



Generosity as a Spiritual Discipline

by Rev. Andrew Warner

Dear Colleagues,

Rick Dunham, chair of the Giving USA Foundation, recently spoke about philanthropy in faith communities. Drawing on research by the Giving USA Foundation, he spoke to the many ways charitable giving continues to change in our country. But then he turned to talking about generosity as a spiritual discipline.

Dunham chose as his text the story of the Israelites after Moses received the Ten Commandments. God told the people to conduct a fundraising campaign in order to build the Tabernacle. "Tell the Israelites to take for me an offering; from all whose hearts prompt them to give you shall receive the offering for me" (Exodus 25: 2).

The next several chapters laid out in great detail all the different ways the people came together, offered their skills, and created the Tabernacle. Everyone shared a gift. In fact, within Judaism the categories of work prohibited on the Sabbath come from these chapters: observant Jews abstain from any of the 39 categories of work required to build the Tabernacle (e.g. mending, selecting, planting). God called forth generosity in a way that allowed everyone to participate and know that their gift mattered.

God still calls us to generosity. Through our generosity we create; turning our awe and wonder, our hopes and dreams, into programs and ministries, places of welcome and transformation. Tabernacles in our own settings where God can be experienced.

I am organizing three programs to equip pastors and lay leaders for the work of generosity (see below). Please consider joining in one of these programs in preparation for your annual campaign in support of your congregation. These programs will help invite everyone to make a gift to your congregation.

Together we can make generosity part of the heart of our discipleship.

Yours in faith,
Andrew

PS: Dunham spoke as part of a presentation on research lessons from the Giving USA 2019 Report. If interested in learning more, you might start with [this short video summary](#).

Annual Campaign 101

Webinar: August 7, 2019,

Designed for pastors and lay leaders planning an annual pledge campaign, we will explore ways to create an effective campaign using the materials provided by the national setting of the UCC. The webinar will include developing a campaign calendar, key messaging, recruiting advocates, engaging lay leadership in making early pledges, and thanking donors. [Register here](#)

From Good to Great Annual Campaigns: A Stewardship Bootcamp

August 11, 3pm - 7pm, First Congregational Church, Eau Claire, WI (\$10 registration)

Insights from the best practices of philanthropy can revitalize congregational annual campaigns. The workshop will look at three practical steps: engaging key leaders in developing a “case statement” for the congregation, planning for ways to communicate the case in the lead up to Pledge Sunday and throughout the year afterwards, and the importance of gratitude throughout the process. [Register here](#)

Extravagant Generosity as a Spiritual Practice

Webinar series: Introductory Session August 6, 10:00 -11:30 am, four additional sessions October 8, 15, 22 and 29 at 10:00 - 11:30 am

Generosity doesn't just touch our wallet but engages our soul. We can more deeply consider the spiritual implications of giving, moving beyond a short blessing in worship or celebrating that “God loves a cheerful giver.” How do we think about growth, challenge, crisis, and transformation in our giving? Through a series of four webinars, we will discuss the Book of Ruth and John 10 in order to plan an off-lectionary sermon series for a stewardship campaign (ideally Oct. 20 - Nov. 10). Each webinar will help participants plan for a Sunday of the campaign. This sermon series will root the pledge campaign in a broader focus on the spiritual practice of generosity. [Register here](#)