

For the Love of Church Finances

First, we consider the subject of money a private matter. In fact, many of us were raised to keep silent about family finances. “No one needs to know our business.” Some leaders bring this life-understanding to church leadership. If church financial leaders, treasurers and finance secretaries have been working with church finances for some time, they may come to believe that the church’s income and expenditures should be managed privately, as they would their own finances.

Another reason for the lack of outward passion regarding church finances may be biblically based. Paul wrote to Timothy, “The love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. Some have wandered away from the faith and have impaled themselves with a lot of pain because they made money their goal.” (1 Tim 6:10) No one wants to appear to make the pursuit of money the church’s goal. Clergy can be especially sensitive to this. They remain silent about money rather than risk being perceived as loving money.

Our hesitation to embrace church finances as joy-filled ministry may also be due to our awe of money. This reluctance can be the result of experiences in poverty, personal money management struggles, or our perceived lack of understanding of the financial world. We may not know how investment works or how to read a church’s budget or financial statements.

Congregation members, even those with gifts and skills, decline to joyously lead in the financial ministry of the church because the only time they hear about money is when the church is asking for it. Clergy avoid preaching on what the bible says about money. The church does not offer courses in personal finance. Input is expected, but the spiritual outcomes of financial generosity are not celebrated.

So, how do we recognize financial leadership in our church as a ministry worthy of celebration?

Oppose a revered notion of money. Money is a tool, like the piano, the church office computer and the snow shovel sitting by the front door. The faithful use money to proclaim that the reign of God has come near through worship, hospitality, and compassionate outreach. Talk about money openly as a tool to accomplish the mission of the church. Celebrate what has been done and courageously put forward God-sized dreams.

Intentionally celebrate the ministry of financial leadership. Recognize leaders on the finance team and the counting teams. This may be as simple as sending written note of thanks or as elaborate as giving testimony to their valuable service in worship.

Help congregations to greet financial news with a spirit of curiosity and thankfulness. Celebrate how funded ministry is changing lives and bringing hope. Tell stories through videos and storytelling. Teach about money through a personal finance course or worship series. Offer playful ways to understand church finance, even teaching those interested how to read monthly financial reports.

Make finance meetings a compelling time for witness to life-giving ministry. Begin meetings giving thanks for the generosity of the faithful. Share stories of the work that God is doing through the tool of money. Recognize the abundance that God promises before digging into the numbers. Expand a

church's understanding of who to invite to take part in financial leadership. Include people with the spiritual gifts of generosity, faithfulness, and prayer.

Imagine members of the congregation exclaiming, "I love being on the finance team!" "It is a joy to support my church by talking about money!" "I love counting money!" What might change in the approach to the greater ministry of the church when we embrace the joyful work of church finance?

Would you like to know more about encouraging and transforming your church finance ministry? Contact Sherry Parker-Lewis, Sr. Director of Church Relations at <mailto:Sherry@UMFMichigan.org>