



WHAT MOTIVATES PEOPLE TO GIVE

*Adapted from a Commentary By Bishop Robert Schnase, October 9, 2008
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Why do people give to the church? Recently, I read an article by Dr. Clif Christopher of the Lewis Center for Church Leadership. His ministry focuses on stewardship for congregations, and he's recently completed a book with Abington Press, *Not Your Parents' Offering Plate*.

According to Dr. Christopher, the three main reasons people give are: belief in the mission, regard for leadership, and fiscal responsibility.

First, people have to see a connection between their giving and the church mission. How is this gift changing lives, helping children and the poor? Every sermon, article, and note of appreciation about giving should focus on the church's mission. Dr. Christopher reminds us - people want to make the world a better place; they want to help people. And, they want to know their giving makes a difference.

Second, people give generously when they hold church leaders in high regard. Confidence in the vision and competence of the leadership fosters generosity. Every non-profit includes "fundraiser" in the CEO's job description. You can't lead a church without being involved with finances, knowing the donor base and feeling comfortable talking about giving.

Third, people give generously when they perceive leaders deal responsibly and transparently with fiscal matters. Dr. Christopher cleverly writes, "The church is the only non-profit that believes the more you cry that you are sinking, the more people will give to you." This approach does not work. Sending out a letter that says, "We've outspent our money so please help!" simply does not build trust or foster generosity!

Compare that to, "Thank you for giving generously last year. We used your money well to change lives (tell how!); and if you give more this year, we'll be able to have an even bigger impact."

We're entering the season when many congregations are preparing for stewardship appeals and commitments. Take time to think about these three reasons people give. Consider how to permeate your church with a true sense of purpose, a clear vision from leadership and a system that communicates responsibility and trust.

For information on the Lewis Center for Church Leadership, visit www.churchleadership.com. Bishop Schnase is the Missouri Episcopal leader. This commentary was excerpted from his blog at www.fivepractices.org.