



Strengthening charitable causes to change the world through generosity

MIKE WARD
CFRE, M. DIV., PARTNER

191 Riverbirch Drive
Fletcher NC 28732

828.674.2307
ward@gsbfr.com

Moving Mission Forward During the Coronavirus

This morning I talked to a loved one who is scared to go to the hospital tomorrow for a critical test because she is afraid of the Coronavirus. This afternoon I listened to the NPR story about the cancelation of the home-builders tradeshow in Chicago that was expecting 60,000 attendees. During the story, a pastor and I talked about his concern that Coronavirus will adversely affect his stewardship efforts this year. There's even a nationwide run on hand sanitizer.

Across the country, anxiety is growing around the Coronavirus and how it may affect our communities, our activities, and our day-to-day lives. There are so many unknowns. But I'm reminded of Jesus' calming assurance: Be not afraid. (Mt. 14:27; Jn 6:20 and others).

What we know:

- People are scared. How will we help those around us rise above those fears to care for our communities in need?
- There is a steady stream of reasons to not give: political climate, stock market, natural disasters, uncertainty. How will we lead our faith communities to trust that God is faithful even in times of concern?
- We all may need to adjust activities and day-to-day operations in response to an emerging, rapidly evolving situation. When we do, in what ways will we ensure the sorely-needed work of the church continues?
- Robert Reich and Christopher Wimer of Stanford University published a study in 2012 that showed "there's no evidence of increasing stinginess in times of need." It found people continue to give at the same percentage levels as they gave before recessions hit.

Jesus models for us to care for one another, to live generously—not selfishly—even in times of turmoil. Difficult times are not new. People who experience difficulties are often more generous to others because of that first-hand experience. They will continue to be generous to organizations which lead boldly, organizations which have:

- A strong, well led board of directors
- A clear sense of mission, and
- A strong stewardship program

These are the first three steps of GSB's Ten Steps to Success which is the entire premise of my book, [Abundance: Creating a Culture of Generosity](#). They hold true equally during times of plenty and during times of turmoil.



People still give during difficult times, but they give to those organizations that are relevant and making a difference. Seeing others in need and having confidence in organizations that are critical in making a difference, generous givers make sure that mission will thrive.

Positioning Your Ministry

- Boldly live your mission and invite people to support your mission during this time. Don't hide; don't retract.
- Rise to the challenge to consider new ways to continue mission and ministry:
 - Perhaps you will open your sanctuary for people to come in by themselves to pray and connect with God at times other than a large gathering;
 - Maybe you find different ways to share the peace;
 - You may find ways to provide sabbath to healthcare workers and other responders to this challenge;
 - To sustain giving for ministry, teach members that they don't just make gifts when they are present in worship: set up a challenge gift today for every new person who signs up for automatic giving (I suggest \$50 per new signup as the challenge);
 - Broadcast worship through Facebook Live or a recorded podcast for those who aren't able to gather so they may continue to be blessed by and connected to the faith community.

It is time to pay attention, but it isn't time to assume we will have scarcity. God needs the church to engage now and our congregations need the steady assurance provided by our shared faith and our community. This is an opportunity for your leadership to take a position of abundance and lead your organizations to be even more healthy and critical in your communities.

Rev. Mike Ward is a partner with GSB Fundraising and the author of Abundance: Creating a Culture of Generosity published by Fortress Press. He holds the Certified Fundraising Executive Credential and frequently speaks on the topics of Stewardship, Generosity, Council Leadership, and Strategic Planning.