



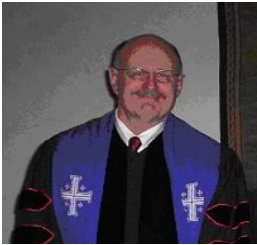
The Grapevine

CONNECTING THE CONGREGATIONS OF THE PRESBYTERY OF DETROIT

November 2018

Kitchen Table Giving: Reimagining How Congregations Connect with Their Donors

(2018, kitchentablegiving.com) by William Enright



by the Rev. Dr. Allen D. Timm, Executive Presbyter

Long time pastor at Second Presbyterian Church, Indianapolis, and Director of the Lake Institute on Faith and Giving, has written a book that shares his insights on how people of faith give their money. They give after talking at a kitchen-table-like conversation. After meaningful presentation and discussion, they hear a call to give to ministry that extends their vision.

One day a couple asked to see Dr. Enright. When they sat down, they shared a vision they had for a ministry that would make a big impact. They had been talking about the situations of most young clergy. They were called to help new clergy start their ministry on a solid footing, and volunteered to fund a program that would host two new pastors for a period of two years. During this period they would learn about ministry. It would mirror the path a new M.D. takes in residency. They would be shown the ropes by a gifted pastor and or staff. They would learn the ups and downs of ministry. The new pastors who have a learning rotation in each area of the church. The session adopted the idea, and established a residency for newly ordained ministers. After two years, the same couple arrived in

Enright's office to reflect on the residency. After a conversation that evaluated the project and its outcomes, the couple said, "Marjorie and I have been talking. We want to keep the project going." They handed the Dr. Enright an even larger check to keep the project going for another two years" (p.1).

Conversations over mission and purpose between partners lead to gifts that reflect their faith in Christ and their desire to express that faith. There was a time that all that was asked for giving to the church as an announcement from the pulpit. Enright presents a convincing argument that with so many organizations sending us requests for money, we have to find a new approach to ask people for their financial gifts. People no longer want to give to maintain an institution. Their giving extends their personal mission. This is faith based giving.

Enright's book spells out five principles of faith based giving.

1. "The donor's perception of an institution's leaders. How do the leaders represent the institutions they serve?
2. "Clarity as to the institution's mission and vision. Donors want to know what God has called you to be and do and how you do what your do.

3. "Organizational readiness. Is everyone on board with all the key players ready to lead the fundraising charge? Donors are reluctant to support marginal or failing campaigns.

4. "Faith and religious beliefs. In what ways do donors see their giving to the church as giving to God?

5. "The congregation's practice of fundraising. Is the annual program a joyful practice or a tiresome dirge" (p. 10)?

Enright's book takes up one of these themes in each chapter. At the end of the chapter Enright presents questions for personal reflection, group discussion, and action steps to take as a congregation. These could be used by a staff, stewardship committee, and better yet, the entire session. There is a connection between the giver, member or not, with the desire to be part of something bigger than themselves. They want to give to efforts that extend their vision of Christ's call to lift up the cross in the world. These potential givers will reflect across kitchen-table-like settings before to hear the call of Christ to service through their giving.

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HOW TO DEVELOP HABITS FOR WELL-BEING

Seminaries and social work programs often ask their students to create a self-care plan. Not only does this send a message about self-care while pursuing a degree, ordination, or certification, it also makes clear that self-care is a life-long commitment for those who serve the church and others. High demands and weak support systems can foster a toxic environment for clergy health. Therefore, some experts see a problem with the idea of *self-care*, which suggests that responsibility for clergy well-being falls entirely on the pastor. Clergy health and well-being involve three systems: the individual pastor's lifestyle, family and friends, and the congregation or denomination. Although all three systems share responsibility, this issue focuses primarily on the role of clergy.

Making Better Choices

Mounting research finds that genetic differences are less important for longevity and health than previously asserted. Twin studies reveal that genetics only account for 25% of the defining forces related to life span. What accounts for the rest? Lifestyle choices and habits. For example, Sanjay Gupta lists five habits that can extend a person's life by a decade or more: eating a healthy diet, exercising regularly, maintaining a healthy body weight, consuming alcohol in moderation, and never smoking.¹

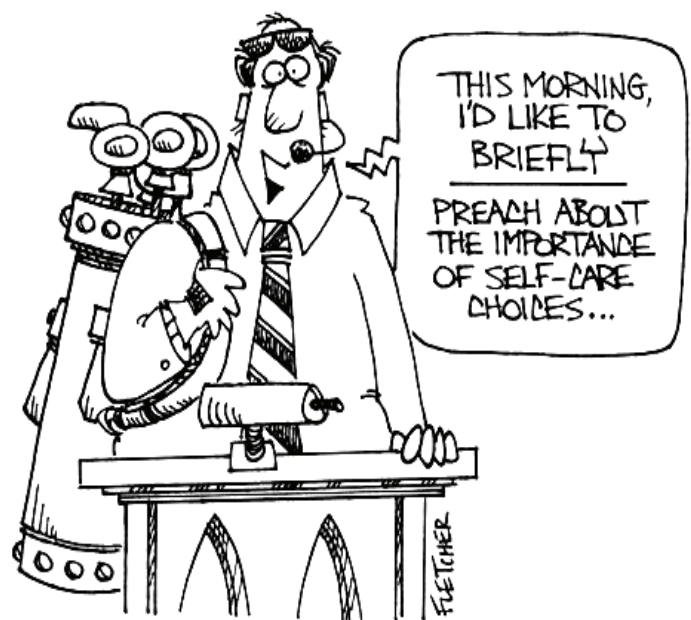
Models of well-being incorporate additional elements beyond physical health because studies find clear links between mental, social, and physical health. For instance, scientists are beginning to pay attention to a sixth healthy habit: maintaining a strong social network. Although positive emotions and moods relate to overall health, they only produce short-term impacts. Positive mental health combined with high psychological and social functioning delivers greater long-term health.²

Map Your Self-Care Plan

Before you can make deliberate changes to construct a personalized self-care plan, you must know where you

are already strong and where you need to focus to see improvement. The self-care wheel, available in multiple versions, is such a tool and illustrates the interaction between multiple dimensions of daily life.³ Imagine a pie cut into six equal parts with each section representing one area of your life: physical, psychological, emotional, spiritual, personal, and professional. If you imagine the center as zero and the outer edge of the pie section as ten, you can rank your satisfaction level within each area by drawing a line to create your own outer edge for each area.

When the findings are graphed onto the pie, some sections are longer or shorter than others. The shorter areas reflect areas of life where functioning can be improved. For example, lower scores in the spiritual area might prompt someone to explore new spiritual practices, participate in a small spirituality group, or other actions aimed at creating greater levels of life satisfaction and balance. Ultimately, you see your full life balance picture and can begin to consider how to improve the whole.



Other approaches entail completing short questionnaires (see the Buffalo School of Social Work for an easy to complete example⁴). Or clergy can honestly answer questions like:

- How often in the past two years has poor physical health, emotional problems, or family demands interfered with your ministry effectiveness? How do you cope in such situations?
- What practices do you regularly engage in that sustain you physically, emotionally, and spiritually? Are additional efforts needed to support your well-being and reduce stress?
- How would a spouse or best friend answer these questions? Your coworkers?

The value of these approaches is that the agency for making better choices rests with the individual. A friend of the late Senator John McCain remarked that he was not very good at lying to himself. McCain would joke that his biggest accomplishment as a Navy pilot was crashing five jet planes, reflecting his belief that “We cannot forever hide the truth about ourselves, from ourselves.”⁵ Authenticity or self-integrity is a gift to be treasured.

Create and Enact Your Self-Care Plan

Just as there is no “right way” to experience God, there is no “right way” to find a greater sense of well-being. Once you have mapped what your current life balance looks like on the pie chart and honestly answered questions about your life habits, take time to make a solid plan. For the areas of your life where you are strong, write a few sentences about how to maintain or even enhance those areas. For areas that are closer to zero, write down goals to help you increase your satisfaction. You also want to periodically check in on how you’re doing with these goals to see if you need to revise any of them as your life changes. It is okay to begin with only one or two areas. Finally, find someone who cares about you to hold you accountable and who is willing to help you achieve these goals. It’s best to find someone in a similar situation as you, such as another clergy member. Share your self-care plans and meet regularly to check in with each other.

Remember that people will be motivated to form new habits by different incentives and identities. These differences mean that no two people will choose an identical path to a more satisfying life and that the goals you set must be tailored to work for you.

Congregational and Denominational Support

Every congregation should have a functioning personnel committee because a church cannot succeed unless the pastor succeeds. The regular interaction between the committee and the pastor contributes to the pastor’s overall ministry and life satisfaction, assists the pastor in establishing priorities and boundaries, and supports the pastor’s self-care choices. The pastor and the committee members must share a vision for ministry and a shared understanding of the pastor’s gifts.

Several denominations began to recognize that support for pastors needed to extend beyond seminary. For example, the Church Pension Group of the Episcopal Church started CREDO, a conference for pastors aimed at enhancing clergy wellness. Participants explore four areas—spiritual, vocational, financial, and physical/psychological health—in a week-long community experience. The Board of Pensions, Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.), launched a similar national clergy program to help pastors examine their health and replenish their spirit. Other judicatories and denominations invite their clergy to workshops and experiences that help pastors deal with stress, nurture spiritual vitality, and promote flourishing ministry. Congregational leaders should encourage the pastor to participate in such conferences.

Well-Being Is a Journey

The good news of the gospel says again and again, “Behold, I make all things new” (Rev 21:5). People, who are made in the image of God, are free to make choices. And they are free to make new choices. Begin with one new self-care practice today. Begin with one new way of finding joy in life. Try it on and risk failure. Pastors and people of faith can count on the promise of John 10:10: “I have come that they might have life and have it abundantly.”

1. Dr. Sanjay Gupta, “Forget science (for now); living longer is in your hands,” <https://www.cnn.com/2018/07/27/health/living-longer-sanjay-gupta/index.html>.

2. R. J. Proschold-Bell and J. Byassee, *Faithful and Fractured: Responding to the Clergy Health Crisis* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 2018), 112-113.

3. <http://www.olgaphoenix.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/Self-Care-Wheel-Final.pdf>

4. <https://socialwork.buffalo.edu/content/dam/socialwork/home/self-care-kit/self-care-assessment.pdf>

5. https://www.brainyquote.com/quotes/john_mccain_135484

GETTING TO KNOW OUR NEIGHBORS ONE-ON-ONE INTERVIEWS

Holding conversations with neighbors can provide church leaders with vital information about the community. A one-on-one interview takes the process a step further by structuring the conversation around a set of questions prepared in advance so that church leaders can focus on what matters most: tailoring ministry that is most appropriate for this neighborhood, these people, and this time.

Listening: An Essential First Step

Joy Skjegstad, who consults with churches on community ministry, finds that many churches prefer to skip the listening step and simply launch into a new project. “It is faster to plan programming without it, because listening takes time.”¹ Church leaders also tell her that they find it intimidating to meet people they do not know, especially when people in the community come from different ethnic, cultural, socioeconomic, or religious backgrounds than church members. Finally, Skjegstad suspects that some church leaders do not want new information to contradict their long-held assumptions, arguing that “community listening can be a humbling process. People in the community may tell you things you don’t want to hear.”²

Faith-based community organizers consider one-on-one interviews to be an essential tool in getting to know the neighborhood. The Reverend Dennis Jacobsen, an Evangelical Lutheran pastor and community organizer, observes that organizing efforts can falter without relationship building. The one-on-one interview is a primary way to achieve this goal. “Organizing misses its calling,” Jacobsen writes, “when it becomes a swirl of frenetic activity, . . . running past and over human beings. One-on-ones slow things down, restore needed focus, and serve as a reminder of the human dimension of this work.”³

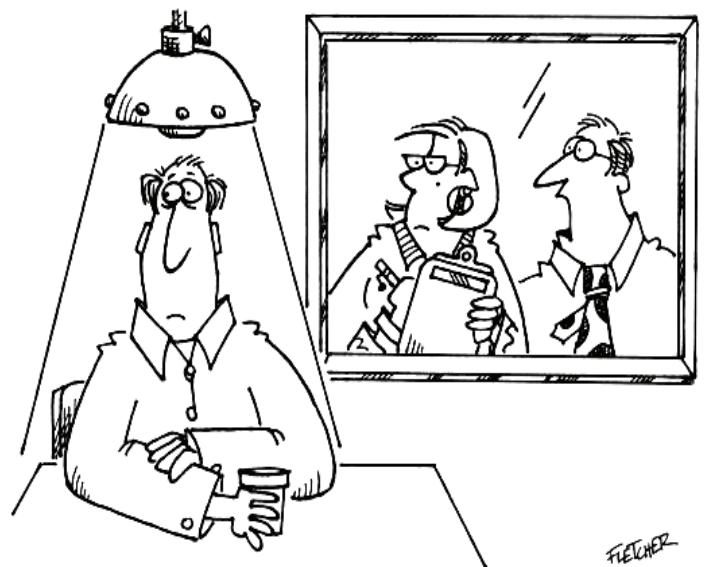
Interviewing Basics

Interviews come in three styles: structured, unstructured, and semi-structured. If you want to get to know

the person or community, try an *unstructured interview*. Start with a broad question about your interviewee’s experience and then let the conversation flow in whatever direction it will. However, if you want to assess a community’s needs or analyze a particular problem, a *structured interview* may serve the purpose better. In this case, ask questions about specific issues. At the extreme end of the structured format, this interview may resemble a verbal questionnaire with answer options limited to yes or no answers. The *semi-structured interview* strikes a compromise between the two styles, utilizing predetermined questions while allowing respondents to use whatever language they are most comfortable with or allowing them to wander from the topic as it suits them.⁴

A basic unstructured interview may be the easiest type of interview to perform. Social scientists Andrea Fontana and James Frey offer the following seven steps for preparing for and carrying out an interview.

1. *Access the setting.* How do you “get in to” wherever the interview will take place? This question must be asked because interviews typically do not take place on your own



“I STILL THINK WE SHOULD HAVE GONE WITH AN UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW.”

turf but in the field. How you access the setting depends on the group you are studying. One researcher-author had to buy a motorcycle and hang out where Hell's Angels were known to gather in order to interview them for a book he was writing. While this may be an extreme case, it illustrates a point: in order to interview someone, you need to enter their setting, not invite them to yours.

2. *Understand the language and culture.* An interpreter may help you understand the person you interview, but that is no guarantee you will understand the culture. If you are non-Hispanic, it may feel puzzling to answer a volley of questions about whether you are married and other personal questions about familial relationships. Yet the family holds a key place in Hispanic culture. Ignoring this reality may result in “mis-translation” even if you have a great interpreter.

3. *Decide how to present yourself.* Whether you dress up or dress down may be subject to misunderstanding. Dressing up may create suspicion among some populations such as undocumented immigrants or blue-collar workers, who might misinterpret your intentions. On the other hand, if you are interviewing parishioners in a Sunday morning church setting at a Black church, dressing down might be seen as disrespectful to God. Best practice in many cases might be to try matching your dress to that of the person being interviewed.

4. *Locate an informant.* You may need someone who can act as a guide to the local culture and its distinctive idiom. In one low-income neighborhood in Syracuse, New York, a woman known as “the mayor” of the neighborhood regularly welcomes her neighbors for evening gatherings on her front porch. She would qualify as a good informant.

5. *Gain trust.* Gaining trust may serve as an important prelude to getting someone to talk about themselves. Trust may not be such an issue for someone known to be outspoken on public issues, but it may be more essential if the interview concerns sensitive matters.

6. *Establish rapport.* Developing a strong connection between you and the person you interview, can open the door to a deeper dive into important information. Establishing rapport might not be crucial in some cases. For example, if your goal is to survey as many people as possible on a given issue, establishing a strong connection might take too long. Neighborhood surveys do not typically require deep rapport with everyone you poll.

7. *Collect the data.* How will you record what you find out? The most thorough techniques (video or audio), may seem the best, yet they might be the most intrusive.

In some cases, note-taking may even have an off-putting effect, so you might try taking mental notes and writing it up in private soon afterward. Best practices for collecting data include (1) taking notes regularly and writing them down immediately; (2) writing everything down even if it seems unimportant; (3) trying to be inconspicuous in talking notes; and (4) analyzing your notes often.⁵

The Roving Listener Style

Broadway United Methodist Church in Indianapolis offers one example of how to conduct interviews in the neighborhood. The church hired a “roving listener” to wander through the neighborhood and spend time with people he encountered. This person focused not on neighbors’ needs but on their gifts, passions, and hopes for the community. The interviewer asked these questions:

- What three things do you do well enough that you could teach others how to do?
- What three things would you like to learn?
- Who, besides God and me, is going with you along the way?⁶

Nothing beats a direct one-on-one interview for learning about the community and building relationships. Sometimes we may be surprised by the willingness of our neighbors to express their faith in personal, direct terms outside the worship setting. One researcher, who conducted one-on-one interviews for a faith-based community organization, tells about a neighbor who wanted to pray for her interviewer as the conversation concluded. “Lord Jesus,” she said, “help us work together to change things here. Thank you for this new friend. Give us your Spirit and your power, and we will turn this city around.”⁷

1. Joy F. Skjeggstad, *Seven Models for Community Ministry* (Valley Forge, PA: Judson, 2013), 12.

2. *Ibid.*, 13.

3. Dennis Jacobsen, *Doing Justice: Congregations and Community Organizing* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001), 60.

4. Scott Thumma, “Methods for Studying Congregations,” in *Studying Congregations: A New Handbook*, ed. Nancy Ammerman et al. (Nashville: Abingdon, 1998), 206.

5. Andrea Fontana and James Frey, “The Interview,” in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman Denzin and Yvonne Lincoln, 2nd ed. (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2000), 654–56.

6. Paul Nixon, *Fling Open the Doors: Giving the Church Away to the Community* (Nashville: Abingdon, 2002), 22–23.

7. Richard Wood, *Faith in Action: Religion, Race, and Democratic Organizing in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002), 165.