

INTRODUCTION



WHAT IF I TOLD YOU fundraising isn't really about money? Because it's not. Really. Fundraising is about preparing your donors to respond. However, preparing your donors or members to be joyful and generous givers is the most daunting current challenge facing most faith-based churches and organizations.

Fundraising has been for decades and remains today one of the greatest challenges the church is facing, and it seems paradoxical that in a time of such great affluence the church continues to struggle with giving more than any time in recent history.

In almost all denominations the giving indicators are down, with many churches having to close or merge due to declining memberships and the consequent inability to pay the cost of ministry. We have all heard the stats:

the United Church closes another congregation each week, and the Anglican Church is trending toward zero membership by 2040. That's less than 20 years away and COVID has likely accelerated that timeline. That's not just a few churches. That's the entire denomination membership. Gone.

In addition, many ministers and church leaders have great difficulty dealing with money and stewardship issues in their preaching and teaching ministry. You really don't have to go too far to see this in operation. The result: many people in your organization or church do not really understand basic biblical principles of stewardship in relation to discipleship and how that impacts our value systems and our giving. So when church members are giving out of value systems that are not Christian-focused, giving is at minimal charitable levels, if at all. And to make matters worse, we don't seem to know how to *ask* properly!

It sounds bleak, and to be honest, for many it is. But amid all these closures and decline in giving and

attendance for *some* churches, *others* are growing and thriving! How are they doing it? Why can't we do that in our church? I know you've asked yourself that question. Many church leaders have. The answers are in this book.

I wrote this book for people who are not yet ready to give up on their church. People who believe God's church can and will survive, as it has for thousands of years. We are being challenged right now, just as our predecessors were in the past. There are countless stories in the Old Testament of the challenges the people of God faced, and often failed to meet. But God never gave up on his covenant with his people, and His church lives on.

If you want to be a part of the future of God's church, the strategies outlined in this book can help you grow a vibrant culture of giving in your organization or congregation, a culture of giving based on industry best practices framed in discipleship, stewardship and the joy of Christian giving. This book will challenge you and ask hard questions about how giving and money are

addressed by your organization or church. Why does the church think we don't have to ask for money? Why do we feel bad talking about money in the church? Are we really preparing our members properly to be asked for money?

Perhaps we feel as if we're offending them when we talk about money because we really don't know how to ask for money appropriately in faith-based organizations. The number one reason people say they do not give is because they have never been asked. So why don't we ask for money in the church? In fact, we don't ask because we are afraid of the rejection and/or we don't feel confident with our level of knowledge in asking.

We've all heard the old accusation of, "All the church wants is money," or "All the church wants is *my* money." Yet nothing could be further from the truth. The church doesn't want *your* money; rather God wants you to find peace and community in the church and your faith, so you can experience blessing and gratitude.

WHO IS THIS BOOK FOR?

This book is for staff, lay leaders, volunteers and anyone who is interested or involved with resource development in a faith-based organization. It takes the principles of fundraising and applies them to faith-based organizations and churches in a holistic, proactive and biblically-appropriate way. Much of what has been learned in mainstream fundraising can be incorporated alongside your existing stewardship strategies in a meaningful and biblical way. Do it right and you will increase involvement, engagement, and additional revenue for ministry.

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Each of the sections can be read independently of one another. If you have a pretty good handle on some of the topics and just want to read the chapters of new information, you can do that without having to read the whole book.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

The first two sections deal with basic principles and strategies in fundraising that most churches and faith-based organizations should have in place, some of the current issues facing the church as a whole, leadership in the church and some of the challenges faith-based leaders deal with daily.

The third section is based on Ben's first book, *The 7 Myths of Church Fundraising*, and looks at some of the beliefs people in the church have about money, budgets and other crucial issues affecting church finances. The fourth section looks at demographics and takes a deep dive into how this relates to giving and volunteering across the cohorts.

The next few sections will challenge you to look at the trends in your church and how your organization approaches budgeting. Then I address the attributes of a successful annual fund strategy, and the importance and impact of stewardship education based in faith and discipleship.

The next section moves into strategies that may not be so familiar to some churches: how to use grants in your funding strategy, sponsorships and events and how to incorporate industry best practices in them, tribute giving and other non-mainstream approaches, and up-and-coming trends in giving. Then we look at online and digital giving and social media and

communication strategies, two interrelated but not mutually dependent strategies. Whether or not you engage in online giving or not, you still need to have a good communications plan.

The next section is all about transformational giving through major gifts and legacy giving... transformational giving because truly, in generosity the giver and the receiver should be transformed, particularly giving grounded in faith and obedience.

Our final section focuses on recognizing and appreciating our donors and building a strong volunteer base while recognizing that our donors and volunteers are often one and the same.

THE GENESIS OF THIS BOOK

This book is based on the life work of my father, Ben Harder and his personal ministry to further the work of God. Saved at 17 years old, he dedicated the rest of his life to working in ministry. After pastoring a few churches, he landed at the then Winnipeg Bible College (WBC), now Providence College, and quickly became its first Vice President of Development.

He told a story about the first mail appeal he did during those early days in fundraising at the college. The goal was reasonable, so he applied some simple math and calculated if everyone on the list gave \$25, they would meet the goal. The letter went out saying just that, and he ended it with, "Please keep us in your prayers." The response they got didn't even cover the postage of the mailing, but he did get a bunch of letters letting him know that people were keeping the college in their prayers.

Prayer is important of course, Ben would add, and then would share valuable lessons he learned from that experience. First of all, if you want money, ask for money; don't ask for prayer. Second, people have varying levels of ability to give, so asking for a unitized amount is good math, but poor stewardship.

Ben stayed at WBC for many years and gained valuable insight and experience in fundraising that he took with him to other executive roles. This

eventually led him to opening his own consulting practice focused specifically on faith-based fundraising and growing financially-healthy churches and organizations. During that time, he wrote three books which have been incorporated into this book with updated information and additional strategies.

Ben was also a theologian, and taught it for many years at the college concurrently to his development role. But he mostly referred to himself as a fundraising practitioner. Why? Because that was the ministry God placed on his heart. To help faith-based organizations do better when it came to finances and talking about giving and money in the church. And he did it for decades, in Canada and the United States.

I worked with Ben at Harder & Associates as a consultant for over ten years and am grateful for the knowledge and experience I learned working with him. On a personal level, it helped me understand and recognize this work as my own calling and ministry based in faith and discipleship. I am not a theologian, but I am a professionally-trained fund development practitioner with an MA degree from Saint Mary's University of Minnesota in philanthropy and development. I am a Christian fundraiser. So, this book is not a theological reflection of giving. It is a practical guide to concrete strategies that will increase giving in your church grounded in the principles of biblical stewardship.

When I was on the board of my local AFP chapter, we brought in a very prominent fundraiser from one of the large hospitals in Toronto to give a presentation on major gifts. We were excited that we had been able to secure this person. Everyone was all ears as she opened her talk with, "I'm not here today to talk about the details of how to run a major gift program; you already know that. I'm going to talk about some of the biggest gifts that have been given in Canada in the last few years and how they came to be." And she did exactly that. I was inspired and amazed to hear of the generosity of these donors and the journey they took giving their gift.

After the presentation ended, I heard some attendees

commenting, “that was great, but I still don’t know where to start,” and “our donors don’t have that kind of capacity.” We later received more feedback through the surveys and emails reiterating that as much as it was inspiring, people still walked away without the tools and *know-how* to start a major gift program, which is what some of them were hoping for when they came. Of course, it’s an impossible topic to cover in an hour, but I learned that day that inspiration alone wasn’t enough. Nor is inspiration *and* action if you don’t know what to do. Inspiration is a crucial ingredient, but an actionable plan with concrete tools and skills are what is needed to bring inspiration and mission successfully to fruition.

Thanks to my father, I was gifted the opportunity as a fundraiser to help people fulfill their dreams of changing the world and making it a better place. I’ve now worked in many different sectors within the industry (education, healthcare, social services and faith-based), and have facilitated giving on many levels. I have always felt fortunate to witness people’s joy in giving and making a difference in the world.

One of my professors, Simone Joyaux, called herself a ‘*cage rattler*’ and encouraged her students to do the same. Ask the hard questions, she said, challenge the status quo and be a force for social justice and philanthropy. I think it’s time to rattle some cages in the church, old fixed ideas about money and giving, discipleship and gratitude, and about how we can further the church of God in today’s world.

We need God more than ever in today’s world, and the time and opportunity is right now. What better time, than in a world full of chaos, for God to show the world through his faithful servants the power of his love! The time is now. Right. Now.

Don’t wait until it’s too late to get help.

Use this book and learn how to identify the signs before it’s too late. It’s hard to get back on track when your seats (real or virtual) are already empty.

Learn to recognize when your church is settled into maintenance mode and lost the vision. It might be as simple as a creative strategic and visioning process to get you back under control. It might be more. But unless and until you proactively take the first steps to identifying and owning the issues holding you back, nothing will change.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Michelle". The script is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M".

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