



Dear friend in Christ,

From the beginning, our trinitarian God has been energizing all creation through relationship. Is it any surprise then that relationships are fundamental to faith-based fundraising? These pivotal relationships include our relationship to God, to the church, to each other and to our world, and not to be forgotten, our relationship to all the assets seemingly under our control.

At their very best, congregations nurture, cultivate and multiply relationships, relationships that transform lives and change the world as Jesus would have us do. It is through these relationships that people can be inspired to see their own potential to resource ministry, not just in the church but everywhere they go and in all that they do. It is through the aggregation of a fraction of this capacity that our congregations and the larger church are supplied with the necessary participants, leaders and financial support that make everything we do possible.

The implications are many. One is that, as followers of Jesus, we need to value EQ (emotional/relational intelligence) as much as IQ and understand that giving intellectual assent to beliefs and doctrines is most likely not as important as living life in a relational, loving way. Another takeaway is that most often generosity flows more from teaching and inspiration than manipulation, coercion, shame or guilt. In the end, our best strategy for funding the church will focus less on an annual stewardship campaign and more on a daily emphasis of relationship, relationship, relationship.

This issue of stewardNet is about the value of relational stewardship and taking seriously what we want for people, not just what we want from them.

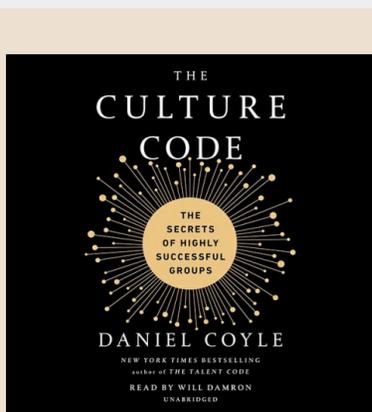
We are a church that is energized by lively engagement in our faith and life. Thank you for doing God's work with a faithful, generous heart!

Faithfully,

Steve Oelschlager
Stewardship Program Coordinator
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

"The Culture Code" Groups that thrive

In an effort to better understand what makes organizations thrive, author Daniel Coyle investigated a wide spectrum of teams, groups and companies, from the San Antonio Spurs basketball team to Pixar Animation and the military. Surprisingly, the commonality he found was all the little relational things leaders do to enhance a sense of belonging while creating feelings of trust, safety and cooperation. When leaders effectively model vulnerability, it promotes healthy risk-taking where failure may be an outcome. When leaders make use of the power of story, it promotes a sense of shared, motivating purpose. Coyle writes, "Culture is a set of living relationships working toward a shared goal. It's not something you are, it's something you do." In the end, everyone feels like they have an important role to play and contribution to make.



For a deeper look at the value of relationships and belonging as a precursor to organizational vitality, read Coyle's book ["The Culture Code: The Secrets of Highly Successful Groups."](#)

Congregations as cultures of generosity The centrality of relationships

At an Ecumenical Stewardship Center event in Dallas this past spring, speaker Aimee Laramore gave a terrific, down-to-earth presentation ([watch here](#)) on congregations as cultures of generosity. Laramore is a person of faith with a background in development and faith-based fundraising. She covered lots of topics, but the core of her message was about the importance of relationships, meeting people where they are, being truly interested in how they are doing, talking about money without always asking for any, and celebrating all the ways people make a difference including outside of the church. She asked how our congregations can help people see themselves as benefactors. What if we didn't limit our storytelling to just how giving makes the world out there better but also cultivate stories by givers about how generosity has blessed their lives?



Laramore mentioned her friend and mentor William Enright, the founding director of the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving, part of the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy at Indiana University. Enright recently authored a book worth reading titled ["Kitchen Table Giving: Reimagining How Congregations Connect With Their Donors,"](#) in which he shares a similar relational approach. [Here](#) is a review of the book by the Center for Stewardship Leaders at Luther Seminary.

Mission interpretation ministry Inspiration from Aimee Laramore

After watching Aimee Laramore's stewardship presentation on the "how to" of generosity, I was struck by how much of what she discussed pertained to mission interpretation. I immediately thought of the elevator speech I use when asked to give a brief description of what mission interpretation is about. It's about telling the stories that declare God's work in the world. It's about lifting up our connectedness as the three expressions of our church. And it's about thanking the doers and the givers for their generosity.

Aimee says that our story is part of the mission story, that people want to know where their money ultimately goes beyond building and salaries. That's exactly what a mission interpreter in your congregation does! Tells the stories that help build relationships between the giver and the receiver, tells the stories of how your Mission Support dollars make a difference. Stories that grow generosity. Aimee also speaks about how important it is for us to share our faith stories of God's goodness with one another. An easy way to begin a conversation, to tell stories, about our faith was introduced at a mission interpreter coordinator's conference in 2015 called The Turning Point Storytelling Method by Jennifer Strauss at [storybetold.com](#). (Download the outline [here](#).) A mission interpreter in your congregation could lead you through this process.

When Aimee spoke about philanthropy, she gave the definition as being "the love of humankind." Mission interpreters in congregations bring to light how we share our gifts throughout our church from congregation to synod to our churchwide organization. How, together, we make a difference in the world telling stories of how we are church together.

Won't you consider becoming a mission interpreter in your synod? Please contact [Denise Ballou](#) for more information.

Other items of interest Resources, events and more

- If you need an approach for engaging in a "relational ask," see this [resource](#) on LOAVES (listen, observe, assess, value, encourage, support) from the ELCA's Rediscover Macedonia initiative a few years ago. You can find many other useful resources from the Rediscover Macedonia effort [here](#).
- For more than a decade, the Center for Stewardship Leaders at Luther Seminary has published a weekly e-newsletter. Recently, the center went through its database of hundreds of reflections and selected 17 top posts that lay the groundwork for innovative stewardship ministry. These articles have been assembled into a PDF titled "Stewardship 101: An Invitation to Financial Stewardship." You can download the PDF for free [here](#).
- Stewardship Kaleidoscope is an annual conference offering excellent plenary speakers, informative workshop leaders, provocative worship experiences and incredible networking opportunities for all who are passionate about stewardship and generosity. Drawing leaders from across the ELCA and the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.) and beyond, Stewardship Kaleidoscope is designed to help participants explore stewardship in its many colorful dimensions! The event will be in St. Louis Sept. 24-26. [Register now](#) for \$275 per person before the price increases to \$300 on Aug. 1.
- With "God's work. Our hands." Sunday approaching on Sept. 9, the Life of Faith Initiative offers a new document to expand "God's work. Our hands." Sunday from being a single day of service to a way to equip our people for a life of faith so that "every act of service, in every daily calling, in every corner of life flows freely from a living, daring confidence in God's grace." You can download the seven-page PDF [here](#).
- Through [Capital Campaign Services](#) of the Mission Investment Fund, experienced and professional fundraisers are available to help congregations reach their goals and potential. Many of these people are former stewardship staff in the ELCA and have years of visioning, planning and implementation experience. Paula Kitt is the executive director of Capital Campaign Services. If you have any questions, please send them to her at Paula.Kitt@elca.org.
- Thank you to all the congregations, synods and individuals who have participated in *Always Being Made New: The Campaign for the ELCA's* first four years. In the [2017 Campaign Report](#), you will see how your generosity continues to make a difference in the lives of our neighbors around the world. Please share this important work and progress with your synod and congregations! In addition, to find out how you can continue to support the campaign in its final year, please visit [ELCA.org/campaign](#).

Sayings, quotes, thoughts Henri Nouwen

"When we give ourselves to planting and nurturing love here on earth, our efforts will reach beyond our own chronological existence."

Biblical foundations Acts 2:46-47

Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Upcoming events (watch the [calendar file](#) for details)

Aug. 16–19
Chicago, Ill.
[Mission Interpreter Coordinator Conference](#)

Aug. 30
stewardTalk
3 p.m. Central at 877-820-7831, participant code 6314685#

Sept. 24–26
St. Louis, Mo.
[Stewardship Kaleidoscope](#)

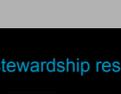
Oct. 5–7
Camp Agape, N.C.
[Lutherans Restoring Creation Retreat](#)

Nov. 15
stewardTalk
3 p.m. Central at 877-820-7831, participant code 6314685#

Nov. 27–29
Tampa, Fla.
[ESC Generosity Next Conference](#)

[Full calendar](#) | Subscribe to [Our Calendar File](#)

Find ELCA stewardship resources online



We'd love to hear from you! Have a link or idea you want to share in our next issue? Email stewardnet@elca.org.

You're receiving this email because you or your congregation indicated you are a stewardship leader in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA).