

Nurturing Generosity in Our Children by Andy DeBraber

As a child, I remember sitting on my Dad's lap in church or next to him in the pew. I would trace the veins in his hands. He would point me to where we were in the bulletin and give me a pen to draw with.

When it came time for the offering, he would hand me the envelope every week to put in the offering plate. I knew it was money that we gave to the church, even if I never knew how much.

When I became a pastor with children, though, we gave electronically. My children never knew about offering envelopes.

As we move more and more toward electronic giving, how do we include our children in stewardship and giving? What practices nurture generosity among our young people? Take a few minutes and consider the ways your church nurtures this generosity in our younger community members. Do they take a collection during Sunday School and get to choose where the money goes? Does the youth group do a service auction or pop can drive? Do we help families have jars for each child labeled "Give," "Save," and "Spend" to divvy up whatever money they get?

How about in our worship services? Do or could you allow the children to sometimes collect the offering? How about the children collecting a "Noisy Offering" with coffee cans that they get to decide where to give? Do we give our children meaningful service opportunities within the church and in the larger community?

Finally, what role does or could your church play in helping children understand money, spending, and costs? Most children in church have no idea how church is funded or what it costs. They don't know how credit cards work or how insidious debt can be. A marvelous opportunity exists for us to have open and honest discussions about money with our children that no one else is having - and that are based on Christian values of love, justice, and generosity.

Consider one way your church can expand the way you nurture generosity in children. Then give it a try!