

THE AFRICAN LEADERSHIP LETTER

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HOW TO DEVELOP GENEROUS CHURCH MEMBERS

Introduction

The peoples' leader Moses shared the vision with the community of Israel. The focus was the erection of the tabernacle. People gave generously until the people were stopped from bringing offerings.


"They received from Moses all the offerings the Israelites had brought to carry out the work of constructing the sanctuary. And the people continued to bring freewill offerings morning after morning. So all the skilled craftsmen who were doing all the work on the sanctuary left their work and said to Moses, "The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the Lord commanded to be done." Then Moses gave an order and they sent this word throughout the camp: "No man or women is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary." And so the people were restrained from bringing more, because what they already had was more than enough to do all the work." (Exodus 36: 3-7)

A leader's responsibility is to share, challenge and mobilize members in getting involved by giving needed resources to change people's lives. We need to cultivate the culture of being generous in all seasons to the right cause with eternity in mind. King David said to the whole assembly, "...The task is great..." (1 Chronicles 29: 1); furthermore, David acknowledges that wealth and honor comes from God (1 Chronicles 29:12) and continues, "everything comes from you, and we have given only what comes from your hand" (1

Chronicles 29: 14). The question is how to develop generous church members who willingly give to the Lord's work without any reservation in advancing God kingdom on earth?

1. Shared Vision

Leaders' have the responsibility to cast great commission vision that outlines the clear specific goals in advancing God's Kingdom. The shared vision becomes the engine to pull members towards desired results; namely, lives being changed, communities transformed through planting of new churches, construction of the health clinic in the village, an orphanage in the community, the skills centre for the unemployed youth and a Bible College for preparing men and women for ministry. The contagious challenge focuses members to the great task which they own and live for daily. The shared vision has power to drive members towards the common purpose. The Lord replied Habakkuk, "Write the vision, and make it plain on tablets, that he may run that reads it" (Habakkuk 2:2). There is great potential for church members to become generous in the Lord's work. The Macedonian church member's situation was a good excuse for not being generous but the cause which brought them together was greater than their economic status. Despite




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ECONOMIC STATUS

the challenges faced but, “they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability” (2 Corinthians 8: 3).

2. Celebration Stories

Leaders must never cease to cast the shared vision. Furthermore, leaders intentionally help church members to celebrate milestones or accomplishments of the shared vision. Remember, church members are generous to a winning cause that is making a tremendous impact in people’s lives. Our church members are searching for evidence that their giving has made a difference in people’s lives. They want to be sure that their giving is helping the church to accomplish its shared vision in affecting more people positively. It will encourage church members hearing the stories or testimonies of changed lives, watching video clips of construction projects, the impact of the health clinic in the village offering basic health care, Bible College graduates reaching unreached people groups. Celebrations build excitement and the sense of accomplishment in life. Furthermore, it stretches the heart of church members to become even more generous and inviting others to be involved in the good cause of changing lives.



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WINNING CAUSE THAT IS MAKING A
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3. Benefits of being generous

Paul writes to Ephesians, “Praise is to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ” (Ephesians 1:3). We have been greatly blessed by God, and David acknowledges that wealth and honor comes from God (1

Chronicles 29:12) and continues, “everything comes from you, and have given only what comes from your hand” (1 Chronicles 29:14). It’s vital for church members to know and experience the benefits of giving generously to the Lord’s work. King Solomon observed, “A generous man will prosper; he who refreshes others will himself be refreshed” (Proverbs 11:25). We are giving generously not buying God’s favor or gifts; but it’s our expression of heart; not expecting anything in return. The benefits of giving generously: may be good health, a child obtaining a free scholarship, divine protection for the family against theft, all family basic needs being supplied, all children serving God in ministry and living a good healthy marriage life. In sowing generously, Paul brings this truth, “Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness” (2 Corinthians 9:10). We need to encourage church members to give testimonies of their generous giving to get others involved in changing lives. Their testimonies will increase faith and challenge others to get involved in the good cause of bringing change in our world. Remember, “It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35). There rewards for those who are generous in changing people lives, making a difference in advancing God’s Kingdom.

Conclusion

I believe church members need a challenge and mobilization in being involved in advancing God’s kingdom by their generous giving. King Solomon said, “Honor the Lord with your possessions” (Proverbs 3:9-10). Honor is an act of worship, adoration of the Living God. Worship is not an event but a lifestyle that exalts the Lord Jesus Christ. When church members’ hearts are right with God or in consistent fellowship with the

Holy Spirit, they will become generous in giving for the good cause of advancing God's kingdom. It's our leaders' responsibility to share about the needs and challenge members to be involved. The results are from God who speaks to the heart of those individual members in church. Let's remember, "For God loves a cheerful giver....." (2 Corinthians 9:7).

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HOW TO DEVELOP GENEROUS CHURCHES

“Practice what you preach.”

“What you are doing speaks so loudly that I can't hear what you are saying.”

“Actions speak louder than words.”

These sayings remind us of the importance of being sure that we live up to the message we are preaching to our congregations. To encourage others to do something that we are unwilling to do ourselves is the ultimate in hypocrisy.

In our churches we often have much to say to church members about how they use their financial resources. We encourage them to tithe and give generously. We encourage them to trust God to supply their needs. We promise them that God rewards those who are generous with what God has entrusted them.

But, too often the way we manage finances collectively as a church contradicts what we are telling our people they should do. We want a church filled with generous members, but the church itself does not demonstrate the grace of generosity. When a church demonstrates generosity as a body, it is much more likely that its members will likewise demonstrate generosity.



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LIKEWISE DEMONSTRATE GENEROSITY.**


There are different kinds of churches when it comes to how they manage their finances. Perhaps you will recognize your church in one of the following.

- **Miserly church:** These churches hold on tightly to the money they receive and let go of it only grudgingly and in small amounts. Their pastors are often poorly paid – way below the church’s ability. The church building often is poorly maintained and in disrepair. When financial needs arise they look to the District or to others to help them out. Yet often they are accumulating significant balances in the bank as they store away their funds for safe keeping. They are similar to the servant in Matthew 25:14-30 who hid his master’s money in a hole in the ground instead of putting it to good use. Like the unfaithful servant, such churches are fearful that when needs arise that they won’t have the money they need. Unfortunately they fail to experience the blessings that come from investing what has been entrusted to them in the church in the work of expanding the kingdom.
- **Selfish church:** These churches do make use of the money they receive, but it is all used on things that benefit them directly as a church and not on the needs of others or to help with kingdom work in other places. While it is a good thing to keep improving the church facilities and programs, it should be balanced with a similar investment in ministry outside the local congregation. Often these churches take great pride in what they have built for themselves, but they are blind to the needs of others, especially those who have not yet come to know the Savior. They are aptly described like the church in Laodicea, “You say, ‘I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.’ But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked.”

These churches often are overextended. That is, the amount needed to meet their

“needs” is such that there is nothing left to invest in ministry in other places. It is not unusual for them to complain that they are unable to meet their obligation to the District or support the Bible College or give to missions or help plant a new church because they can barely meet their own needs.


- **Wasteful church:** Some churches readily spend what they receive on whatever someone in the church gets excited about, without giving due consideration of how it fits with the focus and mission of the church. These churches are like the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32 who received his fortune from his father and then immediately “squandered his wealth in wild living”. Instead of planning for the future and investing wisely, he just used it for anything he wanted simply because he had the ability. Unfortunately for the prodigal son and churches like him, undisciplined management of finances leads quickly to the loss of resources with nothing lasting to show for it. On the surface such churches might appear to be “generous” because they are spending freely, but unless used wisely the money is just wasted and there is little or no kingdom impact.



UNDISCIPLINED MANAGEMENT OF FINANCES LEADS QUICKLY TO THE LOSS OF RESOURCES WITH NOTHING LASTING TO SHOW FOR IT.

- **Generous church:** A generous church is one which recognizes that they are stewards of the money that is received and God expects them to use those resources to advance the purposes and interests of His kingdom. The funds are

invested wisely to enable ministry locally and beyond and church members are excited about what God is doing through them as a church in the hearts and lives of others. As with any church, generous churches also face unexpected financial needs (e.g. part of the roof blows off; a crisis in the community; etc.) but they trust God to provide – and He does, through His people.



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Obviously we all want to be part of a generous church. But how can that happen? Can a miserly or selfish or wasteful church become a generous church? Yes, but since we are talking about bringing about a cultural change within the church, we need to recognize that this change will come to pass over a period of time. There is no simple 3, 5, or 7 step process, but here are some principles that may help us bring about this important change in the churches we lead.

- Generosity begins at the top. Generous leaders build generous churches which in turn build generous members. It begins with us. Unless we as leaders are living a generous lifestyle, our efforts to create a generous church are likely to be futile. Just like the churches we lead, we as leaders can be miserly, selfish, wasteful, or generous and we must allow the Holy Spirit to convict us in our own lives when we are demonstrating anything other than generosity. The

power of the model that we give in our own lives should not be underestimated.

- Churches must manage finances in a disciplined and responsible manner. The church's ability to respond generously to ministry needs is enhanced by the wise management of resources. (Remember the prodigal son!) Regular obligations of the church should be budgeted for and satisfied as the first order of business. That would include the church's District assessment, pastor's support, rent and utilities, and any other regular financial obligations involved in operating the church.

For example, several African Wesleyan churches recently have been in danger of losing their property because of their failure to pay utilities and rates to the municipality for an extended period of time. Now when the municipalities are putting pressure on the church for the payment of those outstanding accounts the church is finding itself (like the prodigal son) unable to meet their own needs, let alone to contribute to ministry beyond their local community. Disciplined and responsible financial management through the years would have enabled these churches to avoid such a situation.

Responsible management also includes the careful protection of funds entrusted to the church for specific purposes. For example, if the church raises money to help send a student to Bible College, it must not "borrow" that money for other needs that come up.

- Churches should celebrate what God is doing through them in other places. Church members need to hear and rejoice together how God is using them collectively to make a kingdom impact.

Historically, *Malihambe* offerings in southern Africa were opportunities for churches to celebrate together as they contributed to church expansion and missions. Regrettably, in some places that spirit of joyous generosity has been replaced by selfish interests as churches have fought to benefit from the offering rather than to enthusiastically contribute to the expansion of God's work.

When churches are miserly, selfish, or wasteful, church members view themselves as giving "to" the church rather than giving "through" the church. But when the church celebrates the work being accomplished both locally and elsewhere through their giving, the members themselves are more inclined to give joyfully and generously rather than grudgingly and stingily.

- Churches need a clear kingdom focus in their vision and mission. Church leaders need to regularly remind their people that the church exists in order to reach those who are not yet part of the family. Our reason for existing is to "make disciples of all nations" whether that be in our own community or elsewhere. That missional focus should guide all the financial decisions made by the local church.

It is said that you can tell what is most important to a person by seeing how they use their money – is it pleasure, family, security, etc.? Similarly a local church's priorities can be easily discerned by how it's resources are utilized. A mission statement is a wonderful thing for a church to have – but what the church really sees as its mission is proven in its use of finances.

- Deliberate strategies should be put in place to ensure generosity becomes a

real practice. It is easy to talk about being generous, but a plan helps turn the talk into reality. For example, some churches have set a percentage of their tithes and offerings (usually 10%) to be set aside for missions. Other churches take the entire tithes and offerings one Sunday a quarter and use it to support church planting. Still other churches, when buying new chairs for their church also buy a new chair for a church plant for every chair they buy for themselves. The important thing is that there is a deliberate plan the church has agreed upon to ensure that they are truly being generous in fact and not just in talk.

- Give members an opportunity to join in acts of generosity. When the church is generous it will inspire its members to be generous as well. While it is good to use money from regular tithes and offerings to be a blessing to God's work outside our church, it also is good to promote special offerings for these kinds of projects. It's important for members to feel like they are participating in the giving and not simply that the church is giving on their behalf.

The Wesleyan Church in Africa is coming alive to the Great Commission like never before in its history. Missionaries are being sent, new fields are being, and churches are being planted in places that had never heard of the Wesleyan Church before. For this to continue and expand there also needs to be a corresponding growth in truly generous churches – churches that see themselves as privileged to be part of God's work of releasing material resources to see His work extended near and far. May God help us as church leaders to develop generous churches!

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## A LEADER'S TASK: RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

### INTRODUCTION:

One cannot talk about development without talking about the ingredients that facilitate the process of development. These ingredients are referred as resources. Resources could be animate or inanimate objects. Development and resources are inseparable factors that are also naturally synonymous to humanity. When once development is mentioned the aspect of man and resources come to play outstandingly. By the manifestation of His love and divine care, God created resources and initiated the aspect of development in their midst. He created all resources including man, and further instructed him to have dominion over all and produce in order to increase in number. The following discussion will highlight the significance of resource development using the Biblical, social and economic points of view.

### Meanings:

Resources – According to the Dictionary, (a)

it is anything that can be used to accomplish a given project. (b) It is some one's capacity to deal with situations.

Development – (a) The process of increasing the size of a given object. (b) The reproduction of new cells to increase the quantum.

Having looked at the definitions, let us carefully study the above mentioned viewpoints relating to resource development.

### BIBLICAL RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT

God established the aspect of development and resources since creation. "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it...and have dominion over every living thing that moves upon the earth." Gen. 1:28.

Genesis depicts that man is fully responsible for the resources on earth. As people who are created in the image of God,

believers are therefore agents of development. The children of God should create a conducive environment for the expansion of the available resources consistently. "Be fruitful and multiply" clearly indicates that stewardship of creation such as fish of the sea, birds of the air, plants, and all creatures are squarely under the stewardship of man.

The book of Numbers chapter 35 provides an example of civic policy creating conditions for the growth of resources. Numbers also suggests that excellence and wisdom are required elements to facilitate growth in an effective, efficient and sustainable manner. Mankind therefore must be wise to use what we have by maximizing it to yield for both the present and future generations. The children of God must grow in their spiritual and natural resources. As stewards the church should care for the vegetation, the sea, the land, the beasts and the human race on earth. Man should be conscious of the fact that the universe is under his care to ensure the continuity of generations of all species.

## **SOCIAL RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

Prior to development is the establishment of relationships between man and other resources in society. "And God said, let us make man in our image, and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the fowl of the air, over the cattle and over all the earth." Gen. 1:26. As a steward of all resources man should possess qualities that can enable him to relate well with his community. The church as an agent of growth should work on the behavioral pattern of its members in order to create a conducive atmosphere to foster growth. Transforming the behavior of people does not just occur overnight; it takes constant teaching over a long period of time. The fundamental components that the church

can use to transform society are discipleship, evangelism and educational programs. Before he ascended to heaven, Jesus Christ mandated his followers to make disciples (produce their kind) and teach all that he had entrusted unto them. They should carry responsibility from their native home to the rest of the earth. Matthew 28:19-20. This implies that the church has been given the responsibility to reproduce its kind through teaching, nurturing, counseling and mentoring. When people are well nurtured they will possess the right attitude to meet their desired results. It is therefore incumbent upon pastors, teachers, counselors, lawyers, parents and other elders of society to engage their communities through discipleship seminars, education and evangelism. Robust discipleship activities can bring changes among members in their thinking, habits, values, attitudes, interest, culture and tradition and thereby cumulatively develop their behavior to meet the desirable character towards development.

A society with well refined character will relate well with its children, youth, women and men. A community with a sound social resource development is a place where human right principles are observed considerably rather than engage in degrading activities such as child abuse, drug abuse, early marriage, teenage pregnancy sex labor etc. Educating children from kindergarten stage to senior secondary school will capture the young and make them instruments of development in society for the rest of their life. A socially resourced development community does not only relate well with its people but also with its natural resources as well. Man should protect and not destroy the land, nor cause deforestation and increase global warming. As an agent of development, man



should not pollute the sea and terminate sea values.

Most countries in the world are struggling with the aspect of developing their resources today because they either fail to use the appropriate tools or are completely ignorant of them.

It would be most helpful if the church engages society and increases its capacity through discipleship, education and evangelism programs. Being a global village, the church can easily and quickly engage the world through print and electronic media. Doing it now will prevent struggles in the present and future generations.

## **ECONOMIC RESOURCE DEVELOPMENT**

The economic aspect of resource development is identified by the fund raising activities a particular group is engaged in. Every sound agent of development is overwhelmed with the passion to provide beyond the basic needs of his subjects. The role of man is first of all to ensure the security of his domain. These include the protection of land, beasts and man himself. As responsible stewards, the children of God should cater for the wellbeing of those under his care. The under mentioned cases are important factors to consider in addressing economic resource development:

- Mobilize resources to support



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operations of the organization

- Establish income generation activities so that members can play part in the development trend.
- Identify potentials and guide and place them in the appropriate field of operations. This may be vocational, technology or academic.
- Secure agents of development and establish contact that will bring maximum profit to the beneficiaries, especially where social cooperate responsibility is applicable.
- Ensure proper management and supervision of resources to prevent leakages or wastage

## **CONCLUSION:**

Resource development is a primary responsibility of the human race since creation. Just in the midst of the creation process, God instructed man to add both quality and quantity to these resources. However, much increase in value of resources is not seen in society today. It is therefore a golden call for the human race to return to the purpose of creation. Man should have dominion over creation and behave responsibly by being fruitful and multiply. Humanity should take the role of an agent who has the passion to overcome the perpetual struggles prevailing in societies today by turning back to the origin they were created for.



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