

Propel: Good Stewardship, Greater Generosity

Online Resources

by Clayton L. Smith

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Additional resources will be posted quarterly to www.claytonsmith.com. You may contact Rev. Dr. Clayton L. Smith at revclaytonsmith@gmail.com for more information or to inquire about his speaking and coaching availability. Clayton enjoys being of help to you, your church, or your nonprofit organization.

Assessment and Audit of Your Stewardship and Generosity Ministry

If you've ever been through a SWOT Analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) you will know that this process is helpful. You identify what you're currently doing, what you want to do, and where the gaps are between reality and your vision. Then, you write the plan that bridges the gap between what you have now and what you want to have in the next three years. All of this is based on your mission and purpose that is sustained by generosity.

The process has several steps:

1. Begin with a self-analysis on how your stewardship and generosity program currently works:
 - Strengths
 - Weaknesses
 - Opportunities
 - Threats
2. Determine what new measureable goals and objectives are needed for each of the next three years.
3. Write a new strategic plan for stewardship; evaluate and revise it in January of each year.
4. Understand how others see your ministry: be an investigative reporter and ask lots of questions.

Interview key leaders and get their responses. Begin by asking questions to document the current stewardship and giving process. Because stewardship happens across many areas of ministry, start by asking a series of questions: What are the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats to your church's overall financial stewardship program? What giving models need attention? What new models and programs need to be started? Does the stewardship and generosity team have a voice and vote on the finance committee or church council? Those who are in contact with donors or who are involved with stewardship could be interviewed—pastors, staff, leaders, volunteers, and so on.

Today, more than ever before, expertise matters. This is why the pastor or the key stewardship leader wants and needs the support of church leaders. Remember, in many churches the future of the church may depend on major gifts. Begin by asking the following questions in these specific areas:

Major Gifts

1. What happens after a large gift is received?
2. How are acknowledgment letters (with tax language) generated?
3. Who signs the letters at different dollar amounts?
4. What reports are produced that document recent gifts? Who receives these reports?

Foundation and Endowment Gifts

1. How many donors have made a bequest or planned gift?
2. Do your donors receive personal acknowledgements after indicating that they will make major gifts or remember the church in their planned giving?
3. Is there a set process or society for recognizing and thanking donors each year?
4. How do you keep records of the donor interests and legacy plans?
5. Do you use a donor profile to track visits and contacts?

Annual Stewardship Campaign

1. Are members (and new members) expected to return an annual estimate of giving?
2. How are inactive members communicated with to encourage participation?
3. What percentage of your active congregation returns an annual commitment card?

Designated/Restricted Gift Tracking

1. Are donors informed about how they can set up a designated or restricted fund?
2. How is the donor's intent for the funds documented?
3. Is there language or an establishing gift document that allows the church to spend the funds if the restriction is no longer viable?
4. How is financial stewardship information about the donor documented?

Year-Round Stewardship

1. How often do members receive special giving appeals in worship? Other requests?
2. How often do donors receive information about the impact of their gift?

3. Is there a system in place to track members' areas of service?
4. Is there a way to track donor participation and interests?
5. Do you use mobile giving, kiosks, or other giving program like electronic fund transfer?
6. How many communication channels are available for stewardship and generosity education (social media, web, print, phone, etc.)?
7. What ongoing stewardship initiatives already exist? What programs are not fruitful and need to be eliminated?
8. Can your pastor use good stewardship lessons in sermons at least quarterly?

Rating Your Congregation's Generous Giving

How would you rate the effectiveness of your congregation's support for these types of gifts? Rate on a scale of 1 to 10 with 10 being the highest:

- ___ Spontaneous giving
- ___ Pledged giving
- ___ Loose plate and non-pledged giving
- ___ Mission or emergency appeals/offerings
- ___ Capital project/building giving
- ___ Designated giving—donor directed
- ___ Planned gifts to the foundation or endowment committee
- ___ Other

Ask yourself, what are the top three areas of giving that need improvement? What are your next steps?

Crossroads: Navigating the Second Half of Life—Strategic Plan

Generational Goals to Reach those in the Baby Boomer Generation

- Help individuals find significance in the second half of life through knowing, loving, and serving God.
- Reach non-religious and nominally religious people over the age of fifty and connect them to experiences that will lead them toward becoming deeply committed Christians.
- Broaden and enrich all staff and volunteer ministries of our church through the involvement and leadership with those in the second half of life.
- Reach the boomer generation in our church and community with our stewardship and generosity ministries.

Reaching Members and Visitors

- In the church I serve, there are 5,705 active members and 405 visitors who are over the age of fifty. We also now have over ninety small groups/classes that serve this age level.
- We see this age group as a tremendous leadership ministry resource. The congregation care ministers program is a good case example of this age group getting involved in meaningful ways. When this program started there were ten congregational care ministers. Five years later there are over one hundred serving.

Community

- Programs for those in retirement like that of the Kansas City Shepherd Center Central have had sustained success since 1970. For example, the Coming of Age program that the Shepherd Center offers helps people “explore their future” as they prepare for retirement. Partnering with programs in your community can help you reach those who are seeking ways to navigate the second half of their lives.

- Colleges and universities across the United States are recognizing the need of reaching those in retirement.

Need

Researchers tell us that every day for the next sixteen years, 10,000 new baby boomers will enter retirement. The baby boomers remain a huge demographic block within the American landscape. They are the generation that many churches have lost. They have become inactive. And yet, this age group can provide great volunteers and resources for the local church.

How can our church find a way to reach this growing age demographic?

Key Initiatives for Knowing, Loving, and Serving God

A ministry for those over the age of fifty will focus on four distinct phases and age levels in the second half of life:

- Preparation—pre-retirement
- Transition—early retirement
- Finishing Well—mid-retirement
- Silver Link—late retirement

Recommended Ministry Opportunities for Knowing God

- Coming of Age seminar—four week study
- Journey to Significance—six week group life Bible study
- STRIDES Inventory and Spiritual Gifts class
- Spiritual Gifts, Talents, Resources, Dreams, Experiences, Seasons of Life
- 50+ University
- Others that fit the needs of your community and church

Recommended Ministry Opportunities for Loving God

- Workshop for caring for elderly parents—ongoing
- Special/big events—ongoing
- Grief workshops—ongoing
- Caring Conversations class—ongoing
- Pre-Retirement Coaching ministry—feasibility study
- Others

Ministry Opportunities for Serving God

- Pre-Retirement seminar
- Legacy Journey—seven week class
- Estate planning workshops—ongoing
- Retirement budgeting class—ongoing
- Social security and Medicare workshops—ongoing

Recommended Advisory Team Roles and Responsibilities

- Define specific paths of engagement to reach the baby boomer unchurched generation
- Develop new ministries to meet the needs of this generation and bring focus to anticipated results through self-discovery experiences.
- Offer a menu of new and existing options at all campuses to motivate and fulfill that growing need.
- Coordinate existing church/campus menu of options into the program.
- Through experience, define and develop other new outreach and invitational programs that meet identified needs of this generation in our area.
- Develop a process to measure key performance metrics/goals of the program.
- Sponsor annual pre-retirement seminars in September/October.
- Launch fall semester 50+ University program.

- Develop an assessment model for each of the three areas to help an individual identify points to focus on as they move forward in knowing, loving, and serving God.
- Develop a tracking process that is objective so the church can provide feedback and motivate people to accomplish their goals (three tracks of knowing, loving, and serving God).

Evaluation/Accountability

- Develop a three-year strategic plan
- Continue to research and study of needs of this age demographic
- Receive oversight by an advisory team
- Evaluate each event
- Develop and approve volunteer and staff job descriptions
- Set measurable annual goals

Strategic Goals for Stewardship and Generosity

Setting annual goals for your stewardship and generosity ministry is very important to help create focus and energy. Strategic planning can also be developed for three years in mind. Whether it is a one-year plan or a three-year plan, goals need to be specific, measurable, assignable, realistic, and time-related.

These goals can come out of brainstorming session but will need to be refined with those who are going to be working on these goals before final decisions and approvals are made. Ownership is important for best results. Every year, it is helpful to evaluate the previous year and set your strategic goals for the new year.

It is recommended that you limit your strategic goals to three to four per year. Too few will not generate the leadership dynamic you need, and too many will be frustrating to all involved. These goals can also become part of the pastor or staff professional goal-setting process.

Specific goals can be identified from those areas of your ministry that need improvement. Measurable ways of quantifying the progress or results are essential for evaluation. Assignable simply means who will be responsible for the project. Realistic expectations are important, and yet the expectations should encourage risk and great results. Failure should not be punished. Time-related results keep moving us forward toward completion or at least a sense of accomplishment.

Here are some strategic priorities for your stewardship and generosity team to consider:

To teach and interpret the biblical stewardship principles that enable all members to become disciples of Jesus Christ who are theologically informed, spiritually transformed, and daily living their faith.

To celebrate that “[God] gives life, breath, and everything else,” so that in God “we live, move, and exist” (Acts 17:25, 28 CEB). God is the giver of all good gifts!

To teach Christian stewardship as the faithful practice of systematic giving of our tithes and offerings.

Every member is invited to give a percentage of his or her income with the tithe (10 percent) as a goal. We seek to find creative ways to become a tithing congregation.

To articulate the challenge facing our mainline church today in the areas of financial stewardship.

Due to economic uncertainty, there is a changing state of giving in our community, state, and nation. We call upon our leaders to respond faithfully as we work for economic justice.

To lift up a clear expectation of our membership to return an estimate of giving card every year as a faith witness.

To offer a continuum of educational programs that support our children, youth, and adults as they grow in their understanding and implementation of biblical financial principles.

To create a culture of stewardship that celebrates joyful and faithful giving, offers strategic giving, and moves toward mission and sacrificial giving.

To integrate stewardship education to all ages and stages of Christian education programs for promotion of Christian values and joy of living and giving.

To support ministries which enhance the stewardship and generosity outreach and bring renewal to the church.

To teach and preach that giving is an act of worship of God.

To provide stewardship coaching and support to those who are in financial crises.

To celebrate and champion the act of generous giving by sharing stewardship stories of changed lives.

To ask members to consider giving a legacy gift so that our church's future will be sustained.

To preach and teach the principles of stewardship and generosity that become an act of worship, an expression of faith, and a spiritual discipline.

To conduct annual and capital stewardship campaigns that raise faith, commitment, and funds that enable the church to fulfill our vision and purpose.

To call all church leaders and staff to a life of faith that demonstrates conviction, character, and our leadership covenant as we put God first in our living and giving.

To speak to the growing needs in our church family of stewarding and nurturing relationships so that every member will be connected to a pastor, life group, task group, or ministry area.

Stewardship Team Chairperson Job Description

Position Description

Stewardship and Generosity Team

<p><u>Position Title</u></p> <p>Chairperson</p>	<p><u>Incumbent</u></p> <p>This position serves on the local church finance committee and chairs the stewardship team.</p>
<p><u>Reports To</u></p> <p>The Finance Committee</p> <p>The Stewardship and Generosity Team</p> <p>The Pastor of Stewardship</p>	<p><u>Position Description:</u> To lead the stewardship and generosity team in the development of a culture of generous giving within the congregation, encourage celebration of total generosity in the church, encourage team members to become personally involved in the outreach to members who have identified needs, and communicate the results of the team effort within the church.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Skills, Attributes, and Qualifications</p> <p>A mature Christian who has a strong personal relationship with Jesus Christ; models Christian values in his or her personal and professional life; pursues and reveals a fruitful reputation for his or her faith, integrity, biblical giving, and spiritual leadership in his or her family and community; exhibits personal humility; and has a heart for ministry and grace with all people he or she encounters. The incumbent will also have strong leadership skills, a vision for the future, and be able to communicate effectively within the team and externally into the church.</p> <p>These characteristics are best evidenced through demonstrated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular church attendance and a strong commitment to participation in Bible learning experiences • Generosity to God’s kingdom with personal time, talents, and resources. Must embrace this generosity by being, at a minimum, a tither. • Ability to influence others, appreciate others’ gifts and ministry styles, and be willing to do what is necessary to see that others succeed in their responsibilities 	

- Honesty and unity with the body of Christ, including avoiding gossip
- Encouragement of others by setting levels of expectations that he or her is personally living up to or willing to exceed
- Leadership by motivating others to see and understand the vision of the stewardship and generosity team
- Spiritual and personal daily preparedness through prayer, devotion, and appropriate response to unforeseen situations

Duties and Responsibilities include, but not Limited to the Following

Lead the discussion and creation of a strategic plan for stewardship and generosity.

- Develop a long-term strategy for funding the needs of the church.
- Develop a short-term plan for each year that supports the long-term vision.
- Develop a plan to celebrate and communicate the growth of generosity within the church in the worship setting.
- Develop programs that reach out to the church members who are experiencing financial challenges in their lives.
- Develop a program that markets the priorities of the church as defined in the church's strategic vision for the church.
- Attract new members to the team with specific skills that have been identified.
- Lead and motivate team members to accomplish the goals of the team and their personal missions that contribute to the support of the church body.
- Lead meetings and encourage participation of all team members.

Teaching Key Biblical Principles

(The following is a good example.)

Key Scriptures

“For where your treasure is, there will be your heart also.”

—Matthew 6:21 NIV

Jesus addressed the important spiritual truths about money and the human heart. His teaching gives us clarity on this difficult topic. This verse is both vitally insightful and important for anyone who wants to be a follower of Jesus Christ.

Unfortunately, most of us do not fully comprehend what Jesus is really saying. If we do not understand, then we do not apply this vital teaching to our spiritual life. We fail to see the full implications of this Christian truth.

First, let’s realize what Jesus did not say: *Your money will follow your heart.*

Jesus did say, *Your heart will follow your money.* He was simply telling us that there is an important relationship between first giving your financial resources (treasure) and then growing in your faith. *In this teaching, Jesus points out the very powerful connections between the ways people use their wealth and then develop their emotional and spiritual commitments.*

Giving can be a heartfelt expression of faith. It is not the amount of the gift but the heart of the gift that really matters. When Jesus said, *“It is more blessed to give than to receive,”* (Acts 20:35 CEB) he was pointing to the joy of generosity for the giver.

Interpretation for Preaching—One Pastor's Process

The urgency in preaching stewardship sermons creates a desire for more understanding of the methodology of biblical interpretation. And my interpretation process or methodology is motivated by a two-fold goal that first seeks a greater self understanding of the preacher and the people and second, an experience of God's revelation in Jesus Christ. Robert Grant, in the book *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, quotes Rudolf Bultmann who says: "The exegete is to 'interpret' scripture after he or she has responsibly 'heard' what the scripture has to say! And how is one to 'hear' without *understanding*? The problem of interpretation is precisely that of understanding."¹

Develop a Dynamic Process

Dynamic interpretation is a process by which one can better understand not only what the scripture is saying but also what it means for today. The re-imagination of the text or the re-performance of the word of God can help bring scripture alive to human experience.

Grant says that "Method alone is lifeless; the spirit of the interpreter makes the text come alive."² I begin to ask myself how this dynamic interpretation process is but another way of talking about the hermeneutic of inspiration. David Tracy, coauthor of *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible*, talks about interpretation as a model of conversation with the scriptural text and the situation for preaching. In some ways, this process itself allows me to begin to approach the scripture more through what professor, Dr. Fred Craddock called "assent" combined with the historical-critical method.

Tracy suggests that "theology becomes not merely interpretation, but self-conscious interpretation."³ In this dynamic of interpretation, there is a conversation with the biblical text. Some texts may call for confrontation, and others may need to be embraced. The dialogue between the text and the context of my preaching situation may help one focus on identity, similarity, or dramatic differences. I have always felt that

1. Robert M. Grant with David Tracey, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1984), 147.

2. Ibid., 62.

3. Ibid., 170.

the form of the biblical literature should help determine the form and structure of the sermon. In other words, how you interpret the scripture will have a direct impact on how you organize that sermon for preaching. You then see how the text can help determine a form of translation necessary to make it relevant to the preacher and the people.

I have served as a preaching pastor for over twenty-five years and now serve as the executive pastor of generosity at the United Methodist Church of the Resurrection. This dynamic process of interpretation for preaching stewardship and generosity sermons can bring new insight and urgency. Surprising as it might sound, I have gained a greater appreciation of the Bible through this focus and process of interpretation. The text can become alive as it is interpreted in a personal and corporate way. It comes alive with a greater sense of compassion and conviction. In some cases, the scriptural text can leap from the printed page, at times seeking its own expression, reflection, and then proclamation. Adam Hamilton's book *Making Sense of the Bible: Rediscovering the Power of Scripture Today* illustrates the vital importance of a dynamic and relevant interpretation for preaching.⁴

Like most preachers, I am interested and motivated to see and hear the work of God through Jesus Christ in our world today. What I need is a process of biblical interpretation that provides a dynamic methodology for preaching, which interacts with people in the pew and is relevant to our changing world and speaks God's word to human needs.

Preaching not only needs understanding, but it also needs a great sense of urgency. Robert M. Grant points out that there can be a danger of rewriting the scripture using one's own categories. Is the preacher replacing both the Bible and ultimately creating God in one's self image? Obviously, this is a danger present in most theological systems. I agree with Grant that interpretation can become so devoted to understanding in modern terms that it neglects the biblical emphasis. And yet, Grant aptly points out that the Apostle Paul was not averse to analogical language and metaphors drawn from contemporary thought. Yet, there must be a limit in our understanding using "modern" categories.

4. Adam Hamilton, *Making Sense of the Bible: Rediscovering the Power of Scripture Today* (New York: HarperCollins, 2014).

Your Methodology Matters

David Tracy identifies the age-old question: "What is a properly theological interpretation of the Bible in a historically conscious age?"⁵ It is obvious for us that the historical-critical method of interpretation of the Bible has become the dominant approach. For me, the historical-critical methodology has been foundational. I can appreciate David Tracy reminding us that the problem of interpretation becomes a central issue in cultural periods of crisis. Oftentimes the historical-critical approach lacks the dynamic of imagination, inspiration, or insight.

Interpretation theory today has a difficult time dealing with the method and the understanding. For me, this means that there is a difficulty in dealing with the differences between the objective and subjective meaning of scripture. I agree that we need the historical-critical method of interpretation to keep interpreters from forcing text to bring their own self-centered meaning. In this way, the historical-critical method of modern scripture study has provided a foundation for what we are doing is exegesis and not an undisciplined eisegesis. The interpreter must strive to understand the scripture in its own terms. All this says to me is that the historical-critical method is essential for any interpretation that is going to be historically conscious and authoritative. I think this is especially true for stewardship sermon preparation.

And yet, it seems to me that much more is needed in one's historical-critical methodology. One of the results of the historical-critical methodology of biblical interpretation is that it develops an attitude of suspicion. While Tracy points out that our common human experience of interpretation as conversation with the scripture should alert us to the occasional need for a hermeneutic of suspicion and its critical theory. I wouldn't argue with this statement.

My process of biblical interpretation would not only want to know what the scripture actually says but also what it means. And furthermore, my biblical interpretation for preaching must have an emphasis on how this scripture can bring transformation and change. What difference does it make?

5. Robert M. Grant with David Tracey, *A Short History of the Interpretation of the Bible* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 1984), 163.

Conversational Methodology

How can your process of interpretation be more than just a conversation with the scriptural text? How can the translation of that ancient text be translated into a contemporary dynamic? The interpreter might risk a conversation with the religious issues that are expressed in and through the text itself. This genuine conversation can bring a sense of insight and inspiration. This insight leads to greater self understanding and inspiration as well.

We can really appreciate David Tracy as he reminds us that theology, in its traditional and contemporary form, really is interpretation. And this theology becomes not just interpretation, but self-conscious interpretation. He says that this so-called “revised correlational method” for doing theology is in fact nothing other than a hermeneutically self-conscious clarification and correction of traditional theology. It is important to note that this task of interpretation as conversation with the subject matter of the text does have certain limitations. One cannot determine the outcome before the actual interpretation. This is certainly important because you can read a number of scriptures in different situations with different interpretations. There is a radical confrontation between a text and the situation that always needs to be understood. A major point, according to Tracy, is that interpretation, as conversation between the text and the interpreter on the religious subject matter, can be described as process of correlation. This correlation helps guide the interpretation process by helping the interpreter with a pre-understanding, an understanding of the text, and then an amplification of both understandings into some conclusion.

One must always ask yourself oneself about pre-understanding. And yet, no one is ever fully conscious of all the effects of one's background, tradition, and personal life history. The key for me is to enter a process of interpretation that will take in mind the present situation as well as the past experience. Self understanding is essential.

On one hand, the process of biblical interpretation needs to keep in mind the world of the scripture and the changing world of the interpreter. And on the other hand, the issue of theological interpretation of the Bible today has to deal with the dynamic of self understanding and the application of the truth of that text.

What is the role and the nature of the biblical text in our own theological self understanding? What authority do the scriptures play in the central role of our Christian understanding? I believe that we need to recognize that Christianity is a religion of the revelatory event of Jesus Christ. How this Christ event can help our understanding and interpretation of scripture is central. The Christ event brings in the process of inspiration.

A Four-Fold Approach

David Tracy talks about three strands that are needed in the process of theological interpretation of scripture in the church. First of all, he says, it is a process best understood on a model of conversation whereby the pre-understanding of the interpreter and the claim to attention of the text meet in that peculiar interaction called a conversation. Second, he points out that theology is an interpretation that can further be classified by specifying a particular theological conversation called correlation. And then third: the final strand of the argument suggests that the theologian's task is to interpret that scripture within the life of the church. Here a recognition of the church's own theological tradition is very important. I want to add a fourth strand to this process. I would call this the relational and dynamic experience of the Christ event through inspiration.

These four strands of biblical interpretation are helpful for my own biblical process of understanding. And it certainly is important for me to maintain some fidelity to my own denominational norms of biblical understanding. The United Methodist Church calls for scripture as a primary resource of understanding God's will. And we understand that scriptural interpretation is through our own tradition, reason, and experience. This is another four-fold process of knowing God's will and is also a dynamic process for biblical interpretation. It has often been called the Wesleyan Quadrilateral.

I certainly like the suggestion that biblical interpretation can be seen as a conversation. In my conversation with God's word, I may encounter a revelatory event. This is experiencing Christ of the scriptures and Christ of the church. Here my own personal relationship with Christ takes on a dynamic of aliveness. The event of Jesus Christ can help me judge the text and tradition that seems to be witnessing to it. Therefore, the text itself does not necessarily dictate my own encounter and conversation with Christ. This

seems to be more authentic and real to me in my own experience of God. Obviously, I have to trust that the Spirit is present in the church and sometimes in spite of the church. The same is true for me. I have to trust that God's Spirit is at work within me and sometimes in spite of me.

I think the issue of correlation helps provide a corrective in the conversation that I have with scripture as a process of biblical interpretation. In a way, this correlation keeps the historical-critical method alive. It does not become a mere objective scientific task. It allows for some sense of excitement and discovery. It allows me to see the inspiration of that scripture as it was inspired in the past—that can make more sense to me now in the present.

For me, the tradition of the church is especially important. I believe that scripture lives through earlier methods of interpretation that helped form the church. I believe the opposite is true also. The early church helped form methods of interpretation. Contemporary theology certainly has benefited from understanding the developments of biblical interpretation in the early church. The allegorical methods of biblical interpretation that began in Alexandria, as well as the emphasis on primary literal sense in Antioch, show us actual differences that are obviously as real today. As a United Methodist, I certainly appreciate Tracy's statement that, "The rubric is simply a contemporary way of saying the Christian Church lives by allowing the full dialectic of faith, scripture, tradition, and reason."⁶ I also realize that each generation has to approach biblical interpretation with a sense of integrity by understanding the classical history of conversation with scripture and interpretation. With this appreciation of our classical models of scriptural interpretation, one can then step forward and be more authentic in developing a new dynamic model of conversation and dynamic interpretation of scripture for today.

New Reflections for Preaching Stewardship and Generosity Sermons with Passion

There comes a time when we may have to take ourselves seriously or die. Interpretation can make all the difference in the world. Rituals of transformation happen because of our interpretation process. Growth and change are essential. I believe the dynamic of biblical interpretation is not only a witness of heaven and earth

6. Ibid., 186.

but is an experience of such. Biblical interpretation takes on a great urgency when we see the value that it has in bringing new life as creation awaits transformation with the right word and understanding. The revelatory event of Christ in scripture seems to be forever searching for ways to speak about transformation and change. Scripture can be seen as pushing at ways to bring growth through resurrection, reconciliation, and renewal.

In looking at biblical interpretation with this dynamic, one can see that at the heart of this is a sense of passion. And passion has many tenses. The past carries with it a great amount of meaning. The present is alive, while the future is full of hope. Interpretation, for me, is what helps me understand the past and present and gives urgency for the future. Without passion, we lack the desire to interpret the present times in light of God's word. And there are certainly lots of questions that do emerge. With a sense of passion in our biblical process of interpretation, God's word seems to break in at levels where we have human need and speak a word of freedom or grace. Too often when preaching financial stewardship, preachers lose their passion and nerve!

When our theology of stewardship has a sense of urgency about it, it becomes not merely interpretation of God's word, but also a self-conscious interpretation. There becomes a correlation and methodology that helps one understand the fullness of meaning. Many times, it becomes a confrontation between the text and the situation in which one lives. The process of interpretation then becomes a conversation between the present situation, the text itself, the tradition, and the role of our Christian community.

Our Christian faith is a religion that focuses on the revelation of God and Jesus Christ, which gives certain authoritative witness between not only the text of scripture but also the event of experiencing Christ. Obviously, a danger here is that we need not limit the authoritative role of the text in favor of some contemporary experience of the Christ event alone. What becomes creative is the difference and dynamic of these two understandings and experiences. Allow me to reflect on the task of this process called dynamic translation.

There is a critical relationship of the text, which is written, and the context of the hearers. I find that this dynamic interpretation process serves as a corrective to the historical-critical method. It brings a personal dynamic and relationship with the text that makes all the difference for me in the process. It allows me to

experience the scriptures again as if for the first time. Its real focus becomes what God's word is for people. The text itself is broadened to have implication for our life text. It is an exciting adventure in discovering and engaging the scriptural story. This dynamic moves me not only in thought but also in feeling.

One might understand also the limits to this process of dynamic translation or interpretation. One must recognize in the first place how the text engages you. Self understanding is essential. How you recognize your own limits within the biblical canon is also essential. One must understand the context of authority from our own tradition as well. This dialectic between the word of God and humankind must also always focus on the primacy of scripture in matters of faith. I can appreciate that the process of assent can be in tension with the hermeneutic of suspicion. Also, there must be a great sense of trust within the community for this dynamic translation process to bring about effective and authoritative interpretation.

Implications for the Preacher

Several assumptions must be analyzed for this process of biblical interpretation to be appropriated in our preaching. First of all, we must analyze the interpreter's competence. How do we know what we are doing? Every time we begin to start the process of preparing a sermon, we engage in a new learning experience that seeks expression. As you read the scripture, begin to look for connection of the text to the context of your ministry. Next, look for some structure that can help your understanding. Look for something that matters not only to self but to others. Explore different issues that matter to people who need hope. Seek out ways to see how lives could be changed by the hearing of the spoken word.

Too many times, nothing seems to happen. Too many times there is not an active dynamic or conversation. Too many times one cannot correlate between what is actually being said and what it means. This dynamic of biblical translation does require an awful lot. One must be open to change. One must be open to analyzing one's lifestyle. One must be willing to give of one's self and always expect a response to preaching.

Some of the most basic questions of preaching seem to provide leverage in this process of dynamic

interpretation. Why is an issue central? What is essential? What is said in this scripture that seems to require the preacher's voice? These questions enable the process.

The life of ministry is a life of interpretation. And one's involvement in this course and experience of interpretation has helped us better see the reality of God's word. It is essential to realize how speaking God's word can help make God real. Biblical interpretation can make a difference. The issues of suffering, change, and hope are essential. One finds that this process of biblical interpretation allows us to be positive on the one hand and yet realistic on the other. In other words, the good news is a powerful dynamic in dealing with the bad news of humanity.

This model of dynamic translation for biblical interpretation does call forth certain shifts. There is a shift from preaching understood in isolation toward preaching in an integrated way with the community. One must see the whole liturgical setting as full of resources as the whole service itself becomes part of the preaching. The preacher tries to gather up what has been happening and carry it forward so that it will continue to happen.

This process of biblical interpretation helps one move from the interpretation of the text to the text, which is interpretation of life. It helps us understand our own life. Our life also is what really needs interpretation. Self awareness is not only a beginning but also an end to which the preacher works. Self understanding enables an authentic revelation of Christ.

This biblical process of interpretation also moves us from meaning as proposition, to meaning as experience. Our theology is a way in which meaning is implied as we understand God. Our theology, which makes a difference, can be that learning and meaning which comes out of experience.

Another shift happens as preaching is seen as a discourse about something that shifts to displaying and/or performing what it really means to be something. In other words, we do have a need to be embraced by the text so that we can really experience what it means to live within the story. We discover our own meaning and purpose within the text itself. Self understanding happens with assurance and acceptance. It also grows with conflict, confrontation, or crisis.

Preaching can move from an independent rhetorical act to become a different form or expression of the text itself. We have many different understandings of God's self revelation in Christ in this process. The form of our witness helps us understand the very nature of our revelation.

Also, this style of biblical interpretation helps us move from an instructional cognitive model to a model that addresses imagination and inspiration. In the past, preaching through a logical or deductive model was seen to be most helpful to instruct. And yet today, we see a need to balance this with a shift to experience passion as it can help motivate, challenge, or delight and bring change. We are interested in changing lives for Christ and the church.

Preaching also needs to be seen less as a product and more as something with which you enact or call to embody. On one hand, a sermon is produced. And on the other, a sermon is never fully completed. Dr. Fred Craddock, one of our greatest seminary professors of preaching ever, reminded us that preaching needs to say what the congregation needs to say. Each Sunday we need to know what we are doing, and then we need to have the freedom to do it. As we wrestle with our preaching styles, we understand more fully the hermeneutical implications of our study. We also need to see our preaching move from the objective truth to the contextual truth. Stories can shift from being just illustrations to being empowered to be a story that speaks for itself.

And finally, we see the shift in preaching because of this process of dynamic translation from more of a formal message to that which is informal. Obviously, there are many dangers in the shift that comes about through this dynamic process of translation. One can focus more on the context and limit our understanding of the historical-critical tradition. One also can easily dodge the responsibility and refuse to bear witness to the authentic word of God. It might also be said that it's much easier to speak to the testimony of the congregation than it is to speak for God. And with new expanding cultural and moral boundaries, there is also a danger of reading into the text more than should be. And one also might say that the authority of our scripture in principle can easily be eroded if one focuses too much on these shifts, which tend to get our theology out of balance.

For me, interpretation always begins with the preacher's self understanding. This is unavoidable on one hand and exciting on the other. This allows us to raise questions and issues and identify a sense of urgency. It helps us better make a connection with our own experience of God and that of others. It keeps open the dynamic that understanding is a growth process. And furthermore, our self understanding can be a gift that has its own limitations. This process of biblical interpretation can begin with the hermeneutic of suspicion and grow to become a hermeneutic of restoration and assent.

I believe it is important that we look at interpretation as it begins with one's self understanding. This is unavoidable and important for us to comprehend. This gives us questions, issues, urgency, and great care in making the connection with our own experience to that experience that we have with the scripture. Obviously, some of our experience is a mystery. God reveals himself in a variety of religious experiences. While self understanding is a gift that brings great awareness, it is also a limitation. When one looks at the hermeneutical circle, one can see how interpretation can flow from the biblical events to the oral and aural communication of those events, then to their written form, and then to the actual text as the church brings this scripture into its printed canon form. We also see how our world, its possibilities and demands, influences how we understand that text. Also in this process of interpretation, we see the text through our objective, historical, and other vantage points or perspectives.

The final way in which we understand scripture comes also by way of self understanding. This leads us to the appropriation of the fullness of truth. And we are called to respond by our witness. In looking at this hermeneutical circle or process, certain problems for interpretation today present themselves as we see stages of our faith development.

Another question that has merit is: how does the oral/aural character of preaching affect the work of interpretation? Obviously, speaking is different from writing and hearing is different from reading. The use of the voice, the body, the presence of the preacher, and the use of senses all come together for a certain kind of purpose. In our preparation for preaching, we ask: What does the text say? And what does the text do?

We need to always ask the question: how does one know that he/she is interpreting authentically?

Augustine offered this criteria: first, we must love God, and second, we must love others. We are correct in our interpretation if we meet these two criteria. The matter of intentionality is so important in the process of biblical interpretation. The preacher must assume and trust that this is also the correct criteria for the congregation. It is simplistic yet essential to my process.

Relational Implications for My Preaching

My theology can best be described as relational. It would be important for me to define what I mean by this word. The process by which I approach this scripture in preparation for preaching is first to determine its relationship with God's intent. Then inspiration and information needed to bring about the revelatory event of Jesus Christ. I want to relate that scripture to those who are hearing it. And I want to be the best instrument I can to help relate the text to the people. As St. Paul said "Faith comes from listening" (Rom 10:17 CEB) The thesis that I am trying to better understand in my preaching responsibilities follows something like this: My goal in preaching stewardship and generosity is to bring about self understanding, which will then lead to a greater understanding and experience of God in the revelation of Jesus Christ. My overall focus is based on a relationship of Jesus Christ.

As I prepare to preach, I try to relate not only the *message about* Jesus Christ as it comes from scripture but also relate the *message from* Jesus Christ as it comes through a relationship of inspiration. What I am looking for is the dynamic of information and inspiration. Dr. Buttrick says, "In all the Gospels, there is a tension between Christ remembered and Christ rediscovered in faith, a tension not unrelated to the polarity between a message from Christ and a message of Christ."⁷

Preaching Problems

On a more personal note, I think many are motivated by more inspiration in preaching than information in the historical-critical process. However, the homiletic of inspiration can always be grounded and informed by the historical-critical method.

With this approach in mind, let me identify several problems that we struggle with in preaching and

7. David G. Buttrick, *Preaching Jesus Christ: An Exercise in Homiletic Theology* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2002), 12.

interpretation. First, allow me to speak to the problem of culture and change. Each sermon that I preach must be very timely. Because cultural situations change, the sermon must relate to those with immediacy. Many times I have looked back to old sermon files to find not only a lack of inspiration as I've reread these sermons, but also a disconnected understanding and application. Sermons often seem to be valuable only in the moment of preaching to that particular culture, which is constantly changing. My goal, then, in preaching the relational message of Jesus Christ is to relate that gospel to a particular cultural situation and particular people. The question is how can I best preach Jesus Christ in this moment? I think it's always important to be able to identify, in the first place, what our need is for Jesus Christ. Then I try to develop a plan by which I can communicate that need and also witness to the benefit of how Christ can help in the particular time and need of the preaching event.

David Buttrick makes a very important point when he reminds us that too many of our pulpits are concerned with self preservation today. He says, "Is it any wonder, then that American pulpits, trying to please, have turned to a safe therapeutic personalism or an equally safe Barthian biblicism?"⁸ He correctly states that in many pulpits there is an embarrassing silence. Our Christology is being shaped more by fear than faithful prophecy. Another homiletical problem that affects my process of biblical interpretation for preaching has to do with language. How can I communicate, on an understandable level, to people who may not comprehend the theological implication of words like resurrection, incarnation, or atonement? Language is changing at an alarming rate, and this linguistic problem continues to compound itself as vocabularies seem to multiply through the growth of word and computer technology. It is said that nearly half the dictionary has been rewritten in only fifty years, and this linguistic revolution has transformed every major language of the world. I find it challenging to use the right language, metaphor, or image to communicate the message that I am seeking to preach.

Language is particularly powerful when one is preaching in the narrative form. Telling a story that people can relate is most significant. Word usage, grammar, and vocabulary must be identifiable if people are going to relate their story to the story you are trying to express. Also, certain words have power-packed messages to

8. Ibid., 14.

them. It is certainly easy to use a word that will get people off the track. Some words and metaphors are so emotionally charged that it may even block continued thought. My language and theology must grow with a focus on inclusive language. I also find it important to be able to translate old metaphors or illustrations in a way that give a contemporary and compelling meaning.

A third problem I would identify in preaching is a relational pattern that has to do with our understanding and experience of God. My point is that better self understanding provides opportunities for people to experience God's revelation in Jesus Christ. What is needed is a sound doctrine of humanity as well as an up-to-date way to express one's psychological and social understandings. This leads to the discipline of theological study and expression. There are so many varieties of religious experiences about God and with God that sometimes it is difficult to understand what is meant. For example, how are we to understand the dual nature of Jesus Christ? What can we say to help people experience his divinity on one hand and comprehend his humanity on the other?

David G. Buttrick talks about the problem of preaching God and Jesus Christ in our contemporary situation. He suggests that every culture seems to have some word that is the counterpart to our word "God" and some commonly accepted understanding attached to the word. Are we to understand the nature of God through some natural theology? Or are we to experience God through some transcendent understanding? Or is God to be best understood through some experiential process? In doing Christology, one does need to do some required understanding of difference in personality traits and temperaments.

While Robert Grant and David Tracy have suggested a hermeneutic of conversation with the text, I would like to expand on that dynamic. I think one important way of looking not only at the biblical text, but the context and people of the congregation, has to do with relational dynamics. For example, I have found over the years of my ministry that some people tend to be more emotional by nature. Preaching that pulls on emotion and the dynamic of decision has a great impact on these types of people. On the other hand, people who tend to be more cognitive and thought-oriented need to be challenged in their understanding of God through a more rational, thoughtful approach. Within United Methodism, I have seen our theology and our

history to invite balanced approach to being disciples. Preaching needs to enhance psychological and theological maturity.

The recent interest in personality and temperament tests, like the Myers Briggs format, tell me that people want to better understand themselves. And as they understand themselves, they discover their spiritual and relational gifts. What I am proposing in my relational hermeneutic is that I can best understand God through my own particular frame of reference and lifestyle experience.

Another problem, I believe, for preaching today has to do with personality differences. In my own pastoral ministry, I have discovered over the years that different people have different gifts and abilities. It's amazing how much spiritual growth and change can happen if you can communicate in a language that people can understand. Gary L. Harbaugh, in his book titled *God's Gifted People, Discovering Your Personality as a Gift*, points out that there are a variety of personality gifts. Dr. Harbaugh has offered this little book as an application of the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator.⁹ This test is the most widely used measure of personality dispositions and preferences. This is used not only in the church but also industry, education, counseling, and other health services. Harbaugh offers a biblical understanding of personality or spiritual gifts that are often overlooked in our experience in the local church setting.

Dr. Harbaugh, in his book, does an interesting and helpful job of identifying four personality gifts that correlate with the Myers-Briggs profile. First, is the gift of practicality: living in the here and now. The second gift is the gift of personal helpfulness: reaching out and lifting up. The third personality gift is the gift of possibilities for people: keeping hope alive. And the final gift that he addresses is the gift of looking ahead: letting the future guide the present. This excites me and motivates me to think ahead about developing a four-part sermon series that would not only help people better understand themselves but also respond to God's revelation in Jesus Christ through this understanding.

Another problem that I think preaching must address is the problem of the present age. There has been much discussion about new age philosophy and spirituality for our day. I tend to bring an indictment upon

9. Gary L. Harbaugh, *God's Gifted People: Discovering Your Personality as a Gift* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1990).

Christianity because there has been a vacuum that is now being filled by this movement. I believe our church needs to do a better job of speaking to the spiritual needs of people today. At the time of Christ, people were looking for a messiah. People today continue to have that spiritual hunger, thirst, and quest. We know there are many different expectations. How can our preaching take on power to point out the significance of Christ's death and resurrection? How can we better relate to the risen presence of Jesus Christ as we preach that the kingdom of God has arrived?

Preaching from a relational theology with a process of dynamic interpretation can help us experience God's love and assurance in Jesus Christ for the past, present, and future. Preaching using my suggested relational and dynamic hermeneutic would allow us to celebrate Jesus in a personal way. This would encompass his historical humanness, as well as a contemporary inspiration of his presence. The promise of life and life eternal can be generated through one's experience of God's love in the present and an overriding eternal love for the future. There are several other problems of preaching and contemporary Christology that would need to be addressed. However, the process of dynamic interpretation through relational conversation with the text and God's people does bring us to a greater understanding of who we are and whose we are.

Preaching to Meet the Needs of People Today

A good preacher is able to reflect what he knows about the people he serves. Preaching is a function with and of the people of that congregation and community. Preaching is not really effective until it calls for involvement. And before it can invite involvement, it must involve the community of believers in real-life issues. The needs must be presented. A conviction and a compassion must be motivated.

Criteria for preachers to meet the needs of their congregation:

1. The preacher must begin by inviting the people in to the sermon.
2. The exegesis of the scripture base for the sermon must also take serious the people who will hear it.
3. Illustrations, examples, allusions, and other literary forms that the preacher uses need to show sensitivity to the life world of the people.

4. The sermon needs to address the current relevant situation in which the people live. It calls them to think and take action.
5. The sermon demonstrates the preacher's experience in the congregation so that the larger community can then bear witness to the need to be part of God's community.

If the purpose of preaching is to inspire the congregation to do something, then inspiration and involvement must be the result of the individual preacher reflecting an outcome of corporate activity. Because there are many worship services each weekend, the preacher is challenged to relate to the different congregations.

The genius of preaching is when you are able to give an invitation, which invites people in to the sermon even before you start preaching that sermon. Too many times we plow right into the sermon before we have caught the interest of the congregation. We must develop a need before we inspire some answer or solution.

It is obvious to me that there are many strengths and weaknesses in each local that can be addressed by effective preaching and worship experiences. One word seems to cry out for attention in all local churches. This is the word *stewardship*. It is obvious that we need to improve our stewardship of involvement, giving, and generosity.

The challenge then will be to invoke our congregation through preaching and worship to growth in stewardship areas. This will certainly take a long-term plan where the accumulative affect can be measured. The approach to stewardship must be authentic theologically and offer ways of immediate, responsible, and healthy growth. Preaching generosity must also have a way of developing a supportive community. We must be able to see ourselves as people of common need. There must be a growing trust and ability to communicate the needs clearly.

Preaching can inspire us to grow in love and faith. Preaching must not only lift up the virtues of community through stewardship but it must also confront many of the present-day obstacles to community building. Issues like ethnicity and denominationalism must be addressed. The contemporary church must

seek diversity, pluralism, racial balance, ecumenicalism and help people deal with moral and religious choices. One of the greatest difficulties in calling for community today is the growing emphasis on individuality and isolation. People are more inclined to promote their own private values than public good. Preaching generosity must challenge the issue of privatism that oftentimes burdens the common good not only of our church institutions but our public institutions also.

Preaching with Vision

My hope is that preaching can provide the transforming leadership that is needed for the vision of our church. Preaching can be the key to self understanding, God's revelation in Jesus Christ, and a deeper commitment and leadership for our church. As we better understand ourselves, as we more fully experience Christ, and as we grow in our faith, our church will become a dynamic place for ministry.

Preaching can inspire worship! Our world needs worship that is vital as it relates to our own individual lives and uplifts and raises the sight of all toward God. Worship certainly can be the foundation for individual and corporate Christian expression. Worship can unite and inspire the majesty and power of God's word. Liturgy, prayer, and music can help us lift our highest praise or beseech God's mercy. The future vision of our church can gain inspiration through worship experiences that express a vital congregation full of faithful disciples. God's presence must be felt in our worship experience.

Preaching can also provoke prayer! For Christians today, the act of prayer is probably the most powerful acknowledgement of God's presence in our lives. Whether our prayer is a silent "Thank you Lord" or a request for forgiveness, prayer can be most powerful. It can heal, console, or praise the almighty. Preaching must constantly call for prayer in our lives, at home, at work, and at church, in good times and bad times.

Preaching also must call for forth witness! As Christ's disciples to spread the word, we become modern missionaries. We must travel the difficult and dusty road. These roads lead to our children, families, and neighbors. They lead us to starving strangers, people ill in the hospital, and the poor around the world. So many people in our society have no relationship with God. They are lost—lost to mind-altering substances, materialism, the power of sin, and other addictive behaviors. Modern lifestyles fill us with stress and distress,

which are devastating to the overall well being of our personal lives. As Christians, we must share the witness of Christ to our neighbor next door and the stranger around the world.

Preaching calls for transformational ministry! It has been said that with a strong heart, mind, and muscles, the human body can move mountains. However, we really need faith. The body of Christ needs strong hearts, minds, and muscles so our clergy, staff, and laity can be the hands and the feet, the muscles and the minds. We must lead, teach, comfort, be in mission, and inspire! Yet it is faith that moves and motivates us as we experience Jesus Christ. Our church leadership must also maintain the highest standard of ethical, intellectual, and professional performance. Our theological knowledge must be communicated clearly with conviction. The power of preaching the gospel can change one life at a time as individuals have a better self understanding and experience God's revelation in Christ. Change and transformation happens. The challenge of preaching is to call forth change.

Preaching can also call forth great mission! Our mission must be seen to reach out in our local communities and beyond. In this changing world where we live, we must be willing to share our great resources with those who are in developing countries of the world. We must be willing to do battle with growing violence and moral degradation, which seems to be destroying our society.

Preaching must call forth greater commitment to learning! The mind, be it that of a child or a senior citizen, requires vigorous stimulation. Education's opportunities here at our church must be supported through our preaching and worship experiences. While there are many challenges and needs of a diverse church family that can span the age and background difference, education can be the key to greater understanding. Financial management courses can open the door to a better knowledge and participation in the stewardship of all of God's resources. Our Christian education and theological understanding can guide and shape the spiritual soul. It must also provide ways of dealing with predictable and even unexpected problems that frequent financial situations.

Preaching for growth is also essential. Preaching that calls for a future vision of growth can bring our congregation together with a sense of unity and purpose. The giving of our resources and time, talents,

service, and money speaks to God of our thanksgiving. For it is in response to God's gift that we give. Our generosity and praise is acknowledgement of God's priority in our life. As an imperfect people, we need the guidance and the challenge to be lead. We need, as a church, to be inspired through preaching of the word to lead others toward the goal of proportional giving and tithing. Our understanding of stewardship education can include a denominational emphasis by the pulpit.

In conclusion, it should be noted that all preaching can have a great impact in the formation of a people. Preaching with a vision can cause exciting, dynamic, and energizing hope. Current and contemporary issues can be challenged and addressed. The social gospel and the personal gospel can be preached in a way to bring not only a growth in faith but also a growth in service by the community of faith. Preaching with vision can help congregations be responsive to human need, not only within our membership but within the larger community. Preaching can help a congregation experience the life of generosity as an inspiring journey rather than a depressing obligation. Where there is joyful enthusiasm, congregations can also enable preachers to grow through a relational theology and dynamic interpretation for preaching.

Clayton L. Smith

Eight Sermon Series Ideas (2007–2014)

From The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection

In the fall of 2007 (for the year 2008), the stewardship sermon series was titled Simplicity, Generosity, and Joy. For worship planning purposes, Adam Hamilton, senior pastor of the Church of the Resurrection, described the aim of the series as a way to help people of all income levels think biblically about money and its role in their lives. The series was a call to change, see money appropriately, and move away from the destructive approaches of acquisition and over spending. This includes our human tendencies of measuring our worth by how much money we have, going into debt, and getting caught in the trap of constantly wanting more and the feeling of never having enough.

Adam Hamilton's sermon series and worship design supported the four sermons entitled:

- I. The American Nightmare—struggles that we face when it comes to the use of money
- II. Wisdom and Finance—six key financial principles of managing money well
- III. Learning Contentment and Practicing Simplicity—based on Hebrews 3:5 and 1 Timothy 6:5
- IV. Defined by Generosity—asking about what really defines who you are

This sermon series was designed to meet the real and vital needs of our congregation. It offered worship experiences with real help from a real God. The services called for a change of thinking, feeling, and behavior about money.

The sermons were based on the following six key financial principles that continue to be used to support our stewardship and generosity ministry:

- 1. Put God first in your living and giving. (2 Corinthians 9:6-7)
- 2. Prepare a spending plan and track all expenses monthly. (Proverbs 27:23-24)
- 3. Simplify your lifestyle; live below your means. (Matthew 6:19-33)

4. Provide immediately for an emergency fund. (1 Timothy 6:9-12)
5. Pay off all credit card debt, and use cash not credit cards. (Proverbs 22:7)
6. Practice long-range saving and investing habits. (Luke 14:28)

In 2008 (for the year 2009) the stewardship sermon series was titled Reset: Biblical Wisdom for Challenging Economic Times. Adam Hamilton's sermon titles were:

- I. The Wisdom of Solomon
- II. Now, I Remember Why I'm Here
- III. Overcoming Fear

In 2009 the world had changed; we were experiencing what historians called, "The Great Recession." Adam's sermon series Growing Forward was designed to help people better understand the "new normal."

- I. Finding Hope in the Ashes
- II. Creating a Sustainable Lifestyle
- III. Making Meaningful Investments

The year 2010 called for a combined operating and capital campaign. Adam's sermon series was titled Come Dream With Us. This sermon series and worship planning was based on our church's vision:

- I. Changing Lives
- II. Renewing the Church
- III. Transforming the World

The fall 2011 stewardship campaign (for the 2012 year) was titled More Than Enough: Financial Wisdom, Courage, and Peace.

These worship services and sermons focused on the economy. While 2010 dealt with the vision needs of our church, 2011 returned to focusing on the needs of our congregation for wisdom, courage, and peace.

Adam's sermon titles were:

- I. When it's Time to Reset (Wisdom)
- II. Macaroni and Hot Dogs (Courage)
- III. Reset: The Keys to Happiness (Peace)

The 2012 worship focus during our fall stewardship campaign for the 2013 budget year was on The Secrets of Success. It was based on our common need for success in life. The campaign was called, The Joy of Generosity. Services and sermons focused on the following:

- I. The Secret of Financial Success
- II. The Truly Great will be Your Servant
- III. Living with a Purpose Greater Than Your Own

In 2013 the campaign was called The Power of Generosity. Adam's sermons described the positive power of money. This was a two-part sermon series. A major capital campaign was planned for early 2014. It was decided that we would not confuse our congregation with a joint operating and capital campaign like we did in 2010. The two sermons were practically focused again on helping people manage money:

- I. Tips, Tools, and Techniques for Financial Freedom
- II. Setting Financial Goals that Give Life

The planning for the 2014 campaign was based on the stewardship theme "The Power of Gratitude." The sermon series was titled How Will You Measure Your Life. Adam Hamilton was using a book by that

title written by James Allworth, Karen Dillon, and Clayton Christensen and published by Forbes in 2014.

The three sermons were titled:

- I. Measuring Your Life of Gratitude by Your Love
- II. Measuring Your Life of Gratitude by Your Gifts
- III. Measuring Your Life of Gratitude by Your Service

Go to www.cor.org and search the sermon archives or the current sermon series for specific help. You are encouraged to study Adam Hamilton's preaching and teaching style for stewardship and generosity sermons. His rhetorical skill, transparency, vision casting, and delivery are excellent examples.

Segmented Giving Levels for Multi-Level Communication

Each church can develop a method to measure the different levels of giving in its congregation. It is important to benchmark levels of giving so that you can communicate differently to encourage growth in giving in all levels. This segmentation process helps you evaluate the giving of your members each year and encourages all levels to grow in generosity.

Level I: Nonpledging or Nongiving

This group has no record of giving in the last year but has attended worship. The letter focuses on the importance of giving to God, giving as an act of worship, steps on getting started, and is sensitive to possible financial issues. They will receive the Guide to Giving along with the commitment card. We let them know that they have not given in the last year. We encourage them in grace, not through guilt. We want all our members to know and experience the joy of generosity. We also want them to contact us to let us know of concerns like illness or unemployment.

Level II

This group consists of regular attendees who worship and serve and are involved at an active level of personal and financial commitment. The letter focuses on stepping up toward the tithe if they are not yet experiencing their goals in joyful giving. They will receive the Guide to Giving and commitment card. We remind them of the changed lives, mission outreach, and other benefits that result because of their generosity.

Level III

These donors are most generous in giving with their time, testimony, tithes, and special offerings as a Christian lifestyle. The letter focuses on personal appreciation, celebration of results, and the joy of generosity. They will receive a personal, handwritten note as well as the Giving Guide and commitment card. More detail and direction will be offered in my book *Propel* in chapters 7 and 12.

Level IV

Some churches may want to add a fourth level for major donor development. Major donors can be identified, encouraged, and shown appreciation. It is always wise to offer personal appreciation, when possible!

Lapsed Members

(Who have No Record of Attendance or Giving During the Past Three Months)

They will be contacted by the Connections team. The senior pastor will encourage them to come back to worship but will not ask them to make a commitment for the coming year. These members have previously been contacted at the time their attendance declined. Personal phone calls are made after members miss six weeks.

Follow-up letters and e-mail messages are sent to those who do not respond to the campaign. These non-responders also receive an appeal to encourage participation. A valued member survey can be sent three months later to measure the needs and issues of non-responders. This anonymous survey can also be found as an Online Resource.

Small Group Ministry Is Essential for Building a Culture of Generosity

The key question is, “*How is your small group ministry doing?*” Church vitality can best be measured by the number of people involved in small group ministry. Over the years, Resurrection has placed more and more focus on small group ministry. Our Group Life ministry continues to grow as our church grows. Staffing has increased to support and enhance growth. We know that very large churches must have vital small groups for discipleship and stewardship.

John Wesley, founder of the Methodist movement, began inviting his listeners to join Societies (small groups) when his public preaching appealed to the people of Bristol, England, and Kingswood, England. Many scholars state that Wesley’s preaching and use of small groups sparked the greatest revival known in England.

Most churches have small group ministries, but they may not realize how essential small groups are to their stewardship growth. We often do not see how stewardship giving is the result of discipleship ministry, which builds deeply committed Christians.

By doing research into our members’ small group involvement at Resurrection we were able to identify three vital signs for stewardship and giving by those who participate in small groups versus those who do not participate in small groups:

1. Small Group participants give, on average, 82 percent more.
2. Small group participants give more over time.
3. Small group participants attend worship 70 percent more often.

Worship attendance also becomes a vital stewardship indicator. Most people want to belong to a Christian community. Many small groups and classes worship together. Our research points out the following:

1. Increased financial giving peaks with people who attend worship at least three times per month.
2. Those who attend worship at least three times per month give more than average attendees.
3. Every additional worship week attended out of the year increases the average giving.

When our research combined average worship attendance and participation in a small group we discovered that participants in both gave 64 percent more than those who were not connected with a small group. We also learned that those in small groups attend worship three times more per month and give an amazing 183 percent more than those who are not connected to our group life ministry.

A final vital indicator pointed out that the growth rate of giving is 100 percent faster when those in small groups also increase their worship attendance. Growth in giving results when there is greater connection to others and a deeper commitment to Christ and the church.

Our stewardship and generosity ministry constantly seeks to find new ways to support those in small group ministry. We know that when faith grows giving follows. Our challenge is to reach those in the congregation in ways that connect them to small groups and encourage regular worship. This is especially true for new members.

Many who join Resurrection are non- or nominal believers and are seeking ways to become more deeply committed Christians. Our group life ministry connects them with others in a faith-nurturing environment. Small group ministry strives to help new members know, love and, serve God on the journey of faith.

Valued Member Survey to Non-Responders

VALUED MEMBER SURVEY DRAFT

(It is updated annually and sent by SurveyMonkey.com.)

The purpose of this survey is to get your feedback. We ask for your help so we can better provide stewardship ministry. Please check the correct answer for questions one through four and enter your evaluation ranking on all the pertinent issues in question five.

1. Are you an active member at Resurrection? (Yes___ No___)

2. How many worship services have you attended in the last six months?

(6 or more___, 3–5 ____, 1–2 ____, None ___)

3. I feel that the offering is a meaningful part of my religious experience.

(Yes___No___)

4. Over 30 percent of our members contribute using the automated banking option Electronic Fund Transfer. Would you have interest in this option? (Yes___No___)?

5. Our records indicate that you returned a commitment card in ___ but not for _____. Please let us know why by using the numbers 1 though 10, with 10 being the most important and 1 being not important. If the item is not applicable, insert a 0:

___ Personal financial issues

___ Health issues

___ Personal issues in my family

___ Relocating outside the area

___ A wage earner became unemployed

___ Misplaced the commitment card or forgot to return it

___ Unable to attend worship services

- ___ Have started attending another church
- ___ My commitment card has been returned
- ___ I will continue to offer my financial support without pledging
- ___ I will complete a commitment card next year
- ___ Concerns about the church
- ___ Felt the church did not respond to my needs
- ___ Did not feel a part of the church
- ___ Did not feel that my commitment was needed
- ___ Other (please describe) _____

We appreciate you taking time to respond to this brief survey.

This survey is intended to be on an anonymous basis; however, if you wish to either update your membership records or desire a call from a congregational care minister, please list your name, telephone number, and a brief description of the need below.

Optional name and contact information: _____

Update information: _____

Finance Department Emergency Disaster Guidelines

Here is a sample copy of the guidelines for handling emergency and designated disaster gifts in a timely fashion:

1. The finance committee and church council give the pastor advance authority to act immediately as he or she sees fit.
2. The finance department will quickly establish a designated account whenever they predict interest in donations toward disaster relief.
3. The communications team will post online donation options and create a disaster offering website.
4. Designations will be worded broadly, such as “all gifts will be designated for relief and rebuilding effort in Japan.”
5. In consultation with the pastor, the staff will guide the publicity of any special appeals. Options include such avenues as verbal announcements, eNews, eNotes, Facebook, Twitter, and the bulletin.
6. Any additional education and information will also be posted about the relief response of the denomination.
7. The designation of funds will often include UMCOR Advances and other mission efforts. However, the missions area will determine the best use of the designated funds in each case. Accordingly, funds will be disbursed by the finance department.
8. The online account will be closed at the discretion of the finance department.
9. A communication and celebration plan for the collection will be developed by the pastor along with the missions and the communications teams.

(Thanks to Dan Entwistle, Managing Executive Director, The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection for these guidelines.)

Sample Campaign Case Statement

Case Statement-Debt Reduction Campaign (Sample)

Come Dream With Us!

For twenty years Church of the Resurrection has welcomed non-religious and nominally religious people to the church and helped them become deeply committed Christians. We have sought to equip and inspire our members and visitors to serve as Christ's hands and voice outside the walls of the church to transform the community. In addition, we have freely given away what we have learned to other churches to help them have a future with hope.

The results have been exciting. Our church has grown from four people in 1990 to 17,000 people today. About 10,000 of these were non-religious or nominally religious prior to becoming involved in Resurrection's ministry. Having come to faith in Christ here, most of our members have become engaged in serving others in Christ's name. Today, Church of the Resurrection is synonymous with serving the poor, caring for senior adults and God's children with special needs, and supporting the work of inner city schools.

Our members have given hundreds of thousands of hours of time, and millions and millions of dollars in resources, to positively touch our city. Finally, Church of the Resurrection has trained over 25,000 pastors and lay leaders across The United Methodist Church. As a result, we have been voted the most influential mainline church in America by pastors and lay leaders. Thousands of churches utilize Resurrection ideas and resources.

Over its history, Church of the Resurrection has been a congregation of dreamers. We have listened for God's dreams and boldly pursued them. As we prepare for our third decade, we believe God's greatest dreams for our church are still ahead of us. These include expanding our efforts to reach non-religious and nominally religious young adults, expanding our mission work in the heart of Kansas City with thousands of Resurrection members engaged in serving others, and playing a key part in helping thousands of churches to become revitalized.

There is one hurdle that can negatively affect our ability to take advantage of these opportunities in the

short term: our current indebtedness. Over the last seventeen years, we have funded the cost of our buildings through special capital campaigns while funding our mission and ministry through our offerings. The funds from that campaign will be exhausted by the end of this year. This leaves us with a debt of \$12.8 million and, without a capital campaign, the principal payments will have to be made by reducing our ministry and mission each year until our debt is paid.

Last year our leaders voted to pursue a capital campaign this fall with the goal of paying off our existing debt. Why is there an urgency to pay off the debt? Simply put, our current debt will require \$809,000 presently used for life-changing ministry to be diverted to paying debt principal. To put that in perspective, we will free up resources comparable to more than our entire children, youth, and education annual budget needs. In addition, once our debt is paid off, this will free up another \$973,000 in interest costs that are currently paid out of our regular budget. By paying down our debt principal and interest costs with funds we raise from our capital campaign, we will have the capacity to continue to pursue our purpose and mission in the years ahead.

With each member praying and financially supporting this effort as God leads them, we can *fulfill our dream of an incredible future* in our third decade. We pray that God will continue to bless our church to change lives, transform communities, and renew the mainline church.

(Thanks to Adam Hamilton and the executive team at The United Methodist Church of the Resurrection for this sample.)

Funding Request to the Memorial Committee

MEMORIAL FUND REQUEST FORM

The memorial committee has received undesignated memorial gifts that can be used in meaningful ways for your ministry and mission. Please return the form below with the necessary signatures approving your request.

Memorial gifts can make a significant difference!

Staff making the request: Name _____ Phone _____

Ministry area: _____

*Description of item requested: _____

Dollar amount needed (attach detailed cost sheet): _____

Ministry purpose: _____

Any other source of funds (matching)? _____

(All three signatures are required for consideration.)

Signature of person requesting: _____

Signature of staff supervisor: _____

Signature of pastor: _____

Date of request: _____

Date funds are needed: _____

The memorial committee will consider your request (if funding is available) at the next scheduled meeting.

Thank you.

*Attach detailed information.

Return to: _____ Date: _____

SAMPLE—Please make it fit your local church.

Resurrection Foundation Development Three-Year Plan

2014–2017 Resurrection Foundation Development Plan

*Providing a framework for legacy gifts that will sustain the
long-term mission and objectives of Church of the Resurrection*

Objective	Strategy	Target Audience	Committee Responsibility	Activity Schedule
Short Term Objectives (2014)				
Thank current John Wesley Legacy Society (JWLS) members for support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Host donor appreciation event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Copy of Adam's new book Adam speaks Testimonials from JWLS members Challenge members to invite others to support foundation 	Current JWLS members	Donor Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send invitations Develop program agenda Hold event June 17, 2014
Increase membership in John Wesley Legacy Society.	Create potential JWLS membership pools based on specific criteria <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Age groups Past financial support levels Length of membership Level of attendance Put together talking points on foundation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rationale for foundation Role foundation plays in Resurrection's future Legacy nature of giving How to give Types of funds to support 	Target group A <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members 50–65 (4,338 total in age category) Annual giving >\$5,000 ≥ 50% church attendance 5+ years membership 	Donor Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send invitation and conduct follow-up calls Establish critical number of attendees Develop program agenda Hold event September 9, 2014 in student center in evening
		Target group B <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members 65+ (2,367 total in age category) Annual giving >\$2,500 ≥ 33% church attendance 	Donor Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Send invitations and conduct follow-up calls Develop program agenda Hold event November 1, 2012 in morning

Objective	Strategy	Target Audience	Committee Responsibility	Activity Schedule
Long Term Objectives (2015–2017)				
Provide essential staffing for foundation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct feasibility study for added staff • Prepare rationale for added staff • Develop job description 	Executive staff, church council to gain approval and funding	Board of Directors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop CASE Statement • Gain approval from the executive directors and church council by September 2014
Develop foundation programs for satellite campuses to achieve their long-term needs.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify key leaders at each campus • Examine the long-term needs specific to each campus 	Satellite campus pastors, associate lay leaders, and potential donors	Donor Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conduct information session at each campus (complete September 2015) • Determine long-term needs at each campus • Compile the specific campus needs and incorporate into overall foundation program.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grow foundation total assets to \$45 million • Increase JWLS membership to 700 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leverage “Sustaining the Vision” focus of capital campaign to grow foundation assets • Target major donor segments • Create program to encourage this segment to support foundation • Use senior pastor in key high level engagement with donors in 2016 and 2017 	Top 50% of giving segments of all age levels	Donor Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact target audience • Build relationship and interest in foundation work • Schedule meetings with senior pastor and key prospects

Donor Profile for Legacy Giving

(To be used to track donor visitation and follow-up.)

[Name and Contact Information] Confidential Information

Executive Pastor Donor Profile – Contact Record

- John Wesley Legacy Society declared member
- Prospective donor

1. Leadership, worship, and volunteer history and key interview questions:

- How long has donor been connected to the church? _____

“Why do you attend Resurrection?”

- How is the donor involved? _____

“What impact has this church had on you?”

- What areas of interest does the donor advocate or serve? _____

“How do your goals connect with our church’s goals and values?”

- What is the level of loyalty to the church?

- ◆ Giving level _____ (low, moderate, high)

- ◆ Attendance level _____ (low, moderate, high)

- *“Would you consider leaving a legacy of giving so that others could benefit from this experience?”*

2. Foundation event(s) attendance:

3. Suggested action follow up steps:

4. Declaration form returned or other verification: _____ YES _____ NO

5. Contact date(s):

6. Name of pastor/staff making the contact: _____

Estate Planning Seminars

There is growing interest in estate planning. The boomer generation is producing greater numbers of people who need help with tools for generational wealth transfer. People want to plan their legacy with maximum tax savings.

Local churches have a great opportunity to offer seminars that help members of their congregation become better stewards at all levels of wealth. Most churches have members who have legal or financial expertise. It is important to utilize resource people who offer credibility and provide professional expertise for the program or seminar.

The Fund Raising School at the University of Indiana recommends that churches and nonprofit organizations utilize seminars and workshops as a way to serve the needs of its members and market the planned giving efforts. The overriding objective is to create an awareness and environment where people will associate the idea of giving with estate planning. This is what is called “conceptual” marketing. The second objective is to profile prospect segments and individual prospects to match specific gift plans and ideas to meet their circumstances. This is “specific” marketing.¹⁰

Promotion of these events can be done on at least three levels. Saturation marketing is broad in scale where prospective donors initiate a response to qualify themselves and their need. Segmented marketing is more focused into segments that meet prospective planned giving criteria. Interested members respond to this more personal invitation so it is a co-active process. The third marketing approach would be called the “impact” marketing approach. Specific individuals would be invited to participate based on their circumstances and circle of influence. For example, church leaders or small group leaders could be invited and encouraged to influence others.

The seminar can be organized for those groups that may have general or specific needs. Estate planning seminars can be offered three times per year. Also, estate planning seminars for women can be offered twice a year. Single women and widows really appreciate this no cost help.

10. The Fund Raising School, Planned Giving Course, section V, page 1, 2013.

Each seminar begins with a welcome, introduction, and devotional message. The estate planning professionals are introduced. It is best if there is more than one presenter to prevent the possible appearance of conflict of interest or favoritism.

After the presentation or panel discussion, the local church stewardship pastor or other leader introduces the church's endowment giving program or local church foundation. Those attending are encouraged to consider remembering their own local church with a planned gift.

Promotional materials are also offered that describe the various estate planning tools. Attendance is taken because those who attend are good prospects. Follow-up communication is important for prospect development.

For best results, these estate planning seminars can be offered several times a year. Members who are helped often promote these annual events. Each year, changes in the estate tax and other tax regulations need to be updated.

Food, fellowship, and a time for informal questions and answers at the end of the session are very helpful to those who attend. Many bring personal questions that can be briefly addressed by the attorneys or financial advisors who lead the presentations or panel discussions.

We give each participant a folder that has the following helpful information:

1. Letter from the senior pastor stressing the importance of legacy giving to the church and foundation
2. Secure the Future gift planning information packet
3. Ways to Give brochure
4. Resurrection foundation annual report
5. Donor declaration form
6. Stewardship pastor business card

Participants are encouraged to return the donor declaration form if they are going to leave an estate gift or if they have additional questions for the executive pastor of stewardship and generosity. A thank you letter is sent to those who attend.

Each event is also evaluated in order to find ways to improve and better help those who attend. Event presenters also receive a thank you for their volunteer efforts and expertise. Potential donor profiles of each participant are prepared for ongoing follow up and record keeping needs. We are now offering social security seminars at Resurrection since there is an obvious growing need and interest by the boomer generation. This type of seminar uses a similar rationale as described above.

Estate Planning Seminars for Women

Our church has launched a women's estate planning seminar designed to help women with their future financial planning. For a number of years we have offered estate planning workshops for those who were married or single. Recently, we began to realize that women had needs that could best be addressed in an event designed and presented by women estate planning attorneys. For the last three years we have also offered Financial Peace University classes for women to amazing results.

We know that women, whether they are divorced, widowed, or never married, may face greater financial challenges than men. This is especially true as they prepare for retirement. Women tend to make less money than men. In many cases they have shorter careers. They may have saved less money and may have a lower social security benefit.

We also know that women live five years longer than men on average. Because of these and other issues, the church can offer support, financial stewardship guidance, and encouragement.

The University of Indiana's Center of Philanthropy supports the theory that gender differences in philanthropy are indeed real. A study conducted by center staff indicates that single women are significantly more likely than single men to make a philanthropic gift. In addition, results show that married men and married women are both more likely to give and make larger gifts than single men, indicating that a woman's desire for giving influences the philanthropic habits of her husband.¹¹

11. Women Give 2010 Study, Debra Mesch, Director, Women's Philanthropy Institute, Center on Philanthropy, Indiana University

The Legacy Journey

The Legacy Journey Reviewed

Since 2007, Dave Ramsey's *Financial Peace University* (FPU) has been offered at our church. We have had well over 2,500 members and visitors attend the classes. We have seen lives changed, marriages less conflicted, and hope restored concerning financial matters; people of all ages have learned how to get out of debt. We have trained and dedicated class coordinators who manage and teach these classes. We add something of the Resurrection focus and teaching. It is important that the local church pastor give oversight and help promote this very popular and helpful program.

In the fall of 2013, Dave Ramsey introduced a new DVD-based study called *The Legacy Journey*. This seven-week study was developed following the results of a market study by the Ramsey organization. They asked those who had taught and graduated from FPU survey questions designed to update and improve the thirteen-week FPU course. The results of this market study indicated that the thirteen-week FPU study should be reduced to nine weeks. The four FPU sessions to be removed would then be adapted to a new study designed to help people better prepare for retirement. The seven-week course entitled *The Legacy Journey* would speak to the need for managing wealth and leaving a legacy for your family, charity, and church. New and updated life stage topics were designed to assist in wealth building.

It is also important to say that while Dave Ramsey's teaching avoids doctrine issues, it is critical that each church pastor or key leader teach their faith perspectives and church theology as necessary. Adding your faith and biblical understanding is necessary for *The Legacy Journey* since the topics are more biblically focused and technical. For example, your denomination's teaching on generosity and stewardship is essential.

John Wesley's teaching on money and stewardship can be a helpful addition to Ramsey's teaching, especially for United Methodists. "*Make all you can, save all you can, and give all you can*" is a relevant stewardship model for today.¹² Ramsey refers to Wesley and many other Christian leaders who have done

12. John Wesley, "The Use of Money," *The Works of John Wesley*, sermon 50, <http://www.umcmmission.org/Find-Resources/John-Wesley-Sermons/Sermon-50-The-Use-of-Money>.

much to make stewardship and generosity lasting virtues. A solid theological understanding for each class is the responsibility of each class teacher and coordinator, especially when the study is on money.

As the boomer generation grows older, the church can also find new ways of reaching those who lack the support, family and friendships, and counsel they may desperately need. *The Legacy Journey*, like *Financial Peace University*, is a good program for the local church to consider and will offer support to those navigating the second half of life.

The Legacy Journey is a timely tool for churches to use to help the boomer generation. *The Legacy Journey* helps complete the teaching of *Financial Peace University*. Both classes can be essential to the stewardship ministry of a local church. While both classes need the oversight of a pastor, *The Legacy Journey* is so biblical and theological that the pastor's leadership is critical. Lay leaders can also be trained to give quality leadership under the direction of a pastor.

Benefits to the donors and your church are enormous. Giving will increase and more people may remember the church in their legacy gifts. But more importantly, people will become much better stewards of God's resources. Good stewardship teaching empowers great generosity!

Discover Donors in Your Church and Community

I have worked with RSI Church Stewardship consultants during many capital campaigns. Consultants bring a great variety of resources, leadership training, and organizational expertise to any church that has a bold vision for growth. I would always encourage churches to consider interviewing at least three capital campaign consultants a year prior to your campaign.

In their book *The Ministry of Giving*, RSI offers some research helpful tools. Joel Mikell, president of RSI Stewardship, introduced some of these tools to me several years ago. Most nonprofit organizations have staff who spend their time using these tools to research prospective donors and develop donor profiles. Churches have the benefit of knowing most of their donors and their level of giving. Nonprofits do not have donors who give through regular offerings. However, I have discovered there are at least another 30 percent of potential donors in most churches whom we do not know. These donors may offer untapped potential for doing good for the church.

Our community nonprofit hospitals, universities, and charities do their research. They identify potential donors and volunteers. They develop relationships that result in generous support for their cause. Most churches are missing the benefit of using these social media research tools to connect members to areas of service and financial support.

I recommend you do your research. Check out *The Ministry of Giving: Fund Your Vision by Developing Financial Leaders* for how best to use the following social media research tools:¹³

- Google
- Facebook
- LinkedIn
- Maritz

13. Joel Mikell, Bill McMillan, and Kimberly Steward, *The Ministry of Giving: Fund Your Vision by Developing Financial Leaders* (RSI Stewardship, 2013), 105-109.

- Zillow
- Research Point
- Wealth Engine

Every church has members or potential members who have the interest and knowledge to warrant this discovery research. Obviously, confidentiality and a code of ethics must be required to utilize this research. With that in mind, I can tell you that there are many potential donors waiting to be asked to get involved and if they would consider giving a gift to God's work.

Discover, develop relationships, and grow God's kingdom by this igniting social media trend. Since younger generations are involved in social media, this is a great way to have intergenerational leaders working together in your ministry.

Twelve Steps to Receiving Transformational Gifts in the Church

1. Use your church's mission to motivate donors.
2. Use current research to guide your approach.
3. Develop a compelling case statement of need.
4. Organize your major gift program with annual goals.
5. Manage an annual plan to reach your goals.
6. Provide and cultivate leadership.
7. Define the roles of board and staff in major gift commitments.
8. Coach volunteers to overcome their resistance when asking for gifts.
9. Respond positively to objections in your presentation.
10. Forge leadership partnerships with all areas of ministry.
11. Incorporate a planned giving message and invitation.
12. Always express appreciation.