loyalty, including the host of parachurch groups on campus. Newer organizations built around online communications, fundraising, and activism will steal the march on older, more traditional

organizations, the report suggests. There is a fluidity that makes it possible for new groups to enter the marketplace almost unnoticed. People are intrigued by new approaches to old problems. But “new” is the enemy of “loyal.” Those who have supported you in the past will have to make a conscious decision to continue to do so in the future.

> The mandate for effective fund raising is clear. We must do everything we can to appreciate, educate, involve, and build strong relationships with our most loyal donors.

The CMS report offers twelve strategic suggestions for building donor retention.

1. Start with lifetime value-focused new donor prospecting. “Don’t chase low tippers.” Focus your time and your resources on recruiting strong donors who will bond with you over the essential purpose of your organization.
2. Give the highest priority to securing a second gift from new donors. The critical bonding window is 1-3 months of the initial gift. “Get the gift, increase the gift, continue the gift,” is on of the common mantras of fundraisers. Work hard to earn that second gift.
3. Follow the basic rules of economics. Invest more in winning and retaining “high value” donors.
4. Understand in detail what this acquisition/retention costs. Is it more cost-effective to build up current donors or find new ones? How will you relate to your donor core differently than you will to everyone else on your database? Build a budget line around donor retention. Relationship marketing is a big deal. Google “relationship marketing” and see what you find.
5. Identify and address likely defectors. Can you predict why a donor will drop you? What can you do to win this person back: a phone call, a special appeal letter, an invitation to visit the campus? If donors drop off because of a perception of mismanagement or other catastrophe, address the concern with them and assure them honestly that it will not happen again.
6. Re-consider how you tell your success story to existing donors. Your success must meet your best donors’ expectations. Ask outsiders for their feedback. Get some objective perspective.
7. Find a way to introduce your leadership to your donors. In campus ministry this would include students as well as staff and board members.
8. Treat online donors as your most valuable members. Be relentless about collecting email addresses. Invite referrals—this has never been so easy. To stretch your imagination, read Seth Godin’s *Unleashing the Ideavirus*[2], which suggests that product communication happens best from customer to customer rather than from business to customer.
9. Monitor the “casualties” among your colleague groups. If a charity like yours has had an ethical lapse or accountability issue, be sure to inform your loyal supporters that you have taken steps to guarantee that this will not happen to your organization. While you don’t want to play off of the hardships of others, you will want to point out the way in which your organization addresses certain concerns.
10. Monitor both your traditional and emergent competition. Do you visit and research their Web site? Do you receive and read their newsletters? What are they doing well to acquire and retain loyal donors? What fresh ideas can you learn? How can you build on obvious differentiation? “Sameness does not breed loyalty; confident, projected distinctiveness does.”

[2] Copyright by *Do You Zoom, Inc*, Dobbs Ferry, NY, 2000

11. Monitor donor responses that indicate dissatisfaction with your organization. Are there systemic problems that need to be addresses? Reply promptly and personally to any concerns. Silence or defensive responses shut down loyalty.
12. Benchmark loyalty of your donors against other donors. How loyal are campus ministry donors over against donors to church colleges or social service agencies? What are those distinctions? How can you adapt some of the great loyalty builders that other groups use for your own organization?

This has been a lot of information about donor loyalty—knowing when to hold 'em. What about when to fold 'em? When do you drop names from your mailing list and just give up on them as potential donors? My answer would be: Never. Only when someone has specifically asked to be removed from my database would I do so. What I need to do with this host of "deadwood" is to try to bring it to life again. Here are a couple of ideas that might move some donor "suspects" into "prospects."

- Gather a group of loyal supporters and talk with them about why they hold your ministry in such high regard and continue to be thoughtful givers year after year. Find out what you could do better or do differently to involve more supporters.
- Bring together a carefully selected cross-section of supporters who have been involved in the ministry over the years. Share your list of inactive donors with them and ask them, in confidence of course, to create an emerging list of potential donors and what you might do to build or rebuild relationships with them.
- Send a specific survey mailing to inactives, asking them for information about their relationship to your ministry and what they would like to know or do to become reacquainted. Provide them with a way to respond to you online. Make it as simple and as easy as possible for them to respond. Ask for their email address.
- From this emerging group, select 15-25 who you determine would benefit from a personal visit from the campus pastor and/or a board member or student leader.
- Consider congregation contacts in this same way. Visit churches that are potential supporters. Remember to collect names of interested individuals when you make the visit.
- Although not "inactives," parents of students have a very distant relationship with your ministry. They may know about you only through their son or daughter. Parents can be very loyal supporters if the ministry has served their family well. Think of ways to keep the relationship with parents (and grandparents) viable, even after they are no longer paying tuition.

I'm no gambler, but I'd bet on this: successful fund raising happens because of the commitments of an increasing number of loyal donors.

SAYING "THANK YOU!"

At the risk of sounding like the master of the obvious, I want to lift up the importance of saying a genuine "thank you" to all those faithful supporters of your ministry. If it "goes without saying," sometimes that means that we don't say it. Saying thank you is one of the ways that we build relationships with our supporters. If they, indeed, are to become like friends and family to us, we need to do what we would do if someone close to us gave us a thoughtful gift. We need to acknowledge the gift in prompt, appropriate ways.

The fact that we respond promptly signals a number of things. It lets the donor know that we open our mail and that we responsible care for the gifts we receive—like cashing the check within a reasonable time. I remember my shock when I began a new job a few years ago and discovered a half dozen checks in my desk drawer, uncashed, written over six months prior. I had to contact each donor, apologize, and humbly ask if they would consider re-writing a check if I would send them the old one. Promptness also lets the donor know that their gift has made a connection with you; otherwise it's like being on hold on the phone for a long time until someone finally picks up on the other end. The Billy Graham Crusade is successful in its fund raising in part because they have a mandate of replying to each donor within twenty-four hours. It's a courtesy to say thank you as soon as possible.

Second, consider the appropriateness of your response. For many a brief, handwritten note is what is expected and appreciated. If you're fortunate enough to have a lot of responses to send, perhaps a pre-printed note that you would personally sign would suffice. In other cases, where the gift is larger or the relationship deeper, a phone call followed by a note is appropriate. In still other instances, a personal visit or invitation to lunch is the best way to acknowledge the gift and the relationship. Additional items, such as a photograph or a news clipping, add interest. In very rare situations an email response might be okay, but it is about the most impersonal form of communication today.

In an article titled, "Thanks, and Thanks Again," Joseph Barbato[1] offers some ways to make our donors feel special.

- Give your thank you substance. You have to say more than those two little words. You have to let your donors know how their gift helped make a difference. Quote someone who has benefited from it, such as a student who experienced a life-changing encounter on a spring break trip. Barbato says that substance helps to educate donors. Talk about the next new project or your renewed vision. Substance helps them to understand and will encourage more gifts in the future because of that.
- Send the letter now. As mentioned above, this helps the donor know that the check actually arrived and that you appreciate the effort to send it. A warm gift turns cold very quickly with the passage of time.
- Keep the letters fresh. Be sure to write new letters with each round of thank you responses. If a person contributes several times a year, make sure that each note is different and not dated by the mention of a holiday or the beginning of the school year, when it is actually April.
- Tailor your thank you notes. If you tailored your "ask," you need to tailor your thank you. If you appealed to a certain group of alums on the basis of renovating the building, then respond by

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[1] Joseph Barbato, "Thanks, and Thanks Again," *Contributions*, April 2005, p. 6.

letting them know how the progress is going. To know the donor is to know how to say thank you.

- Involve board members. Sometimes board members know donors more closely than you do yourself. In that case, ask them to pen the note or make the phone call. The fact that a board member responds is another indication that the person is giving to an organization, not just to you as leader.
- Use your telephone. We usually get calls when somebody wants something. How unique it would be if someone just called to say thank you! How about the donor hearing the voice of a student on the other end, thanking them for the gift that provided new worship books or a mission trip scholarship. This could also be an occasion to invite the donor to an event or ask if they have questions about an existing program. Of course, a note should still follow.
- Encourage donors to participate. Most donors are pleased to send a contribution, but they might also be pleased to be invited to participate in the ministry in some way. This is a way of educating and deepening the relationship. Good donors make good volunteers and good ambassadors.
- Send a gift. From time to time there might be something from your ministry that could be shared with certain donors, such as the manuscript of a campus lecture, a photograph, or a new resource you have produced. This reinforces the pleasure of giving.
- Make a fuss. You may be in the practice of publishing lists of donors in your annual newsletter. If so, be certain that names are spelled accurately and that if you have giving categories, people are placed in the right one. Include photos in your newsletter with donors at an event. Have them write an occasional article or speak with a group. Hold an annual appreciation luncheon. With rare exception, you can’t fuss enough, Barbato says.
- Keep everyone informed. Those who give want to know how their contribution has made a difference. Echoing what was said above, donors need to hear that their relationship with your ministry through their gift has provided experiences, resources, or direction that otherwise would not have been possible. A knowledgeable donor is likely to be a continuing donor.

In one of the campus ministries I served a check would arrive on schedule every year. It was always made out for $2.00 and suggested that I use it to take the choir out to dinner. Of course the only way to do that would have been to order a giant soda with ten straws or a dish of ice cream with ten spoons. But every year I shared word of the $2.00 gift with the choir, all of whom were touched. Then I sent a thank you note and invited her to come and hear the choir some Sunday when she was in town. The gift may have seemed small to us, but it was heartfelt on the donor’s part, and so it required a thank you.

Take some time to consider how to say thank you to those who know you and love your ministry. It’s a good thing to do.

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HOPE IS NOT A STRATEGIC PLAN[1]

Several of the newsletters and fund appeals that have come across my desk in recent weeks point to the economic downturn we face in this country. They note the impact on budgets and ways in which ministries are trying to expand programs with shrinking dollars. For example shares a conversation with a local banker. Together the banker and campus pastor express concern for the economy, particularly as it impacts students, and their use of credit cards, values, and lifestyles. Let me quote from this well-crafted message: "As the dollar falls in the world market, community meals, festivals, walks in the woods, music, poetry, acts of kindness, and pondering a better redistribution of wealth will be what its going to be about." Later on, an invitation to his campus community: "We meet quietly each mid-week at the University Center to pray and ponder the changes going on around and within us. We share a loaf of bread, drink from a cup, and remember a Promise that one day all things shall come together, everything in heaven and everything on earth. One evening I shall invite the banker. Welcome to a new school year."[2]

He has it right. Finally it is all in God's hands. And in the meantime, we are called to be about those things that we can do to address the times in which we live—from meditation to careful planning, from deep eucharistic celebration to sincere concern for the needs of others.

It seems obvious that no one is immune from hearing about or thinking about the economy these days. We encounter its devastating effects on our lives on many levels, from our income, to our pension plans, to our working budgets in the campus ministries we serve. Some I talk with seem immobilized by the economy's downturn. Others are frantic with anxiety, poised to do something, anything, if only someone in the know would direct their actions and investments. While I'm not inviting you into a hand-wringing session on the economy, I would like to share with you some of the thinking and reading I've done recently that may have an impact on how you do your fundraising in these times.

A recent article in the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* acknowledged that "campus fundraising just got a lot harder."[3] The writer interviewed a number of folks responsible for large capital campaigns and found that they are appropriately cautious, yet amazingly positive. In the report, Carleton College President Robert Oden said, "Part of the spirit of a campaign is the optimism . . . to set an ambitious goal, and because people believe in Carleton, we're going to reach it." But he went on to admit that such optimism is harder right now. "You're doing that with one hand, but with the other hand, you realize things are shaky right now." Mark Deinhardt, executive vice-president at St. Thomas University stated, "Uncertainty creeps into the mix; they (donors) aren't sure how much they can part with and send your way even though they believe in you."[4] Bruce Flessner, whose consulting firm works with many major campaigns in the area, counsels that organizations are going to have to be patient when it comes to seeing results, while continuing to work hard at the planning process of the campaign.[5]

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[1] Letter from Michael Hoffman, CEO, *Changing Our World*, October, 2008.
[2] The Rev. Jon Magnusson, Campus Pastor, Northern Michigan University, *Tracks*, September-October, 2008,
[3] *Minneapolis Star Tribune*, October 17, 2008, Section A1. Article by Jeff Shelman.
[4] *Ibid*, Section A18.
[5] *Ibid*, Section A18.

The wisdom in this article was reinforced a week later at a conference for fund raising professionals. These folks, with more on-the-ground experience than I have by far, encouraged us all to use this time as a way to reflect on the focus and purpose of what we do. One person said, “It’s a hard time to do fundraising, but a good time to do development work.” This is like a mandate to set the foundations straight after we have suffered the quake. Good development work has a strategic plan, has a carefully tuned mission statement, and has a donor base that is informed and up to date. It’s a time to concentrate on “donor stewardship” and on saying “thank you” rather than “please.” While we might be spending more time these days scurrying to plug the holes in the budget, we need to take time as well to step back from the fray to think carefully about our mission and our plan for moving it forward.

Those who study trends in the economy and philanthropy remind us that struggling markets do not necessarily predict a downturn in charitable giving. In 2007, despite uncertainty in the housing market and the skyrocketing cost of oil, Americans donated more than $304 billion to charity. In the last 40 years, the worst single year decline in inflation-adjusted philanthropy was 1973-74 during the oil embargo. The decline in giving was 5.4%. In 2008, if there is an equivalent decline, the amount will be a drop to only $289.5 billion, approximately what was available in 2005. One report states, “Philanthropy in America is more deeply rooted in culture than in equity share prices.”[6]

Another study indicates that in current dollars giving has increased 8.4% in years without a recession, but in years with a recession, giving has increased 6.2%.[7] The reasons for the overall resilience of American philanthropy, the study says, is the high priority Americans give to charitable giving. In times of economic slowdown, other discretionary spending will often be cut first. A pledge to a religious organization or a charity near and dear to their heart will be the last to be laid aside. While donors may pay more attention to timing and the form of their gift (securities vs. cash), those who are able will continue to support causes that are important to them and where their carefully determined gifts can make a real difference. Noteworthy, also, is the fact that estate gifts tend to increase during tough times, as once again people make decisions about priorities.

Here are other words and phrases that I have encountered in my recent reading about fund raising in a time of economic stress:

- Now is the time for dedication to building relationships.
- Tell your story every day.
- Convey tangible results.
- Communicate positive messages
- Speak with conviction about your mission.
- Demonstrate clearly the emotional impact of changing lives.
- Is your case the strongest, most updated statement of who you are as an organization?
- Emphasize the seriousness and immediacy of your needs.
- Be candid.
- Your vision must be set to the future.
- Institute efficiencies—audit and streamline your operations.
- Thank, thank, and thank again.
- Develop unemotional, calming strategies.

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[6] “Economic Q&A”, *Our Changing World*, October, 2008.
[7] The Sharpe Group, 2008.

- Be near, dear, and clear: as near to your donors as possible, keeping your mission dear to them, and being clear about why funding is needed.
- Flexibility and innovation.
- Develop a specific strategy for the chronic phase.
- Communicate more than less.
- What no one should do is sit still.

There are several implications for fund raising in campus ministry that I suggest you spend some time discussing with your board. These points are valid for any time and place, but they are particularly significant in these days.

1. Be clear about your mission. Your community of donors needs to know exactly who you are and what you propose to do before they will support you.
2. Create a vision that is both stretching and realistic. Don't get caught up in an impossible dream. Does your vision have the marks of relevance, urgency, and sustainability?
3. Develop a strategic plan that is doable and measurable. Supporters want to see progress toward a goal and want to celebrate with you when you've reached it.
4. Go to even greater lengths than before to communicate. With more organizations vying for fewer dollars, you will want your donors to be highly aware of your ministry and continue to hold you in deep regard. It's easy to slide off the plate at many levels. Stay in close touch with all of your constituents, from synods to congregations to individuals.
5. Make your appeal about the mission, not about the shortfalls in the budget. Donors support you because they affirm your mission, not because your budget is shaky. They want to invest in "changed hearts and saved lives" and want to make a difference with the limited resources they have. Show them how that can happen though your campus ministry.
6. If you need to make an emergency appeal, keep it real and honest. Let them know that once you get past this bump in the road (new roof, salary shortfall, etc.), you will be as strong as ever. Let them know that their contribution will help get you through these risky times. While most people won't give to a sinking ship, they will give to a ship that will continue to sail if repairs are attended to. Don't whine, don't blame, don't scare or threaten. Be positive, be candid, and focus on mission.
7. Give people a reason to contribute, not a reason to withhold. Don't commiserate by saying, "I know that these are tough times for everyone, so we understand if you are not able to make a contribution this year." Instead, let them know that while some may not be able to contribute readily, their generosity can make up the difference. Not everyone feels the same economic impact; some are as able to contribute as before and will understand the challenge to step up with an extra gift.
8. This is an emotional time and appeals need to be made on an emotional level as well. A cold, rational letter filled with dry facts and trite words will not connect.
9. Most importantly, remember that this continues to be about stewardship of the many gifts that God provides. Let your donors know that you are carefully stewarding the gifts to your ministry and invite them to consider how they might share from the abundance in their own lives.

I was encouraged a while back by an article titled, "Keep Driving Toward the Light," by Kay Sprinkel Grace.[8] She acknowledges that most of us in the fund raising business have had our patience,

[8] *Contributions*, January-February 2003, 1ff.

fortitude and confidence tested in the past few years. We have learned how to work with a new generation of donors who have sharp expectations for our performance. We have had to tell our stories in ways that engender confidence in our programs and ensure their investments. She suggests that a good word for the New Year might be “resolute.” Instead of making resolutions about planning more thoroughly, communicating better and telling our stories more vividly, we ought to think about that word "resolute," which calls forth, in my mind, things like determination, focus, pacing and a mature sense of what can be accomplished and what cannot.

Here are 10 things that Grace urges us to be resolute about (with my added comments):

1. **Think abundance, not scarcity.** It's easy in times like these, she says, to fall into the trap of thinking "poor me" as an organization, when balance sheets remind us of me erosion of income or assets. Instead, we should spend time thinking about all that has been accomplished over the years and the donors who have cheerfully supported our programs. Maybe this is just the right time to write a “non-ask” thank you note to your donors and let them know how much you value them and their past support. Resist the temptation to drag out the tin cup and become "charity." We put the cup away years ago, keep it hidden now. Appreciate the abundance you have and abundance will follow.

2. **Subvert mediocrity.** People who have led great missions were intolerant of mediocrity. They inspired others with their vision and their determination. This is not a time to settle for second best or ill-planned programs. It is, rather, a time to think way beyond the boundaries for new ways of getting things done—new partnerships, staffing shifts, board renewal, funding collaborations. Focus on your true mission with all of the excellence you can muster.

3. **Position yourself for the charitable investment** (but don't call yourself a charity). A charity is an organization that is needy, investments are made in healthy organizations with a future and with clear goals. So, cheek your mailings and publicity to be sure that you are not begging or presenting yourself as a "sinking ship." You may get a few dollars that way, but long-term gifts come only as an investment in the future.

4. **Build partnerships, not silos.** Donors are encouraged by knowing that you "play well with others." Diminishing resources make a larger impact when organizations work together. In campus ministry, for example, much of the work we do ecumenically serves as an example of collaborative planning and ministry. Silos are built out of a fear of competition and turf anxiety. I still remember calling a donor several years ago to thank her for a rather large contribution. She interrupted me "in mid-sentence to say that someone from another Lutheran organization was at her door and could she call me back. Resources are maximized and agendas broadened when we build solid, creative partnerships.

5. **Keep your investors informed.** Even during tough times, donors want to know what's happening. They don't want to be shielded from your "bad news." After all, they have chosen to invest with your organization and they will ride the crest with you. Informed investors will keep investing, as long as they are assured that you are still focused and carefully managing their contributions. If you have bad news to communicate, do so forthrightly, without hand wringing

or whining. State the problem and what you intend to do about it. Ask for their ideas. Thank them for hanging in there with you.

6. **Do something new.** In difficult times, sometimes new energy can come from doing a new thing or taking an old program in a different direction. This is a good way to involve donors and board members in creative thinking together. Focus or visioning groups can help generate ideas. Even a twist like redesigning your logo or changing your promotional colors can indicate new thinking. Instead of a sit-down board meeting, do something physical together. Habitat for Humanity gets great board coalescence by building a house together. What could you do to instill a new sense of purpose and adventure?

7. **Combat fear.** Fear drives much of what happens today. Fear makes us reactive instead of proactive. It shuts us down and drives us inward. Think about the fear of budget cuts and how you are tempted to respond when you hear the news. Instead, Grace says, talk about your success, your vision, how you have changed lives or made a difference. Master these success stories. Make people aware of how important relationships and community are in these times. Fear ices our hearts; positive stories warm them.

8. **Keep your confidence up.** Although this may simply sound like positive thinking, there is a real way in which we can have confidence in ourselves and our mission—confidence that we're doing the right thing, making a difference in people's lives, being faithful to our calling, being good stewards, etc. Donor confidence will be in direct proportion to our own confidence.

9. **Be patient, but persistent.** Patience is that word 1 mentioned early on in this article. We need to be patient with those things we cannot control, such as the economy, politics and misfortune. Our donors are feeling loss of control as well. We need to let them know that we are in this together and that we plan to be on campus for a long time, continuing to do what we have done for years—inviting persons more deeply into Jesus Christ and the community that bears his name. We don't adopt the corporate model of judging our mission one quarter at a time. We look backward, but we mostly look forward. We persist, with patience, to do that to which we are called. Scripture says, "We do not lose heart." Maybe this is a good time to go to contributors who haven't sent a gift in a while and find out what you can do to re-earn their confidence. Let them know of your patient persistence.

10. **Keep driving toward the light.** In her article. Grace talks about her great-grandfather, a California rancher and pioneer, who’s abiding philosophy was to "keep driving toward the light." To him this light meant hope. It meant invading the future and often cutting his own path. Light provides a focal point when the surrounding area seems shadowy. What is the hope of your ministry? What pulls you forward? What is the light that beckons you? How will your ministry be shaped and guided by the hope that is before you?

Now, if you're not ready to sign off yet, I want to add a few comments from another author in the same issue of *Contributions*. This writer is Maureen Robinson, who offers some priorities to keep in mind about governance in these times.[9] She says that "when times are good, those of us committed to

[9] *Contributions*, January-February, 2003, Maureen Robinson, "Governance in an Imperfect Time." Pp. 12f.

strengthening board performance ... tend to view this fluidity (of board membership and participation) and its attendant whiff of chaos with good natured exasperation and just plug away at improvement when opportunities present themselves." In times like these, however, when things are "downright scary, the raggedly, difficult, complex nature of boards can look more troubling. After all, the boat is listing and only a handful of board members remember the emergency drill. (Sadly, a few may be complaining loudly that they didn't join the board to bail water.)" Here is Robinson's list of five priorities to keep in mind:

1. **Figure out what's wrong and what's critical.** You don't have to abandon your whole mission, but you can determine what is critical to keeping that mission alive and healthy. What has to be done in the next 18 months? Have everyone sign on to support those critical issues and be encouraged by your progress in just those areas.
2. **Pruning budgets with recovery in mind.** Out of the focus of what's critical will come some wisdom about how to best use the precious resources at hand. Check the balance between staff and program. Prepare for tough decisions and don't duck responsibility. But also have an eye toward the day when you can restore programs, so that what is necessary today doesn't incapacitate your organization tomorrow.
3. **Keep the board intact, but don't kid yourselves.** Robinson suggests that crisis times allow for board members to make new commitments to things like attending meetings regularly, working on new tasks, and extending their own contributions. But she says it's also an OK time for some members to leave the board without guilt. Lean times are not expected to be "magical" times, but times of hard, focused work. Let those who are willing roll up their sleeves, invite other new workers, and let the rest go—with appreciation.
4. **Communicating.** During tense/intense times communication is crucial. Set up an e-mail list. Have the chair send out meeting highlights and agendas. Staff can send periodic reports. When something wonderful happens, share it. These are little bright blips on the radar screen that are worthy of sharing with those in leadership. It keeps you together and facing the same direction.
5. **Supporting the executive director.** In our shop that probably means the campus pastor. In crunch times the board needs to put solid energy into staff support. Staff feel budget and program cuts personally. Their life-calling may be at stake. Boards may need to shoulder more responsibility for certain aspects of the ministry, such as fund raising or meeting preparation. A kindly word or a cup of coffee can make a tough day a better one.

"Hope is not a strategic plan" and challenges we face do not allow us and our ministries to sit idly by and do nothing in these trying times. Yet, we are called by the gospel to be people of hope. Focus on mission—yes. Plan wisely—to be sure. Tell the story well—by all means. Invite all to share gifts at all levels—continually. These ideas, if taken to heart and woven into our planning and purpose, will help to carry us through these tumultuous days. Through it all, in the community formed by Christ, while we faithfully plan, we are given hope and a future worth celebrating.

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LOOK THAT GIFT HORSE IN THE MOUTH

Did you ever receive a gift that you were not sure you wanted? My best example would have to be my first car. A pink 1953 Rambler! Pink! No doubt my father meant well. He knew that it wouldn't push the speedometer past 80. He had lots of extra parts lying around, since he drove Ramblers as work cars—and they always needed parts. They were pretty simple cars, but ugly, with their bathtub looks and their not-so-cool rating with my high school friends. Sure it was a set of wheels. But pink! What was he thinking?

You may well feel the same way about gifts offered to your ministry. The donors mean well, but perhaps they haven't thought through all of the ramifications of making those gifts. There you stand at the back door, trying to muster up a "thank you" for the used furniture someone was sure you could use for the student lounge or the 1965 vintage sound system for your traveling music ministry (even though each speaker weighed 75 pounds). But somehow you have the sense that these "gifts" are little more that someone's way of cleaning out their garage. Is every donation that comes your way worthy to be named a "gift"?

Several years ago our campus ministry received such a questionable gift. We were in the middle of a small capital campaign to raise money for an addition to our ministry center. One day the president of the university called to say that he and his wife were interested in making a gift. Could I come to their home later to pick it up? Boy, was I excited. I thanked him several times over the phone and arrived promptly that evening to receive the gift. I tried to park in front of the house, but there was a big old ugly van blocking my way. Well, you guessed it. The gift was the big old ugly van. I should have said, "Gee, I wish we could accept your generous gift, but we just can't use it at this time." Instead I did the "pink Rambler thing." I took the keys, said thank you again, and drove off in my newly-acquired "gift."

The donor meant well. He knew that we had several traveling musical groups at the Center who went out to congregations over the weekends. The van had been his son's and he thought that since his son was "done" with it, we might be able to use it. This was before the current trend of giving vehicles to charities for a tax write-off. It seemed like a well-intended, if ugly, gift. Maybe we could fix it up. Maybe it would grow on us. I thought I would take it for a ride.

Three miles out in the country I started to smell something hot—like the wiring under the dash. Then the smoke started to roll out of the vents and I made a dash for the outdoors. It didn't burst into flames, but the wiring was fried. So after my little walk back into town, I called the tow truck and our "free gift" now became a $50 item on the expense line of the budget.

Sometimes it's good to look a gift horse in the mouth. You need to know exactly what you are being gifted and, beyond that, the reason why the donor is choosing the make the gift at this point in time. You are probably aware of charities that have had to turn back significant gifts because the donor had ulterior motives. For example, an organization that is church-based received a six-figure gift from someone who was later discovered to be a racist and frequent sender of hate mail to groups in the community. With some difficulty, not the least of which was avoiding heavy press coverage, the organization had to find a way to return the gift and say that it could not be received because it was in direct conflict with its Christian principles. Once the gift horse is in the barn, it's more difficult to put it out to pasture. Be aware of these kinds of potential conflicts.

One hedge against receiving inappropriate gifts is to write some Gift Acceptance Policies and Guidelines for your ministry. In that document you can list those gifts you are able to receive, including which gifts may be a priority. You may say, for example, "Outright gifts of cash and other property are a priority." You may go on to say that "other outright gifts will be subject to the approval of the Board of Directors." You may list the kinds of deferred gifts that will be acceptable: bequests, charitable gift annuities, life insurance policies, etc. It should be clear that all gifts shall be subject to the oversight of the Board of Directors.

The purpose of developing these policies is (a) to ensure that tax-deductible gifts are received in a manner consistent with the IRS code and do not jeopardize your ministry's tax-exempt status; (b) to minimize the incurrence of potential liabilities; and (c) to limit the acceptance of gifts that are difficult to administer. The following bulleted points indicate other language to include in your Gift Policy:

- This policy is to inform, serve, guide, and otherwise assist donors, but never is it to be used to unduly coerce or persuade such donors.
- No gift will be accepted that is not in the best interests of the donor or which violates the nonprofit integrity of the organization.
- Donors will be encouraged to discuss the proposed gift with independent legal, financial, or tax advisors of the donor's choosing.
- The organization will remain accessible to its donors, providing full communication of its activities and use of funds.
- Requests for anonymity will be honored. Permission to publicly recognize a donor will be assumed, unless otherwise requested.
- Before acceptance, relevant information about the gift will be ascertained, including a copy of an appraisal secured by the donor. The organization may secure its own appraisal.
- Outright gifts of cash, publicly traded securities and life insurance do not require Board approval.
- The Board must approve gifts of: real estate, closely held stock, tangible personal property, and others named by the organization.
- The organization shall not engage in offering legal or tax advice to donors or gift prospects.
- Property gifts of all kinds will be converted to cash at the earliest convenience. Real estate gifts will generally be turned over to a broker immediately upon receipt for disposition.[1]

Professional colleagues in your denominational foundation will be a great resource to your campus ministry organization when it comes to the acceptance and processing of this whole range of non-cash gifts. They will advise you and your leadership about the propriety of receiving certain gifts and can lead you through the complexities that may accompany some potential gifts. Many foundations are "pass through" organizations, meaning that all gifts received and managed are ultimately distributed, directly or through endowment, to the ministries designated by the donor.

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[1] Some of the language in this section is from "Best Practices for Running the Small Development Shop," by Betsy A. Mangone, presented at ALDE, February 28, 2005.

The foundation can often help organizations and congregations receive and liquidate gifts of stock at a lower cost than most organizations can on their own. It may help in the “due diligence” process with gifts of non-marketable assets, such as real estate. The foundation may provides, free of charge, a wide variety of brochures that will assist you in your conversations with donors about such things as wills, life insurance, charitable gift annuities, and more.

When that gift horse arrives at your door, look it over carefully. Is it a Trojan horse? Is it a nag that someone else should have put out to pasture? Does it come with problems and complications that far outweigh its worth? Do you have a policy about accepting it? And maybe the most important question of all: is it pink!?

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PLANNING A CELEBRATION EVENT

It's time for a celebration! While not every campus ministry has a milestone event to commemorate, there may be a variety of possibilities for gathering together your friends and supporters for a celebration. An anniversary is, of course, a good reason to gather. Consider also the inauguration of a new program or direction for the ministry, the culmination of a successful fund drive, or the installation of a new director or the retirement of a former director. Whatever the celebration, make it a time to remember—and to look forward. Let it become a time to lift up what has been good and what continues to be faithful. Make it a time to stretch imaginations, plan strategically, and share your visions with all those who support and cheer on our ministries on campus.

As you plan the celebration your ministry will host, here are some considerations to share with your leadership.

Focus more on the future than on the past. Like a family pulling out all of the old photo albums and memorabilia at a reunion, it's comfortably nostalgic to reminisce about the good old days and remark about how young everyone looked and how funny Uncle Charlie looked back in 1950. At times like these we are reminded that we have a history, that we come from somewhere, and that many who have gone before us have worked with great dedication and creativity to get us to this place in time. However, if the reunion gets locked in times past, no one ever gets a chance to talk about what's happening now. It's knowing about days present and days to come that enlivens the conversation. We want to know about dreams and ventures and about the future as it builds on the past. At your celebration event, you will certainly want to bring out the old pictures and honor former staff and leadership of the ministry. Be sure to lift up your ministry vision as well. Let participants know how you plan to expand your programs, renovate your facilities, or add new initiatives. Give them a sense that the ministry is faithful to the past and that it has great energy and vision to move into the future.

Give participants an opportunity to give. While you may not decide to have fund raising as a major focus of your event, this is certainly a time when your supporters are expecting to be asked for a gift for your ministry. This is a time to ask them to consider a "stretch gift," one that goes beyond an annual fund contribution or a nominal door charge for the event. Once you are clear about your vision with your supporters, ask them to move this vision forward with a substantial gift, including a pledge over an extended period of time.

If you expect to ask a supporter for a gift of some size, you will need to prepare them for the challenge. Small gifts can be solicited on the spot; larger ones need advanced notice. The giver will have to "stop and think" about what they are able to do and how they are going to do it. Give them the space they need to do what is possible. For example, if the celebration event is to be a time when gifts are gathered, make sure that invitees come with checkbook or pledge card in hand. They will give more if they can prepare beforehand. Pre-event communications will let them know your expectations.

One suggestion often mentioned is to make the centennial event a combination of fun and fundraiser. Have a catered meal[1] with entertainment, interwoven by introductions and celebratory

[1] The cost of the meal has to be deducted from the gift total for IRS purposes. So if the meal cost $20 and the gift was $100, the donor could only claim $80 as a deduction.

words. You might ask every attendee to contribute $100 for 100 years, or focus on your own history and ask for a comparable amount. Or challenge them to give a certain amount for each year ($5.00 X 100 = $500.00). You might have a silent auction with items donated by individuals and local merchants. Award door prizes. Give everyone a memento to take home. Print CDs with music or photos of the ministry. Put your vision on the CD as well. Use every means to tell your story and invite your supporters into that story.

Contact individuals who are not able to be present at your event. Give them an opportunity to make a gift. Send them a follow-up note with pictures. Let them know that they were missed and share the celebration with them.

Say thank you early and often. Find a way to show special appreciation to those who worked hard to make the event a success. Hold a volunteer appreciation luncheon. Send flowers to the chair of the committee. Send a note to those who attended. Thank them for their presence and their gifts or pledges. Tuck in a picture. Once again, state how important their support is to the future of your ministry.

A successful celebration event will require careful planning on the part of your leadership. You may want to appoint a special event committee, which would include board members and others from the community. Think about who you might ask to be an "honorary chair" to give you high visibility, such as an important alum or community leader. Talk with other groups in the area who have pulled off similar events successfully. Ask them for advice and an outline of their planning process. Seek the advice of persons who do event planning professionally. Hire a media specialist to take pictures and record the event.

Speaking of specialists, here are ten tips on how to market a special event Carol Weisman[2]:

1. **Commitment.** Be sure that your leadership buys in to the event. If they don't support it, why should an outsider? Ask for their commitment to be there and to make an advance gift. See if they will buy a table (multiple tickets) and invite their friends. Keep track of promises and expect them to be fulfilled. Encourage good-spirited competition.
2. **Never sell a ticket, always sell a table**. Show a benefit to buying more than one ticket, for example, a table gets preferred parking, extra raffle tickets, or mention in the program booklet. Offer different levels of sponsorship. Give a deduction for buying multiple tickets.
3. **Community fluency**. Check out what else is being done in your community around the time of your event. Who else is holding a golf tournament or a cook-off? What other dates might be in conflict? Who else might be seeking challenge gifts? Might there be a way to piggyback your event with one that the university is hosting, for example?
4. **Find an unusual venue.** While you will want to hold an open house at your campus ministry center/congregation, consider holding the dinner and program at a special place, perhaps on the university campus. Rent a local hall or mansion. Put up a tent. Create a stir about the location and some people will come just to be a part of it.
5. **Find a corporate underwriter** (and treat them like gold.) The local Thrivent Chapter comes quickly to mind for many of us Lutherans, but there are other businesses who might like their name on the event, such as the construction company that recently completed a renovation of your facility.

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[2] Carol Weisman was president of *Board Builders* at the time of writing in June, 2000.

6. **Visual aids.** Select a high-visibility item to promote the event, such as shirts, posters, or crystal stemware. See if you can find an individual to contribute the cost of the item and the imprint. If possible, send the item to your core supporters who were unable to attend the event. Create a special banner. Be bold and advertise on a billboard.
7. **Wholesale is good, but free is better.** With the right person asking, everything from invitations to food can be found for free or at little cost. Board members often have well-placed connections. Ask other organizations who you might contact.
8. **Identify media contacts.** Find those special people who can make media connections for you. Then, find interesting people for the media to interview. Students are especially newsworthy, so are unique board members. See if the synod bishop will agree to be interviewed, likewise standout representatives of the university. Identify those who have something worth saying and who your public will be interested in hearing. Remember to involve both the secular and the religious press. Be sure that your synod newsletter carries an article in advance.
9. **Short slogan.** A special event needs a special slogan. Create something just for this event that gets attention and is festive. This is a celebration—be bold, not bashful.
10. **Say thank you**. Keep a list of those whom you need to thank once the event is over. Don't wait until the event is recent history—say it while it still fresh in their minds. They will want to be reminded once again what a great event it was and to be thanked for their part in making it so. If you have a cadre of special volunteers, find a way to offer them special thanks, such as flowers or a photo album.

While we are in the category of good advice, an article about *Effective Delegation*[3] comes to mind. While the authors are focused on larger congregations, there is something to be learned by those of us in smaller shops, especially when it comes to working with leadership and volunteers. They advocate for a healthy balance among three critical organizational elements—authority (the legitimate right of a person to make a decision or allocate resources), responsibility (an assigned duty to perform a task), and accountability (the requirement to report and justify outcomes, along with appropriate rewards or corrections).

The article indicates that "delegation is effective when a person who is given responsibility for the performance of a task is also given the proper level of authority to execute the task and is appropriately held accountable for outcomes." Delegation can go wrong if: 1. not enough or too much authority is assigned; 2. the responsibility is not defined; or 3. accountability is not maintained.

It follows, also, that effective delegation is jeopardized if the "right" tasks are not assigned. Those "right" tasks include:

- tasks that can be done better by someone else
- tasks that are time critical, but not a high priority
- tasks of appropriate difficulty
- both pleasant and unpleasant tasks
- tasks that are not central to your role within the organization.

How tasks are delegated is equally important. Be sure that volunteers or leadership know what is expected of them. The learning curve will be steep at first as they learn what is expected of them. Be

[3] Alban Weekly © 2005 The Alban Institute, Inc. These remarks were further developed by Gil Rendle and Susan Beaumont, senior Alban consultants, in a resource on staffing and supervision in larger congregations.

patient, even though it may seem like you are spending more time supervising than doing it yourself. When tasks are assigned, make certain everyone knows the limits of their authority to make decisions or spend money. Monitor progress and have periodic check-in times. Hold to high standards and expect learning from mistakes. Be ready with appropriate praise.

Have a great celebration!

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GRANT WRITING

"*Grantmaking organizations have distinct personalities and histories, with unique requirements and interests.*" The Giving Forum

Grants often seem to be the easy solution to complex funding problems. When the vision expands and the program dollars won't grow with it, the response by many earnest planners is to find a grant to fund the vision. However, the reality is that sources of grants, especially for religious non-profits, are not easy to find, and once found are not easy to secure. So how might you go about finding, writing and winning a grant for your campus ministry? Where do you look and how do you begin?

STEP 1: Research

The most important step in the grant seeking process is taken at the beginning. Careful, quality research must be done to locate the grantmaking organization that best fits the needs of your campus ministry. As the quote at the top of the page state, each organization has its own history and personality. You will need to know what they have funded in the past, what their values are and where their heart is. In many ways it's like getting to know a potential personal donor, only on a corporate level. So you may want to talk with other groups who have been funded by the grantmaker, asking what their experience has been, what to avoid, whom to talk to, etc. Write for a copy of their most recent annual report, which will give you a listing of their application guidelines and a record of those groups funded in recent months. Find out if the grantmaker has a website you can visit; it will probably list the policies and guidelines on the Web.

A good resource for locating potential grantmakers is The Foundation Center, a nonprofit research and publishing organization in New York City. In the Center's Cooperating Collection you will find print and electronic directories of national funders and a variety of supplemental materials useful to grantseekers. In these directories you can search by state or specific interest, such as education or religion. You can find these materials at a public library near you and a specially trained librarian to assist you. The Web address of the Foundation Center is www.fdncenter.org. You might also try reading a particular foundation's federal informational tax return, called a Form 990-PF. Microfiche copies should be available in the Cooperating Collection, or you can search for a foundation's 990-PF online at www.guidestar.org.

STEP 2: Apply

If you have done your research and believe that there is a good potential match between your campus ministry and the grantmaker, it's time to draft the application. Read the guidelines carefully. Be sure to note deadlines and required attachments, such as your annual budget and board of directors. NEVER draw up a generic proposal and send it around to any and all grantmakers who you think might respond. In most cases you will waste their time and might worsen your chances if you apply at a later date. Some grantmakers will suggest that you send a "letter of inquiry," which is a one to two page letter in which you propose your project and describe your organization. In that letter you ask for guidance with moving your proposal forward. Other grantmakers will request the full proposal from the start.

Many grantmakers will require you to fill out their application forms, in part so that they can expect uniform material from each applicant. If you are permitted to send your own form, see it as an opportunity to communicate to the Hinder who you are, why you are seeking the grant, what you plan to do with the grant, how you will mark your progress and results, how you will evaluate your project and why you think your priorities match those of the Hinder. The Minnesota Council on Foundations has a Common Grant Application on their website that you can download and adapt to your local situation. Their Web address is www.mcf.org/grant/applicat.htm.

Once you have all of the application information at hand, it is time to write. There are many grantwriting workshops available across the country. It would be worth your time to attend one of these if you can, or at least have an experienced grantwriter review your work until you get the hang of it. Like most things, grantwriting is a skill that needs to be learned and practiced. Always use language that is clear, concise, direct and compelling. A tutorial on writing is available on the MCG address cited above.

STEP 3: Review the Grant

After you have submitted your proposal, the long task of waiting is at hand. The time will vary from a few weeks to a few months. Some funders review proposals only once a year, while others do reviews on an ongoing schedule. In some instances staff employed by the grantmaker sort through the proposals and weed out those that are poorly written or outside the funder's interest. Further contact may require meeting with the funder or conducting a site visit. In some cases the board acts on the recommendation of the staff, but in other cases the board reviews all of the proposals directly.

STEP 4: Grant Decision and Follow-up

If you are turned down, you will likely receive a friendly form letter to that effect. If you feel that you could learn something about making another proposal in the future, you might ask to speak to one of the staff members. Only use that time to seek information, not argue your case angrily or stubbornly. Many applicants are successful only after several tries. Being turned down doesn't mean that you did poor writing or that your cause wasn't worthy enough. It may simply mean that there wasn't enough money to go around this time. A staff person may be able to tell you about the wisdom of applying again.

If your proposal is accepted you may simply get a check in the mail. If it is a large grant, there will probably be a full-blown contract to sign, stipulating that you must a file a report when the project is done, for example. Read the contract carefully to note any deadlines. Send a letter of appreciation immediately after you have been notified. If you have received only partial funding, you should decide if you can still carry out the project and, if you can, write all the funding partners and tell them how you plan to adapt to a lower budget.

In the GIVING FORUM, Spring 2002, the Minnesota Council on Foundations lists several key points to remember in your grantseeking:

1. Do your research.
2. If unsure, call the foundation/corporation for clarity and to ascertain interest.
3. Be clear about what you are asking for and how much you will need.
4. Make the Ask. Give a specific dollar amount you are requesting.
5. Half of success is being succinct.
6. Submit all required materials based on what the foundation is asking for in its guidelines.
7. Understand that total giving from any foundation is likely to contain a mix of funds that are
    a. committed for multiple year projects
    b. operating support funds that are given each year
    c. capital and endowment grants that are usually committed over a 3-5 year period
    d. discretionary funds, which are the dollars available to make grants to new organization or new projects
8. Grantmakers have varying timelines for doing their work and making grants. Proposal review may occur on a weekly, monthly or even annual basis.
9. Grantmakers say "No" more often than they say "Yes."
10. A "No" is not always forever. If you are unclear about the reasons for being turned down, ask.
11. A "No" does not mean you or your project are not worthy or meritorious. There are many other reasons why proposals are turned down.
12. Foundations and corporations have their own unique sets of interests.

13. Behavior in foundations and corporations and relationships with nonprofits seeking funds is usually a reflection of
    a. the experience of staff and trustees
    b. the size of the giving program
    c. the type of foundation
    d. time
    e. volume of requests.
14. Each grantmaker is distinct and, much like your organization, has its own culture and values that guide its decisions.

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