

CASE STUDY



Generosity Reimagined

How Two Churches Discovered
That Discipleship Is the
Path to Increased Giving

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STEWARDSHIP



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SUMMARY

Two pastors reflect on their experiences with Horizons Stewardship as a guide for designing and implementing a fully integrated generosity initiative that combined contextually relevant strategies with best practices and resulted in increased spiritual growth and generous giving throughout their congregation.

This case study summarizes each church's experience in identifying their need to address generosity in a new way, evaluating the use of outside counsel, their coordination with Horizons throughout the process, and the resulting increase in connection, focus, and momentum as communities of faith.

PASTORS AND CHURCHES FEATURED

Pastor David Emmert

Celebration Baptist Church (Tallahassee, Florida)

Average Weekly Attendance: 950

Dr. Jason Wellman

Scioto Ridge United Methodist Church (Columbus, Ohio)

Average Weekly Attendance: 500



CASE STUDY

GENEROSITY REIMAGINED

Traditional approaches to fully funding local church ministry are becoming less effective as giving habits and expectations change. Add to that the complexity of hybrid worship and discipleship experiences, and it becomes clear new methods, strategies, and ideas must be implemented to ensure the local church remains viable moving forward.

Churches have effectively utilized campaigns to inspire their congregations about future ministry potential and invite them to give above and beyond their current tithes and offerings. While this approach has been tremendously successful and will continue to be, it is not a fit for every church in every season of ministry.

Some church leaders are exploring, experimenting, and benefiting from a more integrated approach to generosity that organizes ministry needs into a unified effort, supports a more consistent and integrated communications approach, clearly articulates the life change and impact that results from a focused ministry plan, and ensures any generosity effort is grounded in their discipleship pathway.

LOOKING FOR A NEW APPROACH

“Our church had been through capital campaigns in the past. What we didn’t have was a way to increase overall giving consistently,” says Pastor David Emmert.

Dr. Jason Wellman says, “When I arrived, the church was growing and needed to pay down debt. We were going to need help, but a failed effort with another consultant had left leadership hesitant to look for outside counsel.”

Both pastors remarked they knew, understood, and appreciated the capital campaign, and they believe it is the right vehicle to accelerate giving in certain seasons of ministry. But they also



CASE STUDY

knew that they needed more than just an episodic infusion of cash to fund a ministry project. They needed to shift the generosity culture of their church.

A PARTNER FOR THE JOURNEY AHEAD

“After a failed attempt with a previous consultant, I led our staff to complete a deeper approach to due diligence. Each member researched consultants and companies and came back together to evaluate them as a group,” says Pastor Emmert.

He continues, “This allowed each member to educate themselves, establish criteria to determine who might be a good fit, and arrive at a decision that everyone felt good about. It was important to me that everyone be on the same page.”

Dr. Wellman says, “We needed a partner and someone who would walk with us through this journey. Our previous experience was with a very qualified consultant who largely just told us what to do and left it up to our leadership and me to figure out how to get it done.”

“Our church needed a process that fit our church and one that would help us live into the vision we could see so clearly,” says Dr. Wellman.

AN UNANTICIPATED OPTION WITH NEW POSSIBILITIES

“When Horizons explained how they were finding success with churches like us who were combining capital needs with operating needs, it had never occurred to us to consider such an approach,” says Pastor Emmert.

He continues, “It seemed like a great fit for our church. We could resolve our present funding challenges while also addressing the need to grow regular, operational giving, too.”



CASE STUDY

“Our leadership experienced Horizons completely different than the previous consultant. They listened to us, made sure they understood our unique challenges and invited us to consider a different approach to ministry funding that opened up what seemed like endless possibilities,” says Dr. Wellman.

He continues, “We had some very capable people on our committee. Some were not only successful in business but also had institutional fundraising experience. Horizons carefully walked us through their process and framework and helped us make it our own. Everyone agreed this was the right fit for our church.”

THE HOPE OF A NEW APPROACH TO GENEROSITY

Pastor Emmert says, “We learned early in the process that our top givers weren’t even fully aware of the entirety of the ministry opportunity, impact, and life change that I could see so clearly.”

“It occurred to me that we had not done the work we needed to do to tell a unified story that invited them into a discipleship and spiritual growth opportunity rather than just a financial commitment.” He continues.

Dr. Wellman says, “We had lots of little funds that had emerged over the years, and we needed a reset. We are one church, and we needed one plan to get behind, pray about, and support.”

“It was critical in the life of the church that everyone begins to see that they have a role to play in increasing impact and life change. We needed to remind everyone that when they give, they support the mission of the church,” he continues.



CASE STUDY

A UNIFIED APPROACH

Pastor Emmert says, “Our church seemed to adapt to this new approach almost instantly, and for me, it became a way to organize people, media, and programs into a unified story that I could share in a seemingly infinite number of ways.”

“For the first time, some of our longstanding supporters and leaders saw what I saw—a church that was building people, families, communities, and making a difference. As a result, they were even more confident in the future,” he continues.

Dr. Wellman says, “At first, some of our church was concerned we had left our desire to eliminate the debt behind. But later, they realized that eliminating debt was less about the balance sheet and more about paving the way for the future of our capacity to do more ministry.”

“We changed the narrative, and that changed how people experienced church and helped them grow in their faith and their giving,” he continues.

CELEBRATING GENEROSITY

Pastor Emmert says, “We’ve continued to invest in our partnership with Horizons. As a result, we’ve seen total giving dollars increase 100% over the past five years. Today, we are operating with a surplus, very close to being debt-free, purchased three acres for campus expansion with no debt, and have increased our pastoral staff by two.”

“What seemed impossible at the beginning of our work with Horizons now seems possible, and generosity through discipleship has changed not only the culture of our church but also our ability to advance our ministry plan with clarity and confidence,” he continues.

Dr. Wellman says, “We experienced an increase in the number of pledges as well as an increase



CASE STUDY

in the amount pledged. We've reduced our debt by nearly \$1,000,000 while also being able to start and expand new ministries and add new staff positions.”

“To see more than 60 households pledge for the first time was evidence that discipleship is the key to increased generosity,” he continues.

ADVICE FOR OTHER LEADERS

Pastor Emmert says, “I would encourage any pastor not to put off the stewardship and generosity conversation in their church. Stop seeing buildings and ministry as two separate things. It's all ministry, and the sooner your people understand that, they'll grow faster in their faith and their generosity.”

“I would also tell any pastor not to do this alone. Find a partner. For us, it was Horizons. Our ROI continues to remain strong,” he continues.

Dr. Wellman says, “When your vision is right, and your people are united around it, God will work through your people to grow them in their faith and their giving. Keep pushing forward. Don't let off the gas pedal.”

“I would also say it's acceptable and appropriate to talk about money and giving. It's key to growing disciples. Don't back away. Instead, be bold and confident,” he continues.

NOW MORE THAN EVER

The ministry of the local church has never been more important. It's vital that generosity be part of your discipleship pathway and that churches invite others to grow with them in their faith and their generosity.



CASE STUDY

Leaders willing to take a stand for generosity will see how it will build your culture, focus your communication, and organize your entire congregation around a single yet multi-dimension ministry plan that will increase life change and maximize Kingdom impact.

When you invite your congregation to step into a discipleship and generosity experience, you'll find the solidarity you need to bind together as one and the momentum you need to accelerate toward a hope that is filled with both potential and possibility.

ABOUT HORIZONS STEWARDSHIP

Horizons Stewardship helps church and faith-based nonprofit leaders make disciples and fund ministry through a collaborative framework that is tailored to the unique culture of the church, aligned with leadership's vision, and implemented through coaching, planning, technology, and analytics to ensure the church lives into its full ministry potential and impact.

After more than two decades working with thousands of churches to raise billions of dollars for ministry projects, Horizons has refined a deeply integrated, spiritually focused approach that consistently results in more ministry funding and more effective disciple-making strategies.

Horizons' ministry team of International Coaching Federation (ICF) trained coaches are ready to help you discover a proven, effective process that will empower you to move forward with clarity and confidence. Churches who partner with Horizons, on average, experience a **16% increase in giving within the first twelve months.**

Visit nextlevelgenerosity.com today to see if Horizons might be able to help you turn your ministry plan into a transformational discipleship experience.