

How Has the Economy Affected Capital Campaigns?

C. Eugene Musser, President

There may be little concurrence on the actual date when the economy slowed. No doubt all would agree the last quarter of 2008 was poor to downright awful for many. In spite of the slower economy, churches are hitting capital campaign goals. The most accurate means to determine a capital campaign goal is through a feasibility study. A feasibility study will determine interest, support, and fund-raising potential.

Since members are interviewed and surveyed, fund-raising counsel is able to forecast, with realistic certainty, the amount that can be raised. Kirby-Smith Associates, especially during this time of economic uncertainty, recommends churches conduct a feasibility study prior to embarking on a capital appeal.

Absent a feasibility study, the norm often cited is that a church can raise between 2 and 4 times the annual offertory over a 3-year capital appeal. We have seen a decline in the multiple, and churches are raising much closer to 2 times than 4 times. A feasibility study can help take the guess work out of setting a campaign goal. In a time of sacrifice, it is vital that members feel their gift is making a difference. It is imperative that a realistic and attainable capital campaign goal is set.

Stewardship in Difficult Economic Times

Kirby-Smith Associates, Inc.

A common question asked in difficult economic times is, "How can we ask our members to give more?" On the surface, the answer seems obvious. If someone is struggling to put food on the table or keep their home, they cannot give more money. However, the complete gospel on stewardship is not simply treasure, but also time and talent. They can give of themselves. Saint Paul goes even further when he writes about the "gifts of the spirit."

On one occasion, he wrote that "no one can say 'Jesus is Lord' except by the Holy Spirit" (I Corinthians 12:3). Paul noted other spiritual gifts with one of them being the gift of generous giving. Clearly, giving is more than a mere process of putting money in the offertory at church; it is about helping others, and in so doing, receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit through your gift of generosity. Just as some are hurting in difficult economic times and in need of help, others are not and are looking for ways to help others in need. To deny the opportunity for generosity in difficult times out of fear of asking is a terrible loss both to the giver and to the recipient.

During the mid-first century of the Church, Paul and others conducted a church-wide campaign to gather gifts to assist the widows of Jerusalem. Saint Paul writes a powerfully moving and informative story about the

Christians in Macedonia. It would appear that, because of the deep poverty of that area, there may have been a plan not to include the Christians in Macedonia in that in-gathering of monies. He begins the story by saying that he wants the Corinthian church to "know about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia."

Paul tells the story of how, in the midst of affliction, their abundant joy and extreme poverty overflowed into a wealth of generosity, giving beyond their means, voluntarily, begging earnestly for the privilege of sharing in the ministry of the saints. (These are the actual words and phrases Paul uses in this text!) But there is one important thing Paul notes: "First they gave themselves to the Lord!"

"Giving voluntarily, begging for the privilege of sharing." And all was done in an "abundant joy" and "wealth of generosity," though they were living in extreme poverty. Generosity is a gift of the Spirit.

One has to admit, it is a strange configuration of words and of ideas: "their abundant joy and extreme poverty overflowed in a wealth of generosity." So, too, is the idea of the Macedonians "begging for the privilege" of sharing (giving).

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Many, even some who are rather generous, think of giving as an obligation or duty. Few call it a privilege and fewer still call it a “joy.” Rarer yet are those known to “beg” for the privilege.

There is joy in generous giving, and I do not believe that is an accident. Stewardship is not about raising money, meeting budgets, or even building new churches. It is about finding ourselves. It is about personal conversion. It is the first thing we do after we say we believe.

Churches that do not reach out to members and ask for assistance of all of God’s gifts of time, talent, and treasure to help others may find themselves irrelevant to members in the best of times. As our Lord tells us in Matthew 25:40, “Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these, my brethren, you did it to me.” The worst of times requires the best from all of us. You may be surprised to discover how willing people are to help give of themselves, their time, and talents, more so now than ever in the past—a true willingness to answer God’s call to help the “least of my brethren.”

First, we must understand that faith is a great deal more than believing some facts about God. It is a belief so strong in the faithfulness of God that we are moved to trust God. Faith in God must always be understood as trusting God.

Therefore, growing stewardship is never a matter of “doing the best we can.” The very words sound like a whining

apology, hinting that we would want to do more, but cannot.

No good steward is ashamed of a solid gift, sacrificially given, regardless of its size. The matter is our trust in God. “Well, Pastor, it’s the best I can do right now. You never know what will happen tomorrow, you know!” The hint is we have to hold back for some unexpected tragedy. Why not say it the other way: “Well here it is. It will take God’s help, but let’s go for it!” One is a halting, clutching fist. The other is a faith-filled venture. Is this Biblical, you ask? Well, here it is. It is not a matter of “doing the best we can.” It is a matter of trusting, even testing God.

“Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test,” says the Lord of hosts, “See if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing.” (Malachi 3:10)

Again, God says: “Test me! I dare you!” Sooner or later, we are called to come to terms with the challenge of stewardship as a part of our coming to terms with God. We are called, as well, to help others to do so.

Stewardship is a matter of personal conversion. We shall become more fully ourselves when we become more like our Father who created us. Difficult economic times affirm in our hearts our faith and our willingness to share. Do not deny, to those who are able, the opportunity to give of themselves and their treasure to those in need.

To Build Or Not To Build? . . . That Is The Question!

Jeff Knauer, Executive Vice President

Churches considering expansion or renovation of facilities are faced with a greater challenge from the economy than has been the case for decades. These circumstances give weight to the question, “Do we move forward or not?” Is it prudent to move forward, or should we wait for better times? Will people be offended if they are asked for money when they may be struggling themselves?

Consideration of what church members think and how they may respond must always be of concern. After all, the true church consists of people, not buildings. Buildings, however, are the tools used by congregations to worship, have fellowship, and even attract new members. So, very real consideration must also be given to the need for additional space or renovation of current space.

In this challenging environment, three important factors have helped guide a number of leaders in determining the course their churches will follow. These three factors include:

1. The **NEED** for more space, or renovation of current space
2. The congregation's **MOMENTUM**
3. The **PACE** at which to move forward

Take a moment to reason through each of these factors.

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To Build Or Not To Build? (continued from page 3)

1. The **NEED** for more space, or renovation of current space . . .

Most churches that consider expansion of facilities do so because they truly **NEED** more space . . . more space for worship, fellowship, Christian education, ministry. The state of the economy rarely affects the fact that your building is too small. It is altogether possible that **MORE** people may desire to attend during difficult times. What happens if there is no room for them to do so?

The **NEED** for more space may very well be hindering the ministry your church is called to do. This fact must be given equal consideration in concern over the struggling economy. If the sanctuary, narthex, classrooms, or fellowship hall are crowded now, a delay in addressing those needs will only exacerbate the situation.

Experience has shown that most people are supportive if a true **NEED** exists. The answer becomes even clearer when renovations are needed. If the roof leaks or the boiler needs to be replaced, delay simply may not be possible. Borrowing is often needed to make immediate repairs. Even with favorable terms, borrowing must be paid back, and the when and how become key considerations. A well-reasoned process considers the following:

- a. What impact does the economy have on our members? How many of our members are out of work? What needs do our members have in meeting everyday bills? An analysis through a feasibility study can be done by fund-raising counsel to determine the answers to these and other critical economic issues prior to embarking on a campaign. Some members may have great needs, but others may be willing to help if asked.
- b. Difficult economic times also means lower construction pricing and often lower borrowing fees. Balancing cost savings against those who cannot contribute due to the poor economic situation must be a consideration in the big picture of church needs.

2. The congregation's **MOMENTUM** . . .

It can be gratifying to be part of a church with a desire to grow and expand its ministries. But lack of space can soon curb enthusiasm and reverse positive **MOMENTUM**. Parishioners who cannot find seats, teachers in over-crowded classrooms, and committees with no place to hold meetings will eventually grow frustrated and may become discouraged. When promises to address these needs are delayed, **MOMENTUM** is **LOST**. This is not always easy to regain.

Proverbs 13:12 presents an interesting lesson: "Hope deferred makes the heart sick, but a longing fulfilled is a tree of life." It is not an easy decision to engage a building expansion in difficult times but the cost of not doing so may be even greater, in the loss of **MOMENTUM**.

Taking action to move forward maintains positive **MOMENTUM**.

3. The **PACE** at which to move forward . . .

When considering all the space they may need, some congregations make the mistake of addressing their circumstances as an "all or nothing" proposal. The cost of an entire project in the face of a struggling economy can cause the most optimistic leaders to back away from a positive recommendation. What should be considered is the fact that **SOME** progress is almost always better than **NONE**. Addressing at least **SOME** of your need will bring encouragement to members and keep momentum moving in a positive direction.

Determine to **PACE** yourselves. Move forward, building what you can, as much as you can, within the realm of what you can afford. Build **FIRST** what is needed **MOST**.

PACING the project by building in phases can ease the anxiety of members while still maintaining momentum. Ministries can grow and new members can be welcomed. As the church grows, the next phase of the project may be completed with the help of more members.

Kirby-Smith stands ready to guide your church through this process to a successful conclusion. We can help you clearly communicate the **NEED** for expansion to all of your members. We can help members realize that a project can be accomplished even in difficult times, so that **MOMENTUM** is not lost. And we can assist in determining realistic project goals, at a **PACE** that is reasonable. All of this is accomplished from a point of view that is stewardship-based, not a high pressured approach.

Why not invite one of our staff members to meet with your church for a free consultation to discuss your project. If you're not yet ready to build, remember that Kirby-Smith Associates also provides guidance in the areas of annual stewardship and church growth. Call our toll-free number, 1-800-762-3996. We look forward to serving you.

Visitation Is Still One of the Most Effective Fund-raising Tools

An 8 to 1 Return from Families Who Did Not Otherwise Participate in the Overall Campaign

José DeJesús, Executive Vice President

I can remember as a child, my mother would drag me along going from door to door, visiting fellow parishioners at our church in Brooklyn, NY. A mover and shaker she was and, although our neighborhood was one of poverty, something inside of her knew that everyone has something they could give. She never judged anyone and often I stood in the cold wondering why we would even think to bother these folks who, to me, seemed apparently poorer than us. My mother understood that everyone deserved the dignity of being asked to do something for our church, which at the time was in the process of renovation. Although, this was the first capital campaign she had ever participated in, that never stopped her from approaching our neighbors with the idea that our church would soon look beautiful if everyone participated and did their share.

Often it's not about the asking for funds, rather it's the communicating of a vision that is greater than ourselves that helps bring campaigns to successful endings. The goal is to establish a vision that is inclusive and draws people into it.

Many churches and consultants in the fund-raising world have all but abandoned the idea of making home visits during a capital campaign or stewardship initiative. They opt for other means of communicating the vision. Often they leave the visitation process as a "last ditch effort" to "clean up" before ending the campaign. While I agree that there are many other ways to "ask" someone to share in the vision by making a gift, I don't believe that a visit should be a last resort, and yet even if it is, read on.

When planning a campaign, it's important that the greatness of the overall vision be matched with an effective plan to reach the greatest number of church families. In short, the church should work with the consultant to lay out the right tools for the job. Visitations,

when conducted properly and effectively, can achieve much more than raising additional dollars for a church. Visitations can just as well be used to reach out to families who don't normally attend services, or to thank those families who are your stalwart supporters. Visitations can be limited to the case statement for the campaign or be utilized as an all-out time, talent, and treasure initiative. Simply put, when a church asks Kirby-Smith Associates to help make visits during a campaign, we work with the church to design the most effective visit possible—one that will raise the most dollars, seek to bring a welcoming message from the church community, invite the family to take a greater ownership of their church by joining a ministry, or a combination of these items. You decide.

What about cost? At Kirby-Smith, we offer the greatest number of tools for fund-raising for the clients we serve. We will work with you to design a plan that will have the greatest effect towards reaching your goals. The visitation process is but one of the tools we utilize; however, for those of us who love numbers, the typical investment of a church in the visitation process alone has a track record of raising an 8 to 1 return from families who did not otherwise participate in the overall campaign. Yes, you are reading correctly. In other words, even after we have helped churches reach their goal, they may still desire a broader base of supporters. Kirby-Smith Associates can utilize our visitation team, or help to train your visitors, to reach out to all families in the church who have not yet supported the effort. We do this without distinction to whether a family is active or not. All families are dignified in Christ and with that motto we begin all of our efforts.

Why not give us a call and allow us to help you implement your church vision in the most personal and effective way possible?

Services offered by Kirby-Smith Associates, Inc.

- Capital Campaigns
- Increased Offertory Campaigns
- Stewardship Appeals and Training
- Consultation Services
- Feasibility Studies
- Vision Development
- Christian School Campaigns
- Annual Appeals
- Diocese, Synod, District, and Conference-wide Campaigns
- Workshops/Seminars
- Development Officer Training