

TRINITY FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

Cardiphonia

Sounds of the Heart: Reflections on the Christian Life

Seven Values for Church Giving and Financial Planning

Timothy M. Shorey
March, 2007

“...whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work.”

2 Corinthians 9:6-8

Series Introduction

This *Cardiphonia* series is presented to provide *pastoral counsel with pastoral heart* for today's Christian. This is part of my intentional pastoral commitment to serve more effectively the theological and character growth of those in my care. I've created this medium to help shine more of *the whole counsel of God* into your hearts.

With its title derived from two Greek words—one meaning *heart* and the other *sounds*—our *Cardiphonia* series expresses the *heart sounds* of the pastoral leadership of Trinity Fellowship Church. In the course of life and ministry, pastors hear God speak through Word and circumstance, and gain perspective for the lives of those entrusted to their care. As they meditate on God's Word and care for God's people, God places within their hearts passions, burdens and joys that are intended for God's church. The *Cardiphonia* booklets attempt to serve both the pastoral team and the congregation of TFC by transferring such joys and concerns from our hearts to yours.

I offer this series in *faith* that God will bless any truth it expresses *and* will guard His church from any error that might creep in. I present it with the prayer that it will help provide more spiritual food for the Lord's flock in ways that will bless and strengthen those I love. May the blessing of God rest upon you as you hear these heart sounds expressed.

Yours in Christ,

Tim Shorey
Senior Pastor
Trinity Fellowship Church

Seven Values for Church Giving and Financial Planning

Introduction

The following presents the set of values that has guided Trinity Fellowship Church's leadership team in developing our budget and financial thinking through the years. We offer it here to bring clear Biblical vision to the entire giving and budget process of our church.

We are happy to preface these thoughts by giving thanks for all those who have given so faithfully through the years. While we have no way of knowing how much people may have sacrificed to support the work of God in this local church, we know that the impact of your generosity has been huge! Your commitment to God's program through the church is a sign of God's grace in your life.

Because of your faithfulness we have never been delinquent in any bill and, more importantly, we have been able consistently to expand the reach and improve the quality of our ministry from year to year. Thank you so much. May the richness of grace be poured out in even greater measure upon you, in return for all you have done.

Value One: Mission

At the vanguard of our values is mission: *a passion to make Christ famous by doing whatever we can, wherever we can to fill the world with impassioned worshipers of the one true God.* Budget-wise this is reflected in a commitment to give *at least* 10% of our church income to national and global missions—whether through long-supported missionaries or through *Sovereign Grace Ministries'* mission endeavors.

This mission focus also results in significant allotments for *GO-Team* outreach, and a pursuit of paid staff pastor(s) who will commit significant hours weekly to evangelism. It is also reflected in sizable commitments to an ongoing *Pastors' College* scholarship fund to provide for all future PC students' tuition and book expenses (at least), as this contributes to the future expansion and building of the church here and around the country and world. We'd also see the *Contending for Truth Conference* and occasional evangelism seminars as expressive of this value.

Value Two: Leadership and Ministry Excellence and Appreciation

We believe in a strong Biblical *doctrine of leadership* as God's normal way of guiding His people ahead in life and ministry. This requires that we have adequate pastoral leadership in place and that those in such roles are sufficiently equipped to do their work with excellence and skill. An increase in staff is clearly one component of this—explaining our pursuit of men for pastoral internship roles and long term ministry.

This value calls us to budget for leadership development. So we must ensure that Professional Development funds are available for pastoral leaders, and we need to provide growth opportunities for *Care Group* and other *Ministry Team* leadership as well. This is why seminars and conferences must become a regular item in our budget. Whenever possible we need to send our people to conferences outside our church to receive teaching and inspiration to do their work well. When we cannot do this (for whatever reason) we need to make sure that we provide special training and support times *in-house* for these needs. Without leadership development and expansion, leaders become stale and discouraged in their work. The end result is that the Lord's people are not led with excellence, and they suffer for it.

We believe that God's people also need to find ways to express *appreciation* for those who are serving well in the church. Through special events for various ministry leaders, and by planning staff and ministry team retreats/ seminars/ conferences, we create opportunities to place value on what people are doing, and we communicate appreciation for them.

There are at least two reasons why we need to devise means for appreciating leaders publicly and meaningfully. The first is a matter of doing what is right (i.e. it is *fair and Biblical to give verbal and tangible honor where it is due*). The second is a matter of doing what is wise (it's a truism that *you get more of what you place value on*). What is left unnoticed and under-appreciated will eventually be left undone. This is not necessarily because people are motivated by pride and praise; it is because people sense that things are important based on whether as leaders we place real value on, and give real appreciation to, those things.

Value Three: Christian Maturity and Worship

We must invest time and money in those resources that nurture maturity in Christian men, women and children. The wide range of ministries that care for men, women, young people and children, providing teaching, fellowship, accountability and theological/practical resources for them all, must be adequately funded and supported.

Of course our *Parent Youth Fellowship*, *Children's Ministry*, *Men Ahead* ministry and *Women by Design* ministry all serve the maturing process of our people. *Renewing the Mind*, the TFC Bookstore (this far funded almost entirely by private specified donations!), *Hearing for Harvest*, and book and CD giveaways (particularly for those unable to afford such) must not be skimmed on either, as these are the resources that change lives and build maturity.

In addition we must be sure to provide quality worship leadership, resources and equipment. What is offered to the Lord on Sundays and what is presented by way of quality to the people who attend, is critical both for the pleasure of God and the impact of our preaching and public ministry. We need to make sure that we have good equipment, good sound quality, and trained and prepared music team members. To this end, when possible we also should commit resources to send our music leaders and team members to worship team conferences and seminars.

Value Four: Responsibility

Obviously we need to make sure that we pay our bills. Utilities, mortgage, grounds upkeep, etc. are all important as matters of integrity and of community witness. We are responsible to pay for our building and to maintain it well. We cannot shirk these duties, lest we cast a shadow on the reputation of Christ.

Included in this value too, are concerns like background checks, policy development, and procedural and legal concerns. We simply must budget to cover all such matters.

Value Five: Generosity

The atmosphere of the church should be marked by *generosity*. This should be reflected in giving to those in need (benevolence). It should also be evidenced in creating scholarship funds to assist all who cannot afford ministry events and opportunities that others can. This is a matter of basic kindness that ensures that we do not fall into the Corinthian trap of some *having* while others don't (1 Cor:11.20-22).

In this generosity category we should also place church hospitality. Such kindnesses as *Welcome Ministry*, ushering, give-aways in visitor packets, quality nursery care, guest receptions, and gifts for visiting missionaries should all be consistent aspects of how we welcome and treat those who visit us. These are the kinds of things that good hosts do. They are also the kinds of things that make people want to come again.

Value Six: Investment

For both theological and practical reasons we believe that personal and church generosity is wise *investment*. Everything that we give to, and that is strategically dispersed through, the church, to build or enhance kingdom work will produce *returns*. This is the basic theological concept of 2 Corinthians 9:6-11. God has promised to *multiply* faithful and cheerful giving with additional resources for giving and ministry.

Put in stark faith-building terms: *God has promised to give back to us what we give and then some, so we can have more to give!* Of course this is not a promise of prosperity for the sake of personal indulgence. But it is a promise of divine provision for personal and corporate ministry *expansion*.

Practically speaking, the more we devote to kingdom work the greater the spiritual and numerical returns *usually* are. In this way a church budget is like a business budget more than a home budget. The better, bigger, and more excellent our staff and our ministry to people, the more likely that more people will be saved and added to the church. As more people come, we see that the investment we've made produces returns: spiritual, numerical, and financial.

In other words, to see the growth we desire both for God’s glory and the fame of His mercy and Name, (and, parenthetically, for the meeting of our budget needs) requires that we think expansively with regard to our budget. Normally it takes boldly invested money, given in faith and with prayer, to make the church expand and grow.

This in no way compromises our conviction that God alone gives the increase—a truth we live with, pray through, and depend upon *consciously* everyday. We do not trust in human resources or plans in any way. God is sovereign in the growth of His church. Nevertheless, God normally uses means to accomplish His ends. And one of the means He uses is our liberal generosity toward the needs and kingdom mission of the local church.

Passages such as Matthew 6:19-21; Phil. 4:17; 1 Tim. 6:17-19 also teach that as we individually live the generous life we invest in eternity as well. It’s been said that while *we can’t take it with us, we **can** send it on ahead!* So we have the promise that cheerful giving results in God’s generous re-supply of our resources in this life, so that we can give even more to the kingdom of God, *and* we have the promise that cheerful giving is an investment in eternal treasures of far greater worth than anything that money can buy. These are powerful incentives to live the generous life.

Value Seven: Faith

“Seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you” (Matthew 6:33). Here’s the promise of God: *since we are seeking first the kingdom of God, God will add what we need.* This is true congregationally and individually. This does not permit reckless expense in the name of kingdom work, but it does give reason to be bold as we move ahead. If we can look at our budget and see extravagances, then we’d have little claim on Christ’s promise. But since every item is kingdom building or encouraging or maintaining, Christ has bound himself to meet our needs. As we seek first the kingdom—both collectively and individually—God will provide.

This faith for the future is based on the promise of God already cited, *and* on the faithfulness of God already experienced. Even in recent tight times we have always had sufficient funds to meet all our needs. Thankfully God gave us wisdom to plan

ahead to make sure to have resources to draw from in tight times. That, together with the amazing faithfulness of God, has made us able to see every need met, all the time. Over the past few months we also have seen slight movements upward in our giving; further signs, we hope, of continued growth. We take all these as examples of what God has done as evidences of what He is yet committed to do.

We also have faith that *God provides for what He gives us to envision*. God's Word has shaped our vision. That vision is to build a church for this generation, *and the next*, that will be committed to the gospel, sound doctrine, and global mission, all for the fame of Christ. We also envision that in order to be this kind of church in 21st century secular America, we must pursue truth, ministry excellence, love, a relevant, cutting-edge strategy, and a corporate radical commitment to the cause of Christ. This is the vision entrusted to us.

God provides for what He gives us to envision—but how? Through the basic Biblical practice of tithing a church's ministry need may be largely if not entirely met. This means that God has already provided for our present vision through giving us enough people already who, if obedient to the call to tithe, will provide more than enough to meet our needs.

It is also quite possible that God has already given some among us the resources to give much more substantially than they have before. A tithe is only a starting point for Christian generosity. God's people should give an ever-increasing percentage to the mission of the local church as God prospers their lives.

Still others of us may be moved to consider ways to make even greater personal sacrifices so we may give even more generously. Others may be able to increase their giving by transferring their giving from other ministries to restore it to God's priority ministry in the local church. He may also soon draw others into our fellowship that will help to expand our vision even further (strong signs of this are evident already). And it is even possible that He is already moving in a heart of some one or two or five or ten who are not even a part of our church to give generously to what He is doing here. Time and again we have seen our providing God draw from a combination of all these resources to meet our needs.

All this leads us to conclude that personal giving and a church budget should be an expression of faith. Passages like 2 Corinthians 8:1-4, Psalm 37:25, 26, and Matthew 6:25-33 all call believers to faith-stretching giving. This kind of boldness

also is evident in the widow's amazing sacrifice in Luke 21:1-4. While recklessness is sin, bold reliance, leading to decisions that call for faith and prayer and holy daring, is pleasing to God.

Every believer should ask God personally for *widow-faith*, and then step out with an eye fixed on God's providing hand. Similarly, our church should plan and give in such a way that we *need* to believe in resources we *cannot* see: the storehouses of God. Biblical giving involves faith that, while not always knowing *how* God is going to provide, is always confident that He *is* going to provide.

In the past our approach has been one of careful budgeting combined with believing, prayerful dependence. And God has met us in our need every time. As we step into our future, this bold, faith-based giving and planning needs to continue to stretch and guide us along the way. We are confident that as we move forward in faith, any apparent challenges and even deficits we may face will be met and overcome by God's faithfulness and by His providing grace in our lives.

Conclusion

We believe that if our members will review TFC's budget with these values in mind they will see that every budget item reflects one or more of them. We realize that some people may place more priority on some of these values than on others, but we hope that all will see that they are indeed values worth supporting as generously as possible.

We also hope that as you review these values you will feel rising up from within a growing sense of oneness with us in these commitments that we hold dear. It may be that as we all catch the vision and values which we believe have been given to us by God, God will stir within us a fresh heart of cheerful giving to make it all possible. Needless to say, the vision entrusted to the leadership of TFC cannot be realized unless it is shared enthusiastically by all her members, for what is not shared by all will not be supported generously and cheerfully by all.

It is only as our hearts are captured by a great vision and by these great Biblical values that we will become great givers! Only then will we tithe faithfully. Only then will God's people seek God's will to know how they can be ever-growing (as far *beyond* tithing as possible!) in the ministry of giving to the church. And it is

only then that we will see God's blessings abound in our work, and His special love evidenced in our lives (2 Corinthians. 9:6-15). So may God draw us all into what He is doing among us—for His eternal praise and our everlasting joy!