

“Give-Away” Native American Generosity

Philip Reitz
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Martin Brokenleg, EdD, professor of Native American studies at Augustana College and an Episcopal priest, writes about the Native American perspective on generosity. At the heart of Native American generosity is the concept of the “Give-Away.”

This concept is illustrated in a study that compared the response of Native American and White boys upon receiving a gift of two candy suckers. In both groups the youngsters put the first sucker in their mouths. What happened to the second sucker demonstrated the cultural differences concerning the value and purpose of material possessions.

The Native American boys handed the extra sucker to a nearby child who did not have one thus mirroring an internalized cultural principle that the purpose of possessions is to share them.

On the other hand, the White boys took their second sucker and put it in their pocket, expressing a cultural value of provisioning for future personal use.

In many tribal cultures, powerful social bonds are created with the act of giving away valued possessions. The “Give-Away” was a way that wealth of various types was held in community.

Expressed in individual acts of giving and reinforced through public ceremonies like the *potlatch*, the “Give-Away” recognized the abundance of all that was necessary for both the individual and the community to flourish.

“Stewards 2025”

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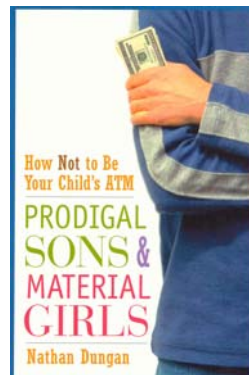
What will the steward of 2025 pay attention to? How will she and he shape the way God’s mission is funded?

I think four concepts reflect the way ministry will be funded in 2025.

- nano-mission
- mission connectivity
- institutional modularity
- relational synergy

Nano-mission: In a world where nano-technology (miniature scale) will redefine the way medical care is administered and industrial production managed, people will rediscover the power of making a personal difference in ministry through ‘point of mission’ connections.

Dungan to Speak at October Stewardship Conference



Nathan Dungan, author, speaker and syndicated columnist to be featured speaker at the October 2005 stewardship conference.

Saturday, Oct. 15 at
St Luke’s, Bellevue
Sunday, Oct. 16 at
Beautiful Savior,
Vancouver

<http://www.sharesavespend.com/index.html>

“Stewards 2025” continued

This drive to be personally involved and the capacity to connect to others in ministry anywhere in the world via the internet and travel will shape how people’s attention and money will be more directly shared in the future. Giving at ‘point of mission’ will enhance the sense of purpose for the donor.

Congregations and judicatories that do not take this reality into account and do not find ways to assist people who are looking to connect directly in mission will be seen as self-serving with regard to funding God’s mission in 2025.

Mission Connectivity: Secure online giving will become the norm by 2025. Ministries that do not provide online giving options will not be funded adequately.

Small groups or circles of from two to fifteen people, of which often 50% are ‘unaffiliated’ with a religious tradition but are co-workers, neighbors or acquaintances, will form ‘giving circles’ that pool financial giving resources. They will regularly poll the interests of the members and research charitable investment opportunities where their pooled financial giving makes the most sense to them. In these ventures the work will all be done by group members using the web, their own passion and ‘word of mouth’ to arrive at their choices.

Congregations that encourage this trend and help nurture ‘Giving Circle’ options and choices will thrive in a new age of mission connectivity which in some ways will be reminiscent of the ‘Mission Societies’ of another generation.

Institutional Modularity: While ‘baby boomers’ enjoyed the comfortable, multiple options of customer-oriented large institutional settings, the sense of a ‘tribal’ context for faith formation will continue to gain currency in ‘post-modern’ faith communities.

Christians will gather in a variety of community forms often sharing in several different communities concurrently. There will be fewer full-time ordained clergy and more ‘worker-priest’ ministers who bring a broad variety of skills and experience to ministry communities.

Ministry professionals will work collaboratively in teams and share their skills across multiple groups in order to enhance the daily life ministry of community participants.

All ministers will be expected to ‘fund their ministries’ and almost all clergy will intentionally recruit a network of individuals who support them in ministry financially.

Relational Synergy: The value placed on time and relationships will be such that many stewards in 2025 will not invest in community that is single purpose.

In 2025 stewards will more clearly leverage their investment in their work life, their family and their recreation (read sabbath) and expect their faith community to add value to these arenas. Congregations will adjust their paradigm to include and support the ‘for the sake of the world’ life of stewards, where they spend most of their energy and time and in which they daily give an accounting of their faith.

Futurists, while they cannot predict the future, do practice the discipline of imagination and dreaming in order to be better prepared to live purposefully toward tomorrow. I think the church is at a crossroads. Either we will embrace paradigms that seem awkward at first or we will disregard the signs and wonders with which God calls us into mission.

Now it is your turn. What is your take on the stewards of 2025?

YOUR STEWARDSHIP TEAM

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