

## Simple Practices Encourage Generosity

Encouraging a culture of generosity in the local church does not need elaborate programming. Keeping up with current stewardship practices and resources is important; however, church leaders can look back to some basic life directions for guidance. Our parents and those who helped parent us can inform what we do to lift the faith practice of generosity.

**"Say your prayers."** Many of us were reminded as children to offer grace at the table, to pray before sleeping and to join in prayer in worship. Practicing prayer can breathe grace and hope into all that we do. Growing generosity as a faith practice in the church begins with our prayers. Nothing we have is ours; it was created by God and belongs to God. Pray thanksgiving for God's abundant gifts. We serve as part of the Body of Christ. Pray for direction and resources so that Christ's body will thrive for making disciples. Outreach into the community and the world offers Christ in word and deed. Pray for a generosity that changes lives. Offer these prayers when community gathers for worship and for planning.

**"Watch your language."** When we were children, we learned in direct and subtle ways what was helpful to voice out loud and what was not. The way clergy and local church leaders speak about giving money, time and energy can shape the attitude of the congregation. Will the message be one of scarcity? "There is not enough, and we will run out soon!" Or can we speak words of abundance and hope. "Here are examples of how we have been generous, and God is faithful." Watching our words does not mean that we refrain from truth-telling, but it does mean we consider carefully how our language in worship, meetings and conversations reflects our trust in God and God's people.

**"Tell the Truth."** Do not hide the uncomfortable truth or the abundance of generosity in the church. Most of us can remember that moment in childhood when we learned the importance of honesty, when we didn't tell the "whole truth". Congregations understand their role in supporting God's work when they know how their giving of time, talent, service and money is making a difference. If there is a financial shortfall, show how ministry will be strengthened through generosity. If the church has an abundance of resources, share the good news. Celebrating generosity and abundance encourages more.

**"Say 'Please'."** When we were young, we found that it was acceptable to politely ask for what we needed. In fact, parents encouraged us to speak up. Clergy and church leaders need to clearly ask for gifts that will accomplish the work of Jesus Christ. The church's ministry is sustained by current giving, major gifts and legacy giving. "Politely" asking may include reminding congregation members of the church's purpose and vision. Asking can include stories of how lives are being changed through the faith practice of generosity.

**"Say 'Thank you'."** Just as we were reminded as children that people are blessed when we say "thank you", the same is true today for those who give to the church. Say thank you to those who pledge, tithe and regularly give. Personal notes are a blessing. Make contact with first-time givers and those who give beyond their tithes and offer thanks. People may not want public recognition for their acts of generosity, but saying "thank you" recognizes support for God's reign.

What else might your church do to create a culture of generosity? Contact [Rev. Dr. Sherry Parker-Lewis](#), Sr. Director of Church Relations to learn more.



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