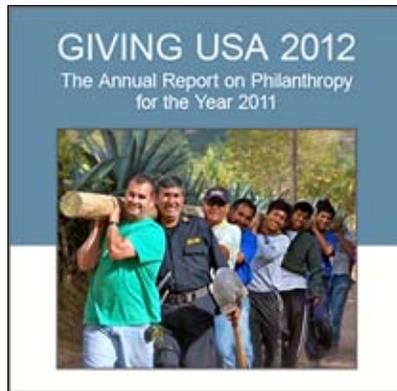


# INSIGHTS ON FAITH & GIVING

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## **Giving USA 2012**

The longest running and most comprehensive report on the sources and uses of charitable giving in the United States.



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## **Checkbook Theology**

It's commonplace wisdom; go home and look at your checkbook, your monthly credit card statement or your online banking report and you will gain insight as to the values and priorities by which you live. This too is true of religious congregations. A congregation's budget is a theological statement as to what it values and prioritizes in its mission and ministry. James Wind, President of the Alban Institute describes congregations as "mini-economies...places where the economic dynamics of life play themselves out."<sup>1</sup>

Where does good checkbook theology begin? It begins with fiscal transparency. People give because they believe in the mission of their faith community. In turn congregations are expected to be good stewards of their congregants trust and monetary generosity. Published budgets, quarterly financial reports and annual audits are the hallmarks of responsible institutional management and prudent stewardship. Trustworthiness is nurtured when money is spent as promised with the annual budget the guideline for all expenditures.

What does good checkbook theology look like? It reflects the stated mission and programmatic priorities of the congregation. It answers the questions:

- **Who are we?**
- **What we are about?**
- **How we do what we do?**

When budgets and mission statements are in sync donors know that we mean what we say when we talk about who we are.

Good checkbook theology doesn't begin with the budget; it begins with a process of discernment. What is a particular congregation's overarching purpose? What makes it unique and sets it apart from other faith communities? Checkbook theology is not

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**Mission:** *The Lake Institute on Faith & Giving exists to serve the public good by exploring the multiple connections between philanthropy and faith within the major religious traditions.*

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**INDY CCCG THIS FALL:** We are currently exploring the facilitation of a Fall 2012 CCCG seminar in Indianapolis. For more information about this comprehensive experience for senior clergy, board members, financial leadership and entrepreneurial lay leadership, [contact us today](#).

If your church, faith community or network would like to learn more about generosity - consider enrolling in the CCCG experience today.

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about making a budget; it's about a congregation finding its compass rose.

-Insights of Dr. William Enright

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<sup>1</sup>James Wind, "Healthy Congregations, Healthy Leaders." Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, Ministerial Growth & Support.

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**What others have said about the  
Creating Congregational Cultures of  
Generosity  
experience and Lake Institute:**

" - you did an outstanding job in presenting great material, and an equally terrific job of facilitating extremely helpful group conversations! When talented and experienced pastors serving larger congregations report significant new learnings, Kingdom stuff is happening! "

*Mr. James Turley, President  
TMF Institute for Clergy & Congregational Excellence*

"In twenty seven years, this is the most exciting and in depth way of practicing stewardship that I have seen and I am convinced that it will create lasting change in the lives of many people in the Highland congregation."

*Rev. Dr. Laura Reason  
Highland First*

"Attending the Lake Institute's "Creating a Culture of Generosity" with Dr. Bill Enright, was most enlightening to our team of both staff and lay leadership. The seminar series planted a seed which led to our team becoming the official Generosity/Stewardship Committee at Holy Cross Lutheran Church. The topics presented spurred ideas that we could apply to our own congregation, and we gleaned ideas from other congregations in attendance at the seminar as well."

*Michele Wiseley*  
*Holy Cross Lutheran Church*

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