

(dot) STEWARDSHIP – February 2009 Printable Version

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Dead Cats Bounce

In frustration, my 80-year-old dad recently told me that he seldom watches the news anymore because it makes him mad and after he watches it, he wishes he wouldn't have.

Bad news is never pleasant, but the current economic news is bathed in gloom and despair. The language of the financial world, in negativity, uses descriptive words such as bank panic, foreclosure, troubled assets, bailout, layoff, global crisis, weakness, deflation and retreat. But perhaps the most descriptive financial phrase is "dead cats bounce," a term used by traders to describe a pattern wherein a spectacular decline in the price of a stock is immediately followed by a moderate and temporary rise before resuming its downward fall. It is derived from the notion that even a dead cat will bounce if it falls from a great height. For a moment, consider possible headlines for the church treasurer's report if given in such negativity: "Recession to Fuel Ministry Cuts," "Pork at Center of Church Budget Debate," "Tithe Slips on Bailout Worries," or "Offerings Fall for a Record Sixth-Straight Month."

Knowing my own glass-half-full perspective on life, I can imagine how my heart might be momentarily stirred when the falling dead cat's direction changed. Even if only for a moment, a vision of hope is captured. The cat seems to be rising! Thankfully, as a Christian, I do not have to live in the slough of financial despair, nor do I have to convince myself that a dead cat is on the rise. As a pastor, I can proclaim a message of *hope* which, unlike the bounce of the dead cat, will prove true for the long run. There is good news to report in God's kingdom: God's not out of money, the church is not going under, and there are lessons to be learned in times of financial uncertainty.

When resources are tight, how do we make the best of a bad situation?

1. **Look for pockets of efficiency.** Eliminating waste is a key factor in good stewardship. There are cost-saving measures within the reach of your congregation that will neither deplete your resources of time nor require a sacrifice of quality. Pray for eye-opening experiences where the Lord will lead you and your congregation into greater efficiency.
2. **Prioritize spending.** Recession causes us to ask, "What is most important?" The fine line between needs and wants is as real in the church budget as it is in personal financial decisions. When money is tight, every spending decision is important and must be scrutinized for relevancy. All across America, families are making hard choices of what to buy and what to leave at the retailer. The result is smarter spending which is good for the church.
3. **Achieve maximum effectiveness.** Concentrate on activities that produce. This is the time for God's kingdom to advance in ways that it cannot when there is financial security. Economic crisis opens ministry doors to every income bracket. Now is the time to develop a plan to minister to felt needs. With declining resources, the challenge is to do more with less. The enemy's lie is that tighter finances reduce ministry. The goal is to maximize effectiveness with the resources that have been provided.
4. **Focus on the mission.** Distraction is the enemy of any worthy undertaking. The enemy of the soul, and the church, will fog up the vision of the mission whenever possible. Becoming sidetracked with activity causes a "busyness" that disguises itself as mission. Especially during economic uncertainty, the mission has to be front and center in our hearts as well as our heads.
5. **Pray earnestly.** While it's not wrong to pray for economic recovery or prosperity, try praying for an ability to trust in God alone for the future. Ask the Lord to provide wisdom, teach discipline and boost your faith during the crisis.

While the world sinks in the bad news of the day, we have a great opportunity to lead. Our hope prevails. The message of holiness is perhaps more relevant during recession than in prosperity. There is nothing depressing about following Jesus. Dead cats bounce, temporarily, but our message is bullish through eternity. *"Wealth is worthless in the day of wrath, but righteousness delivers from death"* (Prov. 11:4). The world has a sad story, but the future is bright in the kingdom of God.

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Mark E. Lail, director
Stewardship Ministries, Church of the Nazarene

Marketing your Easter Offering

World Evangelism Fund Easter offering envelopes and posters are available to order through Nazarene Publishing House, www.nph.com. These simple and inexpensive marketing pieces are great reminders to congregations that a special offering will be taken soon. Other Easter offering resources can be found on the MediaLibrary, www.nazarenemedialibrary.org. Remember to add these pages to your favorites or bookmarks so you can easily find these pages again.

Give Global

The Easter Offering for World Evangelism is a great opportunity to "give global" and make a tangible difference in the lives of others. Historically, this offering has greatly impacted our ability to fund the missions and ministries of the global church. This year, we face a forecast of substantial "lost ground" in mission giving. Our challenge is to *connect World Evangelism with the faces and places* that it funds.

Utilize the stories that can be hatched from within your local church... former missionaries, W&W participants, volunteers, community organizers, etc. Ask them to share how giving in local churches dramatically changes the face of missions here and around the globe. How are our dollars stretched ten-fold in Africa or Central America? What do we take for granted in North America? If you have the capabilities, work with your A/V people at church to produce a short (1 to 2 minute) clip to show several Sundays in a row before taking your offering.

Lastly, take ownership of World Evangelism! This is OUR church. This is OUR ministry. This is OUR offering and we give it *thankfully, fearfully, and willingly*.

Additional thoughts on stewardship can be found at www.nazarene.org/stewardship, www.nazarenemissionsinternational.org, and www.nazareneblogs.org/marklail.

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Josh Jakobitz, creative coordinator
Stewardship Ministries, Church of the Nazarene

Notice of New Remittance Address

We greatly appreciate the trust you place in the Church of the Nazarene to ensure your gifts are promptly deposited and directed to the appropriate area of ministry. Our Global Treasury Services office recently took a significant step to better achieve these objectives as all payments should be directed to the following bank lockbox address:

Global Treasury Services
Church of the Nazarene
P.O. Box 843116
Kansas City, MO 64184-3116

Please note that only payments and remittance forms should be directed to this new bank lockbox address. All inquiries and written correspondence should continue to be sent to the Global Ministry Center at 17001 Prairie Star Parkway, Lenexa, Kansas 66220.

Our success in meeting the goals of prompt deposits and timely transfers is partially dependent on your use of the new remittance forms sent with your gift receipts. *Please discard all old remittance forms.* Additionally, we are able to reduce ministry expenses by using window envelopes for submission of your next gift. Please ensure that the address on the back side of your remittance form shows through the window envelope.