

## Biggest Bang for the Buck

by The Rev. Dr. Leon Spencer



Last fall's pledge campaigns are now at an end. Vestries are looking at pledges and moving toward budgets. Dioceses are awaiting clarity about parish responses to "askings." The national church, no doubt, is anxiously looking at prospects for this year's income. And those of us who have worked in international church initiatives (as I did when I administered the African Anglican theological education network

in Nairobi a few years back) know well the feeling of uncertainty as we, dependent upon the generosity of our partners, await how this process works itself out.

I claim no expertise about the wisdom of one stewardship approach over another, as any church body – at any level – goes through the twists and turns of the budget process. I did enter the Episcopal Church during the heyday of the Alabama Plan. I was part of the Diocese of Alabama when we even took that show on the road to Namibia in 1983, and I admired the scriptural foundation of their approach. But others understand all of this far better than I.

Still, some caveats came to mind the other day when I heard someone say that, with tight budgets, decisions about priorities should be made with the "biggest bang for the buck" in mind. I understand the point, and when it essentially means that good stewardship correlates with some general standard of effectiveness in our ministries, that's fair enough. But when it correlates with the notion of *cost-effectiveness*, I have a problem, and it's a theological one.

The critical standard for all of our decisions within the community of faith, it seems to me, is related to mission and ministry: discerning God's mission in the world and our call to ministry to help fulfill God's mission in this place at this time. We may quite rightly differ about the nature of the call, but mission and ministry remains the standard. And that is surely as true of budget and finance as it is of any aspect of our life together as the people of God.

The "biggest bang for the buck" phrase is a quantifiable concept, as is cost-effectiveness. Living into God's dream isn't. If a rector wanted the biggest bang for the buck, he or she wouldn't spend hours with one parishioner in crisis; a deacon wouldn't work, sometimes for months if not years, with and for a homeless man in the neighborhood; a layperson wouldn't sit down, week after week, with a troubled youngster. And Jesus surely wouldn't have wandered off looking for the one lost sheep: it wouldn't have been cost-effective.

A "biggest bang for the buck" approach may seem real, a strategic choice to deal with the real world. But it's God's mission and our call to ministry that are real. That's where we are to begin – with every program, every ministry new or old, every budget. Indeed, with every day. †



The Rev. Dr. Leon Spencer recently retired as the first Dean of the School of Ministry of the Diocese of North Carolina. Ordained twenty years ago in the Diocese of Alabama, he has served as Dean of Studies of Trinity College in the Diocese of Nairobi, as Executive Director of the ecumenical Washington Office on Africa, and as Rector of St. Luke's in Brighton, Maryland. Among other vocational activities, Leon is now on the adjunct faculty at the Wake Forest University Divinity School. Contact him via e-mail at [lp Spencer@triad.rr.com](mailto:lp Spencer@triad.rr.com).

# Chairing Stewardship...

## A BLESSING!

by E. Linda Jeffries



A year or so ago my Rector asked me to chair the Finance Committee and lead that year's stewardship campaign. The request caught me completely unaware and instilled more than a little trepidation! Sure, I can manage my own checkbook, but to try to lead my fellow parishioners to contribute enough of their dollars to ensure a balanced budget really seemed to be a mountain to me.

When I voiced my concern about my ability to do this, my Rector casually informed me, "You'll learn." OK. I didn't want to say "no" to my Rector, my church or God, so I agreed. And so began the longest, hardest, and yet the most challenging and defining year of my life. I did learn, and I have learned so much that I would like to share a bit of it with others who might also feel overwhelmed at stewardship time.

I began by reading everything I could get my hands on. This included every piece of literature that even mentioned stewardship that had been mailed to our church the previous year. My Rector gleefully channeled piles of literature into my mailbox, and for several months I just waded through all the paper.

Then I found a mailing (reinforced by an e-mail from our diocesan Stewardship Officer, John Vernon Oaks) which was to make the biggest difference in my approach toward this entire "preparation" aspect of my mission. It was a copy of *Networking* the newsletter of The Episcopal Network for Stewardship, otherwise known as TENS. What a godsend! The writers of those articles must have known that total innocents would be reading them. They wrote in such a way that I could not only understand what they said, but be able to figure out how to translate that into St. John's church family life and action.

I have since read every word of every issue of *Networking* that I've received. I cannot begin to tell you how much of the information I have used – it's beyond measure. I learned about the emotional facet of giving in all its aspects, and how to think in the most positive and productive ways in order to help parishioners trust what was proposed, and then how to encour-

age them to do what they really wanted to do all along. I learned that I could follow my own instincts when writing letters to ask for dollars, time and talent as well as letters thanking my friends for their generosity. I learned how to show my fellow church members by example that we are all working together to bring the kingdom of God a bit closer to our building and to those to whom we minister, no matter who they are. So began my leadership of stewardship – time, talent and dollars.

We all know that this past financial year has been really hard. Our Vestry made the decision to keep our church budget at the *status quo* while figuring out how to minimize an anticipated deficit. We wanted to weather this financial storm and emerge fiscally responsible and in the black with a minimum of disruption in our daily life and ministry. Our Finance Committee cut the budget wherever possible, and then we forged ahead, determined to continue God's work in our town.

The Vestry decided that the only thing we could do to ensure that an anticipated deficit would be covered was to hold an Extraordinary Stewardship Effort (ESE). For two months last spring we educated our congregation about our financial goals, and then recruited and received three-year pledges (one third to be paid during each of the coming three years) intended to cover any deficit we might have. We hoped that this three-year "grace period" would cover us until the economy revived.

In the two-month campaign period we raised \$246,000! That is only \$4,000 below our goal. In addition to the monetary

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# To Know or Not To Know

by Robert P. Stephens, M.D.



Whenever I have spoken with clergy about financial giving in the parish, the subject inevitably comes up: Should the priest know what parishioners give, or not? Neither clergy nor vestries nor congregations seem to be of one mind on the issue. In a recent needs assessment in the Diocese of Ohio, priests were evenly split on the question, with half knowing the giving of their members and half not knowing. In my

experience, the rationales given by each side tend to hew to consistent themes.

Among those who favor knowing, the reasoning tends to be:

- ★ Knowing helps clergy plan future programming
- ★ The knowledge serves as a resource to use when funds are needed for “special projects”
- ★ What people give shows who is committed to and invested in the parish community
- ★ Even clergy who don’t know what people give still have a “feel” for who their big financial contributors are

And among those who favor not knowing:

- ★ The knowledge would affect how clergy treat people based on their giving
- ★ Parishioners may resent the priest prying into their financial lives

All of these reasons may be valid depending on the circumstances. For instance, there may indeed be clergy who would favor their larger donors over those of less means. In that case, ignorance of individual giving would be a help to the priest’s ministry. However, I would argue that keeping clergy in the dark about the giving patterns of the flock perpetuates the sinful idea that our money belongs to us. We make it. We spend it how we choose. And it’s nobody’s business but our own. This reticence to be more open about the financial aspect of our spiritual lives continues to stunt the spiritual growth not only of the individual but of our communities.

Wait...Did I just use “financial” and “spiritual” in the same sentence? Please humor me and read a little further.

I ask you to consider how you view the clergy-parishioner relationship. What are the priest’s responsibilities?

In general, we want a priest to care for us: to comfort us when we are in pain; to celebrate with us when we are joyful; to help us form a stronger bond with Jesus Christ. We expect our clergy to be at our bedside at times of illness, times when we are in one of those open-backed hospital gowns and times when perhaps we can’t leave our sickbed even to go to the commode. We expect them to be there when we have lost a spouse, or a parent, or a child. We expect the priest to celebrate with us when we marry, when we baptize a child, when that child graduates. We want, perhaps, an acknowledgment of our birthday or congratulations on a promotion. And then we want the priest to help us know God better. We want her sermon to speak to us and stir the Holy Spirit within us. We want his adult formation offerings to challenge our understanding of how God works in our lives. Help us get to Heaven!

We want all these things from our priest, but when it comes to our financial giving, stop! Slam goes the door. That’s off limits. Why? Ask yourself what it is about money that is so very different from all of the joyful, the painful, the embarrassing situations described above. Why is money something that cannot be discussed with our priest?

“Where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” This is true. Like it or not, I think if we really dig deep, we will admit it to ourselves.

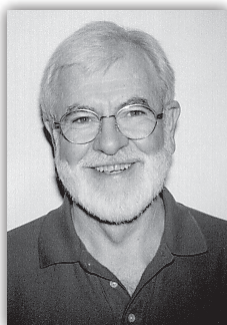
So, we want our priest to be close to us – but not that close. Are we perhaps afraid of what our giving says about us? Do we as parishioners not want our clergy to know what we give because we don’t want him/her to treat us differently because of it? Or are we just embarrassed about what our giving says about us?

Here is my pitch (I can hear the howling already!): Clergy **should** treat people differently based on their giving. Clergy shouldn’t treat everyone the same. Clergy treat us differently when we become adults, get married, have children, become ill, get divorced, lose a loved one. We need that ministering to be personal and special and specific to our circumstances. Likewise, effective pastoral care takes our financial situation into account.

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# Outreach... *to the End of a Leash!*

by John Vernon Oaks



For our 41st wedding anniversary, on February 16, 2004, Beth and I gave each other tickets to a Dog Talk Conference. We'd had dogs nearly all our married lives so we thought, "Why not?" The conference changed our lives. We decided to get Tobey, our German Shepherd, trained as a therapy dog.

Tobey and I became a certified therapy team. Beth had hinted for a Papillion, so we went to "just look" at a two-pound puppy. On the way to "just look," Beth declared the puppy's name would be Ariel. Now we look at all nine pounds of Ariel every day, three years later! Each of us is now certified with Ariel as an AAT team.



Beth Bittick Oaks and Ariel make a new friend.

Countless times Beth and I have seen the glow our dogs put in the eyes of the ill and the elderly, and grieving kids. Dogs don't laugh when a word is mispronounced while a child is reading to them in a library reading program. Pure joy is what we see in the faces of nursing home residents as they pet our dogs with hands that once petted their own animals. We see children, no longer practicing good social skills after the death of a parent or sibling, rejoin society with the help of our dogs.

Beth wanted to "just look" at another Papillion puppy. On the way to "just look" she said, "We'll name her Mariska." On December 7, Mariska – all five pounds of her – celebrated her fourth birthday with us.

Due to Beth's health, we could no longer keep Tobey, who had been bred by the monks of New Skete in New York. We had been on the waiting list for her for over two years before she came to us. Tobey took to being a therapy dog as if that was why she was born. What could we do? We loved Tobey but could no longer keep her.

We knew our friend, The Rev. Lisa Cressman, also wanted a New Skete dog and also had been on the waiting list for over two years when she was notified that one was available. Alas, at that time her circumstances did not allow her to take one. We called Lisa. She and Tobey are now a certified therapy team in Minnesota! Beth and I are convinced that God made us foster parents for Tobey. We were to keep her until Lisa was ready for her.

Beth has had a rough year. Her faith, the love showered on her by friends and her little dogs Ariel and Mariska have kept a smile on her face. When we began our therapy dog ministry, neither one of us had a clue that we would receive far more benefit than those we visited!

Stewardship is what we do with what we've got...*all the time*, including sharing our pets! Think of it as outreach. Outreach...to the end of a leash! ✝

John Vernon Oaks is the Stewardship Officer in the Diocese of Indianapolis. He is also a stewardship consultant and serves on the Board of Directors of TENS. To contact John Vernon, send e-mail to [oaks@indydio.org](mailto:oaks@indydio.org).

# THAT'S GRACE?

by The Rev. Fred Jessett

It's noisy in the bar. The newspaper reporter and the woman lean close to each other to be heard. The reporter excitedly tells her about this homeless man he has just accompanied to hear an orchestra play Beethoven. The homeless man has such talent for music, and love of music, that the reporter is just blown away by how deeply the music affected his friend. It gave the reporter an overpowering sense that there's "something higher out there – I'd never experienced it. I don't even know what you (bleeping) call it." The woman says something he misses. He says "What?"

She leans in and says, "Grace."

He says, "That's grace?"

"Yeah," she says.



I'd already decided to write a column about what grace is, and then Kris and I watched the movie "The Soloist." It's the true story of *Los Angeles Times* reporter Steve Lopez and the amazing street musician Nathaniel Ayers. The scene above is from that movie. It's a beautiful story of someone encountering God's grace in what might seem an unlikely place.

So with that scene in mind, I did some homework. The Outline of the Faith in *The Book of Common Prayer* says, "Grace is God's favor towards us, unearned and undeserved ..." I checked my theological references, where I read a lot of theological language about grace, and found some disagreement among theologians through the centuries about when and how grace works, but the prayer book seems to be right.

I read about types of grace – Prevenient Grace and Habitual or Sanctifying Grace, and then I found Actual Grace. That's what I was looking for, actual grace. Not a theological concept, but the real thing "on the hoof." God moving in a person or a situation, to bring about something good. God's love in action in a particular person, place and time.

The greatest instance of grace is God's coming in Jesus Christ to suffer and die and rise again, and the sacraments are signs of that grace coming to us. They're not, however, the only place grace shows up. Actual grace comes whenever and to

whomever God chooses to give it. One reference noted: "It may exist in the unbaptized."

In "The Soloist" that grace appears beautifully in a scene in which Ayers beds down to sleep in the street and says, "I believe these children of God are going to be okay tonight. They're going to sleep and dream as humans do." He then slowly prays the Lord's Prayer while the camera pans over the whole scene of homeless men and women in the street and in a shelter being fed, finding a safe place to sleep, interacting with each other helpfully and peacefully (mostly). It is a scene of grace at work.

Grace is another word for God's love showing itself in human life. When we truly let God's love flow through us to others, there will be grace. Also we may meet grace unexpectedly when others let that love move them to action. We don't know when, where, or with whom God's grace will appear next, but we know grace does happen. †

*The Rev. Fred Jessett writes a regular monthly column, "Grace Happens," which is featured in several diocesan newspapers. His book Remembering Grace is now available from Forward Movement. Having served as a priest in the dioceses of South Dakota, Montana, Spokane and Olympia, Fred retired in 1997. He started Good Samaritan Episcopal Church in Sammamish, WA, by going door-to-door to 1240 homes looking for the unchurched, and at his retirement the parish had 276 baptized members and an average Sunday attendance of 118. To contact Fred, e-mail to [jessett@earthlink.net](mailto:jessett@earthlink.net).*

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# OUR HOUSE OF WORSHIP

## Who is minding your house?

by Liz Osborne



The lightbulbs are changed. The leaky faucet is fixed. A few other tasks may be completed on an *ad hoc* basis.

But what about the rest of the building? How is the electrical system behind those lightbulbs? Or the plumbing that leads to that faucet? Sometimes a Vestry member is “stuck” as the Building Steward

for one year. If there is any money left over

after salaries and programs, maybe something big is done. But for the most part, unless the congregation is large enough to have a paid administrator and sufficient funds are set aside for major maintenance, our beloved house of worship slides into genteel shabbiness, if not downright neglect.

Caring for our church facilities should be a priority. We want God’s house to be a pleasing place for worship, to reflect His honor and glory. We want a safe and secure place for our families to carry out programs and ministries. We want an inviting place to greet visitors—the number one reason visitors do not return is dingy or poorly maintained bathrooms! And now, with the passage of the Genesis Covenant Resolution at General Convention, we need to assess and reduce our carbon footprint.

Taking the necessary steps to upgrade our church and other parish buildings can be daunting, whether it is a traditional church or a renovated house, an office/meeting room/classroom building, a school or a camp.

First impressions count! The first time I entered Christ Church, I looked around at the white walls, dark wood wainscoting and solid wood beam ceiling, then turned to my husband and said, “This is where I’m supposed to be.” A few years later, an investment account was discovered, a legacy specifically designated for maintaining the building. Funds were used to buy new pews and re-roof the church. Several years after that, the Vestry decided there should be a designated Building Stewardship Committee.

When asked to be the committee chairperson, I agreed. Although I had no experience with remodels or major maintenance, I did know how to manage a large project, whether it was writing a book or organizing an event. I knew from working in healthcare that a building was much like the human body, full of different

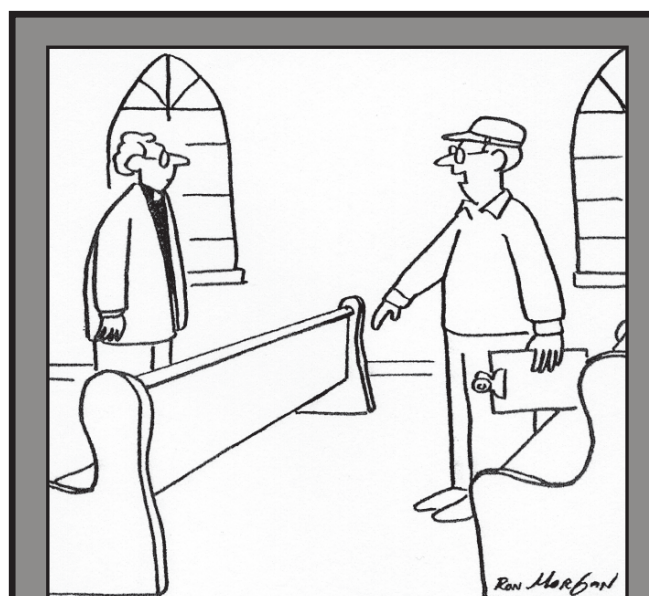
systems that have to work well together. The Vestry and everyone in the congregation knew major work was needed and gave their full support.

So, where to start? If nothing has been done in a very long time, it is easy to feel overwhelmed. Instead, think of the project as a series of smaller projects that may or may not be done concurrently.

### RESEARCH

Start with research: what has been done and what has been left undone. Go through the last twenty years—yes, twenty years!—of Vestry minutes for discussions specifically related to building maintenance. Set up categories, such as Accessibility, Carpets, Electrical, Keys, Painting and Plumbing. When you find

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**“The carpet under the first 10 rows of pews doesn’t need replacing, Father. Looks like it’s never been touched by a human foot.”**

from *JoyfulNoiseletter.com* ©Ron Morgan  
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Our House of Worship – continued from page 6

a topic in the Vestry minutes, make a note under the appropriate category of the date, the nature of the discussion and the action that was taken. Do not be surprised if things like re-keying the building were approved several times, but nothing happened because no one volunteered for the task.

While researching minutes and other archives, talk to parishioners responsible for different ministries. What challenges do they face working in their designated areas? By the time this research is finished, you understand the ongoing issues and have the beginnings for a *Building/Grounds Manual*.

The next step is to walk through the building with a list of questions to answer. Since an electrical fire can be the number one threat to your building, look at the electrical system and consider these questions: How old is the electrical system? When was the electrical panel installed? Has an electrician ever opened the panels to see if there is evidence of problems? Does the panel have fuses or breakers? Is the panel so old that parts are no longer available, leaving the church without power for days or weeks if it fails? Are there code upgrade issues?

The same in-depth questions should be asked about every major system. It may be necessary to have engineers evaluate Electrical, Mechanical and Structural integrity. For other categories, such as Painting and Carpeting, the current condition will be easier to assess.

## REPORTING

When all the information is in, report back to the Vestry. Prepare two reports. One is a *Building Survey Results Report* that identifies all the different categories considered and a one-line

status of each category. This gives the Vestry an overview of the building and its systems. The *Building Priority Report* is a prioritized list of the needed projects, ranging from Safety Needs to Future Needs Requiring Major Funding. Now the Vestry has a plan for thoughtfully and thoroughly addressing the major maintenance needs of the church, and the congregation has a list of specific projects to warrant a capital campaign.

## PLANNING

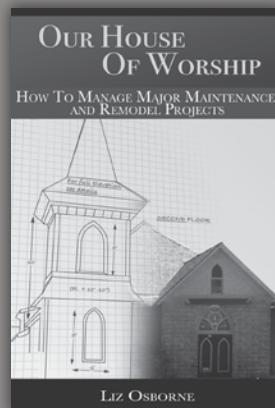
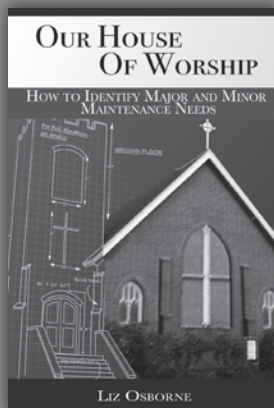
After the Vestry approves a timeline for addressing the projects and funding has been arranged, it is time for the Building Stewardship Committee members to roll up their sleeves and start the next phase.

Plan. Plan. Plan.

This cannot be emphasized enough. This is not *your* house, it is the *congregation's* house. This is not *your* money, it is the *congregation's* money. Planning will save false steps and wasted money.

When it comes to planning, some initial questions need to be answered. For example: Is an architect needed? Only if the project changes the “footprint” of the building. Will a designer be hired, or will a working committee with members representing fellowship activities plan space use and colors? What do you look for in a contractor? What should be included in a bid? Where should all the “stuff” that has to be moved out of a space be stored? Some projects, such as painting a room, will be straightforward. Others, such as upgrading the security system, re-keying the building, or a full-scale remodel will take in-depth planning.

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**Our House of Worship: How to Identify Major and Minor Maintenance Needs** (\$14.95) and **Our House of Worship: Managing Major Maintenance and Remodel Projects** (\$23.95), both by Liz Osborne, are available from the Episcopal Bookstore, 3837 Stone Way NE, Seattle WA 98103. To order these new resources, go to [www.episcopalbookstore.com](http://www.episcopalbookstore.com) or call 206-545-0500.

*Chairing Stewardship – continued from page 2*

pledges, a parishioner who is an artist donated 100 prints each of two of his pictures. With all proceeds from the sale of these pictures designated for the ESE campaign, one quarter of them have already been sold, and we have three years to sell the rest.

Doing so well with our goal has revitalized our congregation. There is a sense of togetherness in our building as we all work to keep our family healthy and positive and to continue our ministries. People are encouraging each other to try new things, to participate, to ask for and also to give help where needed. God is truly working through us to bring his kingdom a bit closer. As I write this article, our 2010 fall pledge campaign is half over, and we're halfway to the goal of our *status quo* budget.

Stewardship? I'm not frightened of that word anymore. I believe that God, through my Rector's urging, gave me the privilege of leading this church family in their endeavors. I have been enriched and strengthened by all I have learned from study and from the ministries, trust and encouragement of my fellow parishioners and friends.

Stewardship is doing everything we can with everything we have all the time. I am confident that my parish is rising to this challenge, and that we will continue to be blessed as a church family. ✝

*Linda Jeffries, a cradle Episcopalian, is a member of St. John's Episcopal Church in Lafayette, Indiana (Diocese of Indianapolis) where she has sung in the choir for her 36 years of membership. She has served numerous times on the Vestry and as a Diocesan Convention Delegate as well as several on parish committees, and is currently completing another Vestry term as Chairperson of the Finance/Stewardship Committee. Linda and her husband Arliss have been married 44 years and are active in their local civic theater plus a religious theater group, Chancel Players of Lafayette. Being retired also allows them to spend even more time with their family (three married children plus five grandchildren) and to enjoy extensive travel, including a month of study at St. George's College in Jerusalem. To contact Linda, e-mail [lindajeffries43@yahoo.com](mailto:lindajeffries43@yahoo.com).*

## You MAKE IT HAPPEN

Because of YOU, The Episcopal Network for Stewardship exists.

**YOU make it happen with your gifts.  
YOU make it happen with your grants.  
YOU make it happen with your membership.  
YOU make it happen because you believe  
that our success will help the Church fulfill its potential.**

**Join The Episcopal Network for Stewardship.  
Consider including TENS in your will. Send us a gift.  
Then, because of YOU, we will succeed.**



*Our House of Worship – continued from page 7*

## COMMUNICATION

Communicating will keep the Vestry, ministry leaders, and the congregation on the same page with you from beginning to end.

Communicate. Communicate. Communicate.

Tell them what you are going to do. Tell them what you are doing. Tell them what you have done.

Write reports to the Vestry, write reports for the monthly newsletter, write reports for the weekly bulletin. Be available at Vestry meetings for questions. Be prepared to give impromptu reports to the congregation during Sunday service announcements and to meet with interested groups. Be upbeat about all the wonderful and exciting things that are happening around the church, a cheerleader for the project.

Research, reporting, planning, and communicating are well worth the time. The result is a clean, well-maintained church facility that is light and bright, radiating energy and enthusiasm: a place that welcomes parishioners, invites visitors to return and honors God in His house of worship. ✝

*Liz Osborne serves as the Building Steward for major maintenance at Christ Episcopal Church in Seattle's University District and was project manager for the Undercroft remodel that included asbestos abatement, renovating bathrooms and creating new storage areas. The author of three healthcare administration tomes and four novels, she has written Our House of Worship: How to Identify Major and Minor Maintenance Needs and Our House of Worship: Managing Major Maintenance and Remodel Projects to help others renovate and maintain their church facilities.*

# Wealth Dominators: Transition to Power through Kingdom Economics

Book Review by Bruce Rockwell



Several years ago I heard the Methodist theologian Douglas Meeks, author of *God the Economist*, describe with great richness two economies, God's economy and the marketplace economy. He explained that the assumption of God's economy is abundance, while the assumption of the marketplace economy is scarcity. The apostles, he said, are the messengers of God's economy, while the messengers of the marketplace economy are those

involved in marketing and advertising who try to sell us the false notion that by purchasing the product they are selling we will find fulfillment and happiness.

Kimberly A. Matthews, in a new book entitled *Wealth Dominators: Transition to Power through Kingdom Economics*, makes a similar argument. Matthews, a member of Living Waters Christian Fellowship in Newport News, Virginia, holds an MBA from Regent University and is an emerging entrepreneur and business consultant in the Hampton Roads region of Virginia. While her academic training may be in business and finance, her faith in God's economy comes through loudly and clearly throughout this short (just over 100 pages) book.

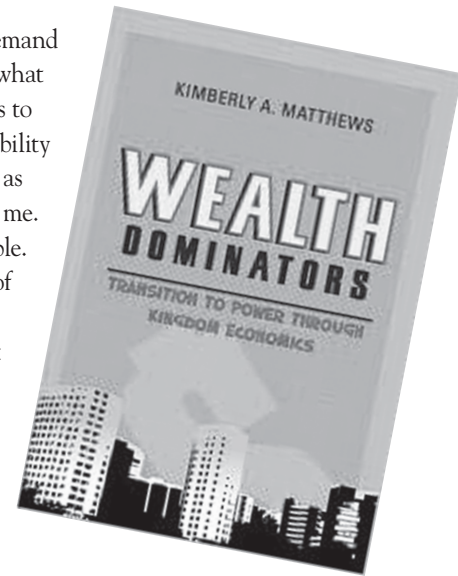
"Kingdom wealth," she writes, "is not the same as the world's idea of wealth. Kingdom wealth includes money and possessions but is not solely money and possessions." We have a distorted idea of the words *prosperity* and *wealth*, she argues. "Prosperity according to the kingdom of God is different from prosperity according to the world." She makes other good points, such as, "If the gift means nothing to you, it means nothing to God." And "The kingdom of God says our opportunity to prosper is when we choose to give."

While this reader found much in *Wealth Dominators* with which he could resonate, certain aspects were found to be a bit troubling. Or at least had me asking myself if the author was preaching a "prosperity theology." For example, at one point she writes: "If I have a new business, my first inclination may be to sow a seed of money to bring increase for my business. When I do this, I limit my possibilities. My mindset has to be that I am sowing my favor, my treasure, to receive God's treasure. When I

sow now, I am placing a demand to receive not money, but what I really need: opportunities to come my way. I need the ability to recognize opportunities as they are made available to me. Opportunities are intangible. Through the recognition of opportunities and the wisdom of God, I can convert that into increase for my business."

Matthews concludes, in a section entitled "Enter the Promise," that God's kingdom is indeed rooted in abundance, and that giving is a key to prosperity in the kingdom of God. She suggests that the kingdom of God is not a physical place but a condition of the mind. "As we change our thinking, our behaviors will change, and consequently our lifestyles will change." And, she says, "If we could grasp the passion God has for us, we would understand that nothing is impossible, that we can do anything and make it through anything because our love is so strong."

The author concludes on a very optimistic note, claiming that the kingdom of God is at hand for those who put their trust in God's economy and not the marketplace economy. The book closes with a passage from Isaiah: "And they shall call them the Holy People, the Redeemed of the Lord, and you shall be called Sought out, a City not Forsaken." (Isaiah 62:12, NKJV) †



Bruce Rockwell serves as Assistant to the Bishop for Stewardship in the Episcopal Diocese of Western Massachusetts. A former President of the Board of Directors of TENS, he has served as a stewardship consultant, mentor and presenter for more than two decades, working with dioceses and parishes throughout the US and in Canada. His personal stewardship story, *Spirituality and Money: 7 Questions That Saved My Spiritual Life*, is TENS' best-selling publication. To contact Bruce, e-mail [brockwell@comcast.net](mailto:brockwell@comcast.net).

To Know or Not To Know – continued from page 3

Knowledge of our giving helps clergy take better care of us. For instance, an increase in giving may indicate success at work – a cause for celebration! – or deepening of faith and a journey toward the tithe which requires more intensive pastoral support. Likewise, a decrease in giving may indicate loss of a job, marital problems, dissatisfaction with the parish community that the individual can't bring him/herself to voice, or perhaps some other pastoral issue.

In addition, clergy knowledge of giving helps avoid what I call the “Pharisee Effect.” Without specific knowledge of giving, clergy rely on appearances. So, for instance, the executive is assumed to be a large donor and his/her opinions are, perhaps, given more consideration. Meanwhile the widow on a fixed income is assumed to be making a small contribution to the financial life of the parish. In reality, the opposite may be true. And certainly when one takes a proportionate giving perspective, the widow may, in fact, be making a much larger relative contribution to the parish.

We should treat our financial lives as a part of who we are, something we share with those with whom we have a pastoral relationship. Walling off that part of us prevents our clergy from ministering to us effectively, and ultimately it hampers our growth as Christians.

I understand that openness about personal finances is counter-cultural. And anxiety-provoking. Some readers have probably already turned this page with a snort. But Jesus was counter-cultural. In fact, everything about being a Christian is counter-cultural. We have to swim against the tide of popular culture just to get to church every week.

If we want a closer relationship with our clergy and a closer relationship with God, we need to get more open and honest with both of them about our money. We can't hide anything from God, so in the end the only ones we're kidding are ourselves. And I don't think God is laughing. †

*Robert Stephens, M.D., is a pediatrician living and working in Seguin, Texas. He also serves as a stewardship consultant for congregations seeking to enhance the annual giving of their members through discipleship and education. He welcomes discussions about stewardship in general and annual giving in particular. Bob can be reached via e-mail at [rpstephens11@gmail.com](mailto:rpstephens11@gmail.com).*



## Editor's note:

“Should the clergy know what people pledge?” is perhaps the most often-asked question that has come to TENS in our fifteen years of ministry. A typical example of such an inquiry is this e-mail message received by Executive Director Tom Gossen from a rector in North Carolina:

Have you done any thinking about whether and/or why a rector should or should not know who is pledging in the congregation and how much? I've always believed that the rector should have access to the pledge information and know who is current on their pledges, as this is both a sacramental and spiritual indication of one's faith commitments and spiritual life. If the rector is not privy to the financial pledge information in a parish, it would be impossible to conduct a ministry of financial stewardship.

Tom replied:

Please know that I share your thinking on this matter. I also have found that those folks who oppose the rector having access to this info are generally afraid that they will be “found out” as having a “big mouth but small pledge,” as my friend Fr. Ron Reed notes from his experience. My guess is that you are asking this question because of some resistance you are experiencing in your current parish. TENS' newsletter, *Networking*, has several articles on this subject that will provide you with some “meat” to frame a conversation with your vestry.

In addition to Bob Stephens' article “To Know or Not To Know,” TENS has available additional resources that address this important issue. Among them is the timeless three-part series, “Knowing What People Give” by The Rev. Kirk Kubicek, published in *Networking* in April, July and October 1998 as part of “Clergy & Money” which he authored for ten years. Members of TENS can use their username and password to print out these three issues of *Networking* from the archives located at <http://tens.org>.

Non-members can call TENS at 800-699-2669 to request a copy of this resource. Better yet: Call us to join TENS – The Episcopal Network for Stewardship – and gain access to the *Networking* archives plus many more great resources!

– Ann Elizabeth Bishop

# What TENS Means to Me

*A Reflection by The Rev. Susan B. Snook,  
Priest Missioner at The Episcopal Church of the Nativity in Phoenix, AZ*



I attended a TENS conference which changed my whole outlook on stewardship and helped me understand that stewardship is something I do with my whole life, out of gratitude to God, who has given me everything in my life. Changing my understanding has helped me teach this new outlook of gratitude to my parishioners.



Sign up for TENS' E-newsletter at <http://tens.org> to receive important resources for nurturing generosity.



TRAINING + ENCOURAGING  
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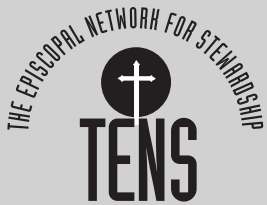
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# ★ UPCOMING EVENTS

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## **Final Affairs Fair, Saturday, February 13, 2010,**

**Seattle, WA.** A workshop designed to help you put your personal affairs in order as a gift to those you love. Well-respected estate planning attorney Tim Burkart provides an overview of Estate Planning 101; The Rev. Canon Rebecca McClain, Canon Missioner at St. Mark's Cathedral, explores end-of-life issues and how the Church is here to support you and your family; Carl Knirk, Canon for Planned Giving/Stewardship in the Diocese of Olympia provides tools and a handbook to help you imagine and design your legacy. All in three-and-a-half hours with coffee and muffins, from 9 a.m.-12:30 p.m. in Bloedel Hall at St. Mark's Cathedral, 1245 10th Ave. East. For more information, contact Carl Knirk at [cknirk@ecww.org](mailto:cknirk@ecww.org), 206-325-4200, ext. 2016, or visit [www.ecwwgift.org](http://www.ecwwgift.org).

## **2010 TENS Conference, July 29-31, Indianapolis, IN.**

TENS' 15th Annual International Leadership Conference, Pre-conference for diocesan stewardship staff and anniversary celebration. Hosted by the Diocese of Indianapolis, co-sponsors currently being recruited to participate in planning and help with underwriting. Additional information to be posted as it

becomes available. For more details now, e-mail [tom@tens.org](mailto:tom@tens.org) or call 800-699-2669 (toll-free in US & Canada) or 316-686-0470.

## **Women's Perspective on Money and Spirituality**

offers a variety of conferences and Immersion Trips. For information visit their web site [www.womensperspective.org](http://www.womensperspective.org). Women's Perspective provides transformational education for women seeking to understand their spiritual and economic power.

## **TENS will publicize your events in this space and**

★ **on our website.** Please contact Tom Gossen or Ann Elizabeth Bishop by calling the TENS office or sending e-mail to [tens@tens.org](mailto:tens@tens.org). *Networking* is a bimonthly publication, so send your information as early as possible.

## **Sponsorship/Hosting Opportunities for future**

**TENS events are available.** If interested in participation in the planning of a national or regional event, please contact Tom Gossen at [tom@tens.org](mailto:tom@tens.org).

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*Networking*, the official newsletter of The Episcopal Network for Stewardship, Inc., is published six times annually. Requests for membership information are welcomed. For information you may: Visit our home page on the Internet at: <http://TENS.org> • Telephone 800-699-2669 (toll-free in US and Canada) or 316-686-0470 • Write to 345 S. Hydraulic, Wichita, KS 67211 • Fax: 316-686-9102 • E-mail: [TENS@TENS.org](mailto:TENS@TENS.org) © 2010 The Episcopal Network for Stewardship ~ We know you're going to copy material from this publication. Please acknowledge this newsletter as the source document so that others may find their way to become members of TENS. And if you yourself are not a member, please join TENS today. TENS is an independent, not-for-profit 501(c)3 corporation. ♻️ Printed in the USA

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