

THE AFRICAN LEADERSHIP LETTER

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EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION WITH DONORS

Introduction:

Communication is an everyday thing, done in different settings with different people. Parents communicate with their children and with each other, while children communicate among themselves and with their parents as well.

In the work place people in authority communicate with those they supervise while those who are led also communicate amongst each other.

In the same vein, church and non-governmental leaders also communicate with donors.

However, much as the art of communication has been simplified, it is not easy. This statement can be qualified by the fact that people enroll and spend years to study this art at higher institutions of learning such as universities.

The church in Africa has not been spared by the many challenges which affect society which including: high poverty levels, lack of safe drinking water, illiteracy, poor health services, orphans and vulnerable children and list goes, which has increased the demand for the church leaders to cultivate and maintain donor relations. The increase on donor dependence has resulted in limited donor funding to churches, and this has frustrated most church leaders. However the reason some churches are financially stable and maintaining existing donors and finding new donors is because the leaders of those churches understand the rules,

techniques and skills of effective lobbying and advocating through communication with donors. The purpose of this paper is therefore to help leaders how to effectively communicate with donors using print or electronic media.

Share the vision of your ministry.

When God calls a leader, he also gives them a vision of the work he has called them. A vision shows the leader that where they are with the people is not as good as where they need to go. In other words, the vision a leader has shown that he is going to move the people they lead from where they are to a better place. The vision must be compelling and must show how it is going to impact more people. Donors want to be part of something big and are also interested to learn to know about how God called you into the ministry if you are communicating with them for the first time. Related to sharing your vision is highlighting the challenges your church is facing. That is stating

Donors want to be part of something big.

the problems your church is trying to solve in the various ministries you are involved in. Share passionately statistics, success stories or chats to help donors connect with the challenges that you are facing. Paint a picture that will make your donor feel they must continue supporting you or start supporting you. Nehemiah is a good example of a leader who had a great passion for the vision of

rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem. The report he got from home broke Nehemiah to tears because he had a deep seated passion for his people. When a vision is from God, leaders soon find that they are inadequate for the task because in order to fulfill the vision more is required than what the leader has in terms of spiritual gifts and financial. For Nehemiah it moved him to communicate with the king to get permission and relevant documents to move to Jerusalem.

Overcome the difference between African languages and the English Language.

Most African languages use indirect speech and use assumption. In the Chitonga language in Zambia indirect speech is referred as “*maambilambali*”. Direct speech is perceived as rude. For instance if a woman is on a journey with a baby on her back feels hungry, she would stop by in one of the villages between her village and the village of her destination and tell the owners of the village that her baby is very hungry. Therefore, she is asking food for the baby. Those whom she asks for food for her baby must figure out that she too is hungry and therefore would provide food for both the mother and the baby. It would be improper for the mother to ask for some food for herself.

The other aspect of some African languages is assumption, which to some extent is related to indirect speech. I first learnt how to drive at the age of 32 when I first became National Superintendent of the Pilgrim Wesleyan of Zambia. The things that I needed for the National Superintendent's vehicle were tools and the tool box. At that time one of our missionaries was returning from the States back to Zambia. I asked my missionary friend to bring me a tool box from the States. However, I assumed that the missionary would bring both the tools and the tool box. This assumption was based on my Chitonga way of thinking then where if someone offers to give you some tea,

you assume that they will also give some bread that would go along with some tea. Or if someone offers you “*Nshima*” a staple food in Southern Africa, particularly in Malawi, Zambia, and Zimbabwe you expect them to also give you water to wash your hands before eating and relish that goes with *Nshima*. When my missionary friend arrived, he called and informed me that he had brought my tool box and that he would send it with someone who was coming to Choma where I lived. After two

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days I received my tool box. I was very excited to receive my new tool box. But when I lifted it, I was very shocked that it was light because it was empty. I immediately called my missionary friend and innocently asked where the tools that were in the tool box that he had bought for me. The missionary responded that there were no tools because I had only asked him to buy me a tool box and that is exactly what he did. Then it dawned on me that I had made an assumption.

When I was at Asbury Seminary in Wilmore, Kentucky a Kenyan young man told me of an experience he had with his American friend. He told me that one Saturday evening he was invited by his American friend to go watch a movie in Nicholasville. Since the American young man invited the Kenyan young man, the Kenyan assumed that the American would also pay the entrance fee at the cinema hall. However, when the two got to the cinema hall, the American paid only for himself and the Kenyan asked, “Are you not paying for me too, since you invited me to come with you?” The American responded, “I did not say I would pay for you, I just asked for your company to come to the cinema.” The dilemma was only solved by the Kenyan borrowing money from his American friend. Dealing with donors from the west requires for churches to think the way

donors think. In other words, be frank with donors. Let them know exactly what you want them to do or how they can support your ministry. Write something like this, “Andrew and Joy, you have read or have heard about our ministry and the challenges that we are facing. Will you prayerfully consider joining our support team at \$50, \$100, \$500 , etc.”

Always show how much you would like the donors to give. If you do not show the amount you want the donor to give, your request will not be seen as an appeal. Asking specifically is an important tool in getting funds from donors.

Let your donors know your other donors.

It is important that you let your donors know who your other donors are and the areas of your ministry they are funding. This is transparency which increases donor confidence in you as a leader and in the church you are leading. Related to the issue of transparency is always telling the truth. The leader should not be tempted to lie. Unfortunately, leaders are sometimes tempted to behave like a fellow who leaves the village to visit the relatives who live in different parts of the same city without telling the hosts other relatives he has visited in the same city. All the hosts get the same story. “I just came to you alone and ask for some help and I will be rushing back to the village after visiting you.”

Show interest in the donor.

Transparency increases donor confidence in you as a leader and in the church you are leading.

After you have shared with your donors about your ministry and the needs you need to address through your ministry, you need to build the relationship with them by showing a keen interest in your donors. You may write

something like this, “Well, I have written about our work and how you may be involved. Tell me about how things are going with you.” Ask about what they do, their hobbies, their concerns and how you can pray for them. This makes donors feel that you are not only interested about their money, but you are also interested in them as people with needs and concerns. Ask your donor how you can pray for them. The relationship that you build with the donor strengthens the simple but powerful thought that “People give to people to help people.” This means that donors give their donations to a leader with whom they have a relationship and trust that the ministry of that leader is making a difference in the lives of people.

Thank your donors.

Always say, “Thank you” to your donors and say it promptly. Thanking your donors is a common courtesy that shows your gratitude to your donors for their generosity. If you do not thank your donors for their gifts, then you are

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communicating to them that you do not deserve another donation from them. Appreciating donors helps to strengthen your relationship with them. Unfortunately, most leaders take donors for granted. They feel that it is their right to receive from donors without a sense of thanking the donors.

In Luke 17 we read the story of Jesus and ten lepers. All the ten lepers received the healing from Jesus and received the same command, “Go and show yourselves to the priests.” Luke 10:14. Interestingly, only one of them returned to Jesus to glorify God out of gratitude, when he saw that he was cleansed. Jesus received the leper's appreciation, but also asked, “Were not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Was no one

found to return and give praise to God except this foreigner?" (Luke 17:17-18). It is clear from these questions that Jesus expected all the ten lepers who were cleansed to show appreciation.

My final remarks on this subject are that effective communication with donors is something that is not easy to do, particularly for us in Africa. However it is not an option, particularly for those in leadership who have to deal with donors. It is a must! In the Chicewa language of Malawi and Zambia they have a saying, "Walila mvula, walila matope." The literal translation is, "If you cry for rain, you have also cried for mud." The implication is that rain and mud are inseparable. I would like to

propose that when one accepts a leadership role, especially in Africa with all the challenges and needs leaders are called to address, one also makes a commitment to communicate effectively with donors. If a leader fails to communicate effectively with donors, they will soon find out that the stream of financial support dries up.

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## THE PASTOR'S ADEQUATE SUPPORT

"Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor. Especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,' and, 'The laborer is worthy of his wages'." 1 Timothy 5: 17 – 18.

**Introduction:**

Pastors are men and women who have accepted God's call upon their lives to serve God and the Church. They usually sacrifice their profession or career and some resign from secular

employment. They have personal needs and family responsibilities, namely; education of children from pre-school to tertiary; provide food, clothing and shelter; paying medical and municipality services, recreation and finally cover the cost of any funeral if there's death in the family. The church in Africa is not yet providing adequately for pastors in terms of salaries, pension or retirement packages, medical insurance in times of seeking medical attention and funeral insurance if they die while serving the church to be buried with the dignity

they deserve. This has caused the families of pastors great turmoil, mistrust and drives families away from God and children don't respond to God's call. The lack of adequate pastoral support has led men and women to be in secular employment in order to support their families and save for education and retirement. The great challenge in Africa is that most pastors are part-time due to secular employment and demoralization of those who are fulltime but without adequate pastoral support.

### **The Biblical Plan for Pastoral Support**

God's word has provided the means for the adequate support of His servants. In Numbers 18:21-24 the Levites received, "All tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform in the tabernacle of meeting". The Lord God commanded Israelites in Malachi 3:10; to "Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My House..." The reason for the provision is found in 2 Chronicles 31: 4; where King Hezekiah commanded the people who live in Jerusalem to "Contribute support for the Priest and the Levites that they may devote themselves to the law of the Lord". The children of Israel and Judah responded in obedience to God in bringing offerings and all tithes and made heaps. In Chronicles 31:10 Azariah the chief

The discipleship of new converts and teaching of covenant members on stewardship is the vital key in bringing lasting solutions as outlined in God's word.

priest answered King Hezekiah saying, "Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the Lord, we have had enough to eat and have plenty left, for the Lord has blessed His people; and what is left is this great abundance". In Matthew 10: 5-10, Jesus sent out the twelve disciples and commanded them to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And in verses 9 to 10 he says, "Provide neither gold nor silver nor

copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, not two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food". Lastly, In Galatians 6: 6 Paul speaks of being generous and doing well, "Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches".

### **What does God's word teach from the above Scriptures?**

- God has called fulltime men and women into the work of ministry.
- They are to be devoted in prayer, studying and preaching the word.
- The provision for their daily needs is already provided through the flock who are covenant members of the church.
- The flocks respond in obedience and faithfulness to God's command.
- The pastor shepherd's family daily needs are being fulfilled and they do the work with a great joyful spirit.
- The flock and covenant church members are blessed in abundance because of their faithfulness in bringing offerings and tithes.

### **How can the church begin to support pastors adequately?**

- The discipleship of new converts and teaching of covenant members on stewardship is the vital key in bringing lasting solutions as outlined in God's word.
- Giving tithes, offerings and any giving as prompted by the Holy Spirit is the demonstration of faithfulness and obedience to God's word.
- The giving of tithes and offerings is a personal spiritual discipline with God's promise to release abundance.
- Everyone has the ability to give and receive beyond their available resources. Poverty is

not an excuse; when given in faith there is always enough.

- It's when members give generously from their money and possessions that the needs of pastors is adequately met.

### **What happens to the church that supports its pastor adequately?**

- When a church supports its own ministry and manages its finance, it develops maturity through the decisions that come with such a responsibility.
- The church feels a sense of ownership for the things they give to and will highly value what they invest in.
- When members of the church support the ministry sacrificially there can be little doubt about their loyalty.
- Self-supporting churches where people are taught to give will see funds increase as new people are won to Christ and incorporated into the church. As the church grows the giving increases so that there is no limit on what can be done.
- The church is transparent with the support of the pastor including benefits. They have a clear understanding of the role and responsibilities of their pastor.

### **Conclusion**

Pastors have the responsibility of teaching on giving tithes and offering, and furthermore they set an example for the flock. The pastor must play a leading role assisted by his/her leadership team to encourage giving to the church. We are



to restore systematic sacredness of giving in the church. Those who collect tithes and offering must use appropriate vessels dedicated for that task. I encourage the use of envelopes provided by the church for tithes in money form and big baskets in front of the pulpit for any kind of produce. Rural churches will have to provide a place to keep produce and livestock and develop specific strategize on how they will deal with produce and livestock. Accountability must continue to encourage the spirit of giving in the church. The pastor has the responsibility to discharge his/her roles as the shepherd of the flock. In Proverbs 27:23, King Solomon addresses the shepherds of the flock, "Be diligent to know the state of the flock, attend to your herds." We are called to bind the up broken-hearted. We are to restore the neglected into families, bringing hope to the hopeless and developing people's potential by their involvement in ministry. We can make the difference and become hard workers devoted to prayer, studying the word, teaching and preaching the living word, and seeking the salvation of the lost in sin to receive freedom in Christ. The problem is not finances but our attitude and commitment to God's work and people's lives. Remember giving is tied to vision.

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## BUDGETING BASICS

Traditional African economic systems did not include the concept of budgeting. Instead, “the financial need that occurs first has first claim on the available resources” (Maranz, p.14) and “resources are to be used, and not hoarded” (Maranz, p.16). As a result, churches and organizations in Africa often struggle with preparing and operating with a budget. Often, they will prepare something on paper to satisfy western partners, but the budget on paper has little relationship with how finances are actually managed.

However, a proper budget faithfully implemented is one of the most powerful financial tools an individual, church, or ministry can use to make sure they use resources to their maximum advantage. Budgets help individuals, churches, and ministries make sure that the funds that are needed are actually available when they are needed. The budget helps insure that resources are not wasted on things that are of lesser importance. The budget provides a basis for financial decisions that need to be made. The budget can be likened to the “rules of the road” when we are driving a motorcar – they help make sure that we arrive at our desired financial destination rather than crashing by the roadside.

Although budgeting is a relatively new concept in Africa, the idea of budgeting is as old as the Bible itself. When Joseph proposed a financial system to pharaoh to prepare for a coming drought, essentially he was presenting a 14-year budget plan. While we will rarely (if ever) work with such a long range budget (1 year is more common), the wisdom behind Joseph’s plan is the same wisdom that undergirds the budgeting that we do.

### Preparing the budget

The preparation of an operating budget begins with making a realistic prediction of what can be

expected as income in the coming year. The best way to make that prediction is to look at the financial reports of past years to see how much is normally received. A common mistake of Districts and National churches is to simply expect that the amount assigned to local churches/Districts will actually all be received. It is more realistic to look at the past year to see how much was received – it is normally safe to assume that giving patterns in the coming year will be very much the same as it was in the past.

Be careful and conservative in estimating what might be received from new streams of income since there is no history by which to judge. For example, maybe the plan is to institute a new special offering that was never collected before – although high goals may be set, for budgeting purposes do not use the goal as your figure but instead use an amount that is considerably less.

Do not include amounts that are designated for specific purposes in the operating budget. For example, you may expect to receive a certain amount for a building project, do not use that in your operating budget because you cannot use that money for operational expenses.

Be careful and conservative in estimating what might be received from new streams of income.

After estimating the income the second step in budget preparation is to predict the expenses that will be incurred in the coming year. Again, the experience of the past is the greatest predictor of the future. Be sure to include any new expenses that are anticipated and plan for the natural increases in costs that happen from year to year. If the budgeted amounts are significantly higher or lower than was actually spent the previous year then there should be a clear reason given for the difference. For

example if you are going to add a new employee, then expenses for salaries will increase; or, if you painted the church inside and out last year, you can probably budget less for maintenance this year because you will not need to repeat this expense in the coming year.

A healthy budget also includes an amount equal to 5-10% of the anticipated income for contingencies. *Contingencies* are unexpected expenses that need to be paid. Failure to plan for unexpected expenses could result in very painful spending cuts in other important areas. For example, if a District owns a vehicle, it will rightly budget for maintenance and repairs – but, if the car has a major breakdown the repair costs could easily exceed the budgeted amount forcing the District to have to choose between paying for repairs or hosting an important planned pastors’ meeting.

Include any new expenses that are anticipated and plan for the natural increases in costs.

The final step in preparing the budget is to make sure that the anticipated income is equal to or greater than the anticipated expenses. If not, then hard decisions must be made to reduce expenses in order to bring them in line with the expected income. The question we are asking ourselves is, “Since we cannot afford to do everything we want to do, how will we spend what we expect to have and what things will we not do unless we receive extra income?” Do not give into the temptation to simply change the figures on the income side of the budget so that it is sufficient to cover the expenses – those income figures should only be changed if there is very good reason to expect to receive more than you originally predicted.

### **Operating by the budget**

The budget loses its power if it is simply approved at the beginning of the year and then put back on the shelf and never referred to until

next year when we are preparing a new budget. It must be used to guide our spending decisions on a day-to-day basis. The budget enables us to make mid-course corrections so as to avoid a financial catastrophe down the road.

Monthly financial reports should be compared closely with the budget. Is the income coming in as we had expected? If not, are there steps we need to take to increase income or reduce expenses? Are our expenses equal to or less than what we had expected? If not, are there ways we can increase income to cover the increased expenses or are there ways to reduce our expenditures so they come in line with the budget?

Financial decisions should be made by reference to the budget rather than by looking at the amount of money that is on hand. Some expenses only happen once a year (or even less often, such as national conference) and it is important that we have funds on hand when those expenses arise. Remember Joseph!

We should feel comfortable and confident when spending for things for which we have budgeted, but we should not quickly approve expenditures for which we have not budgeted. The budget gives us the reason to say “no” when requests are presented to us for unplanned expenses.

Treasurers should have authority to pay expenses included in the budget, but for any other expenses should be required to get approval. In order to pay expenses not included in the budget, one should either have adequate funds in a contingency fund, be able to show that either additional income will cover the cost or that expenses had been reduced adequately on a budgeted item to cover the cost, or a plan should be put in place to reduce other expenses so the unbudgeted expense can be paid.

### **Project budgets**

An operational budget is used to guide spending, but a project budget is used as a guide in fund



raising for major project such as the construction of a building or purchase of a vehicle. In preparing a project budget one begins by predicting all of the costs involved in completing the project. One should be careful to use future costs rather than current costs in this exercise. For example, if the project is to build a new building and it's going to take three years to raise the funds, then the budget needs to reflect what the cost of materials and labour will be in three years' time so that a sufficient amount is raised for the project. The list of costs should be as detailed as possible to make sure nothing is overlooked.

Once the total cost of the project is determined then one can begin thinking about how much can be raised from various sources to meet the need. This then becomes the foundation on which a fund raising strategy can be built in order to approach potential donors and ask for their help in funding the project.

## Conclusion

In some African countries there is a period of time each year known as "hunger season". It's that period of time between when last year's harvest is all used up and the new harvest is available. "Hunger season" comes around every year. These countries need a Joseph who will help them to lay aside an adequate portion of their harvest during the time of abundance so that there will be a continuing supply all the way through the year until the new harvest is ready. Similarly we need Josephs in our churches and ministries who will develop realistic budgets that will enable us to function effectively without encountering a "hunger season" because we squandered resources in our time of plenty.

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