



Episcopal Diocese of West Texas

Stewardship and Philanthropy: The Christian Strategy with Regard to Funding Mission by Terry Parsons

While we often talk about stewardship and philanthropy together when we talk about funding mission, they are different concepts.

Philanthropy

This approach relies upon the presentation of a "case" which outlines the needs being experienced by persons other than either the prospective donor or the solicitor. The solicitor presents the needs of the "other" and the ways in which they may be met or alleviated through the generosity of the donor. As the name implies, the appeal is to our love of humanity and desire to do good.

Key Elements

Primary strategy is focused on persuading a prospective donor to become involved in the mission of the organization doing the asking. The mission is the organization's. The money is the donor's. The assumption is that as a donor becomes more involved with the organization, the amount of their donations will increase. Organizations, therefore, look for opportunities to strengthen these relationships.

The relationship between solicitor and donor is very important. In deciding who should ask whom for a contribution, a key assumption is that it is important for peers to ask peers. In many communities, a "you support my cause and I'll support yours" quid pro quo is taken for granted.

Recognition Programs - These may take many forms, including: naming of buildings, rooms, positions (university teaching chairs); listing in publications and other donor lists; and a variety of physical acknowledgements such as plaques on furniture, art, trees, etc.

Stewardship

Stewardship teaches that all that we have and all that we are is a gift from God. We are, therefore, stewards of God's gifts during our lifetime. Discerning and carrying out God's purpose is the primary purpose of our lives. The gifts we have been given, time, talent, and money, are to be used for that purpose. The primary role of the church is to guide individuals in discernment of the mission for their lives and use of their resources in accomplishing it.

Key Elements

The primary objective of the organization (church) is to bring people into a closer relationship with God. Strengthening relationships with individuals is an important part of this but the goal is always to create an environment in which the relationship with God is strengthened.

The key strategy is to encourage individuals to discern the gifts God has given them and the work God is calling them to do. God is the source of the mission and the money. Both are gifts over which the giver exercises faithful stewardship.

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