

DID YOU KNOW...?

Thoughts on Stewardship and Church Capital Campaigns

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As I make my way around the conference I am hearing a few recurring themes, especially related to our current economic situation. There appears to be a notion among certain churches that they are having a tough enough time simply meeting operating budgets, such that the timing is just not right to even consider a capital campaign for expanded ministry. I want to present a variation of hope in that regard.

First of all, in my role as Capital Funds Developer, I do agree it is important to review the reality of the church's financial health as it relates to stewardship and the paying of apportionments reflecting our connectivity in ministry. Sometimes it is prudent for church leadership to take pause and recognize that the church is not ready to embark on a capital campaign. In those cases I will not recommend proceeding with a campaign doomed to fail or taking on a debt level that is beyond a reasonable capability to service.

But let me further say that, in my opinion, our financial health as a church is actually a reflection of our spiritual health. When our members are aligned with our disciple-making mission, then attendance and participation are prone to increase. As a result, the financial health naturally improves.

I have found some key points to relay from a study conducted by Bank of America and the Center on Philanthropy. Although the report examines the giving behavior of the wealthy before this current recession, it appears that many of the findings are relevant regardless of economic factors. I further conclude the findings may very well relate to all givers regardless of economic standing.

Some 70% of all Americans contribute to charitable causes. High net worth individuals volunteer for charitable organizations in significant numbers. There is a direct correlation between time spent in active involvement and money donated. Let's remember this beneficial connection in our local churches as we encourage our members to discover and utilize their gifts in a deeper commitment.

At times we might assume that the wealthy give because of tax savings and public recognition. The study showed different results. Over 80% of affluent donors surveyed give to charity in order to better their communities and approximately 70% said their loyalty to a cause led to their gifts. Only 5% claimed public recognition as a motivating factor.

On the negative side of the equation, 38% of the respondents said they discontinued their support to one or more charitable causes. The number one reason was that 58% said they no longer felt connected to the organization. Only 15% said they discontinued their gifts because of diminished financial resources.

Overall, the results are very encouraging. Data indicates that Americans are generous and thoughtful when it comes to charitable giving, and they give to purposes they are passionate about.

What this tells me is that emphasizing our mission is of utmost importance. We must remember that our mission is ongoing, whereas the current economic situation is a trough in a cycle that will turn upward again at some point. We cannot allow the current economic situation to veer us off course or even slow us down as we make disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the world. We can never allow our lack of dedication to purpose to sink us into a spiritual recession. When we articulate our mission in an exciting way followed by positive outcomes, I am faithful to think that the financial resources will be available even in the toughest of economic times.