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“Prosperity is basically an attitude of thought and feeling, only secondarily a matter of money. For ideas are coins of the mind realm.”<sup>1</sup>



# Chapter 1

## Your Church is Prosperous

By Richard Bunch

“Prosperity is basically an attitude of thought and feeling, only secondarily a matter of money. For ideas are coins of the mind realm.”<sup>1</sup>

It’s Sunday afternoon. You are feeling great about the message you delivered on prosperity! You carefully explained that prosperity is not about acquiring wealth and power. You were clear and concise as you quoted Charles Fillmore from his book, *Prosperity*: “The Father’s desire for us is unlimited good, not merely the means of a meager existence. We cannot be very happy if we are poor, and nobody needs to be poor.”<sup>2</sup> As you thought about the message you remember pointing out that Catherine Ponder told us how to “open your mind to prosperity”<sup>3</sup> in her book of the same title. You are pleased and thinking prosperous thoughts as you reflect on the message.

On Monday morning you arrive at the church, on time, excited about the day. In your meeting with the church Administrator, you discover that Sunday’s offering was abnormally low and that it is necessary to draw from the savings account to meet the expenses due. The Administrator points out that the insurance premium for liability coverage has increased by \$4,800, or \$400 per month. The initial down payment of \$800 is due within ten days. Your mood changes as you face the reality of less income—higher expenses. Questions start to surface in your mind, such as,

- “How are we going to pay the mortgage when our savings run out?”
- “Will the church be able to pay my salary if things continue as they are?”

- “I wonder why people aren’t giving more since I have been clear about the need for their support.”
- “What cuts should we make in the budget?”

You think these thoughts out loud with the Administrator and then quickly call your Board President to inform her that it is important for the Financial Resources Development Team to set a date for the church yard sale so you can replenish the church coffers.

If this in any way reminds you of yourself or others around you, then you are reacting, not acting. This manual will be a vehicle for developing a prosperity consciousness which starts in you and passes on to your Board, the Finance Team and the congregation. A solid prosperity consciousness does not mean you will not find yourself with financial challenges. It means you will manage these challenges with positive, responsible and practical methods that are created through prayer, discernment and/or envisioning.

However, it is not sufficient to deny or ignore the church’s financial condition. The situation is not going to disappear because you use an affirmation that is Charles Fillmore’s truth and not your own. A healthier way to deal with the issue is to embrace the church’s financial situation and learn what lesson it has for you, your Board and your congregation. Know that your current financial condition is only a passing phase and has no power within itself. When you are willing to recognize that the church’s current financial condition is an opportunity to demonstrate your faith-- a “thinking faith”<sup>4</sup> is called into action! It is prayer action that turns the tide of consciousness from lack to abundance. Where do we start in order to bring out into the light our prosperity consciousness?

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Embrace the church’s financial situation and learn what lesson it has for you.



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Affirm that every person who comes into this sacred space experiences spiritual, emotional, mental and physical prosperity.



## Prosperity Consciousness: Start At the Beginning

“Prosperity flows only through channels that are wide open to receive it.

Everything we get in life comes through the gateway of thought.”<sup>5</sup>

Building a prosperity consciousness will create more than a healthy bank account—it will build healthy congregants and a healthy church. As the minister or spiritual leader, you are responsible for providing an environment that provides for the spiritual growth and health of your congregation. A part of that spiritual growth is to address the financial condition of the church and to lead the people, like Moses, out of lack (slaves to appearances) and into the promised land. This takes preparation. Remember, Moses spent forty years preparing for his mission. Wouldn't it be wise to set aside forty days to prepare for the mission of creating financial freedom for your church? Reverend Harriet Valliere stressed the importance of prayer in the introduction to this manual. Following are some ideas for making prayer the foundation for the church's prosperity.

### Prayer—The Foundation

First, I suggest that you spend time at your church daily, affirming the presence and power of God as your source of supply. This creates a sacred space in every room of the church during a forty day period. Affirm that every person who comes into this sacred space experiences spiritual, emotional, mental and physical prosperity. This is above and beyond your personal time of prayer and meditation.

Second, select a prayer team. This team is made up of a

group (seven to twelve) people who demonstrate a prosperity consciousness through their service and tithes. Each person should agree to:

1. Meet weekly for six weeks as a group. (The last prayer session could be held on the fortieth day.)
2. Maintain confidentiality of the group and the prayers that are shared.
3. Commit to being open to the guidance of Spirit throughout the forty day period.
4. Set the intention of raising prosperity consciousness in the congregation (individually and collectively) in daily prayer.

Thirdly, always begin with prayer. Prayer sets the stage and foundation for discerning, developing and implementing a plan of action that is practical and spiritual. One Unity Church recently spent a year in prayer before introducing a capital fund raising program. How long you pray depends upon you, your church and your situation. You and your prayer team will know when the time is right to move forward.

Through prayer, divine ideas will start to penetrate the collective consciousness of the prayer team, the Board, the Finance Team, the Fundraising Team and any other teams or congregants. As the prosperity consciousness of the prayer team is raised to a new vibratory level, it will resonate throughout the church body. Demonstrations of prosperity will begin to manifest individually and collectively as the consciousness is raised.

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The thought is brought into expression and activity by the word.



In one Unity center, after a short time of prayer by a group of anonymous members, individuals began to donate services, materials and dollars to redecorate the entrance foyer, install a new sign and repair the restroom. All of this took place without anyone being asked. Within a week, the local art association offered to paint a mural in the meditation room. A retreat center called and offered eight leather chairs to the church (not knowing that the meditation room was being refurbished). The minister was given a table by a next door neighbor that fit perfectly in the meditation room. The vibratory level of prosperity consciousness penetrated the walls of the church and drew a response from the community. To the naked eye, it would appear that these independent events were coincidences. They weren't. Rather, they were demonstrations of the power of prayer. Following these demonstrations, a successful fundraising campaign was experienced by the church.

Charles Fillmore described this phenomenon:

“Spiritual thoughts are infinite in their potentiality, each one being measured by the life, intelligence, and substance with which it is expressed. The thought is brought into expression and activity by the word. Every word is a thought in activity, and when spoken it goes out as a vibratory force that is registered in the all-providing substance.”<sup>6</sup>

### **Mission, Discernment and Envisioning**

If your church has not adopted a mission statement, then take the steps to create an appropriate statement. For example, Unity on the Bay in Miami, Florida, has:

*To pray, educate, and serve to inspire and transform our world.*<sup>7</sup>

The mission for Unity of Phoenix, Arizona, is:

*To equip individuals to live love through community, education, and service.*<sup>8</sup>

All decisions regarding your ministry should be an expression of your mission statement. If every activity aligns with your mission, then the *way that you create prosperity* should simply be another expression of it. In the example above, when Unity on the Bay is doing a capital campaign or raising funds for the operating budget, they will incorporate prayer, education, service, and inspiration, seeing the campaign as another way to transform lives. When Unity of Phoenix raises money, they plan community, education and service into the campaign so that individuals are equipped to “live love” in their giving.

Besides the fact that the mission is the reason for the ministry to exist, it also tells people why it is important to support the ministry with tangible and intangible gifts. Many ministries have a mission statement. To take it a step further, test yourself on how people connect with the mission by asking, “Do we have a real mission, or is it just a mission statement?” “Does our mission take us beyond the walls of the church, or does it just address current congregants?” The answers may lead you to refine the statement.

One process for developing a mission statement is the discernment process. It is one of several that the Board and

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The mission statement becomes the guide for moving the mission through specific programs into the church body.



all ministry teams might use to create dynamic programs that express the rising consciousness. This rise in abundant thinking is due to the prayer work and faith of the prayer team. There are several methodologies for discernment. All would agree with the following definition:

*Discernment is seeking the deepest yearnings of Spirit's desire within our heart for our communities. It is the gift of the Spirit. It must be noticed; accepted, treasured, and surrendered to if it is to be received. Communal discernment is an experience of group prayer and reflection on Spirit's guidance as to what is ours to do.<sup>9</sup>*

Some churches use a specific discernment process for governing their church. Through discernment, the mission statement becomes the guide for moving the mission through specific programs into the church body. Besides being a tool in developing a mission statement, it can help to create an image of what a fundraising experience might look like in your church. The purpose of this manual is not to describe how discernment is practiced, but the bibliography at the end of this chapter provides access to resources and individuals who can be of assistance.

The envisioning process is another way for a group to allow Spirit to unfold the perfect idea of how a fundraising program, event or service would manifest. Envisioning together in community, we receive divine ideas that will answer many of the questions that come forth by members of the Board and the congregation regarding prosperity and the tools available as a channel for providing a flow of financial blessings. Questions may include: How should we ask for financial support? ... How should we

raise money? ... How should we teach and emphasize tithing? ... Which prosperity programs are right for our church (Prosperity classes, 4Ts, Keys to the Kingdom, Catherine Ponder, etc.)? ... What kind of fundraising events will work? ... Should we start a capital campaign? ... And if so, how do we prepare to implement such a program?

As these questions are answered through prayer, discernment and envisioning, prosperity consciousness rises. Then we experience divine ideas being raised to our conscious level and shared among the various leadership teams.

### **Action is the Key**

“When a word of Truth is spoken with the conviction of its power, it starts on its journey from the center of life with us out into the world of manifestation. In pushing outward, it sends before it the thoughts and attitudes that have been lodged in mind and drives out the darkness that it may radiate the glory of the infinite.”<sup>10</sup>

When we receive an inner message of a divine idea and it is confirmed by others of a like mind, it brings forth creativity, enthusiasm and commitment. A divine idea is supported by the creative process and always generates a manifestation that is an expression of God. A divine idea becomes reality when we use the powers of Faith, Imagination, Understanding, Will, Discernment, Wisdom and Love as demonstrated in the first and second chapter of Genesis. Everything we need to manifest and express a divine idea is attracted to us as we follow the Creative process. The Laws of Attraction, of Mind/Action and of Giving will work together to bring forth a plan that will provide all the desires of your

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When we speak of fundraising, we are speaking of all the activities involved in educating people about what we do.



church. Our main job is to surrender to the idea and let it be a demonstration of God’s love.

The action that is necessary will be demonstrated by the laws of the Universe. Our job is to be the eyes and hands of God, to be committed to a divine idea and to see it to its completion. Paul said, “I am convinced that when He has started a good work in you, He will continue it until its completion.” Phil. 1:6

### Defining Terms

Before we go on in this study, it might be helpful to consider the meanings of some common terms, and debunk some of the myths associated with them:

- Ask—often used in fundraising, it is a way of making known to people what is needed to accomplish the mission. I have observed many people saying, “We do not ask for money in Unity,” but the same people turn around and quote “Ask and you shall receive” in any other context. In fact, Charles and Myrtle Fillmore actually asked for support many times, as documented by archives.<sup>11</sup> Further, when researchers asked people why they didn’t give, or why they didn’t give more than they did, the majority responded, “I wasn’t asked.”
- Fundraising—“the organized activity or an instance of soliciting money or pledges.”<sup>12</sup> Notice that this says nothing about gimmicks or events! Many people have confused all fundraising with “fundraiser” events. When we speak of fundraising, we are speaking of all the activities involved in educating people about what we do (i.e., mission) and what we can do. In fundraising, we want to connect people who care about our mission with an understanding of how they

can participate and make a difference.

- Commitment—many churches prefer this term over pledging so that it is not a legally binding document. The idea is the same—to know the donor’s intent to give a certain amount over a certain period of time. Many are afraid to use these because they believe that they will be limited to the commitment amount. Many fundraising professionals say this is not the case, and that people often exceed their commitment.
- Pledge—this is a legally binding commitment to give a certain amount over a given period of time. Accounting principles require that pledges be recorded as assets at the time the pledges are received. A church can legally enforce pledges in court, though we know of no instance where this has been done.
- Prosperity—“the consciousness of God as the abundant, everywhere present resource, unfailing, ready for all who open themselves to it through faith.”<sup>13</sup> This places prosperity beyond just material wealth to include all resources.
- Tithe—a gift of 10% of income to God’s work. “Tithing is a tacit agreement that man is in partnership with God in the conduct of his finances.”<sup>14</sup>

With a different understanding of these ideas and how fundraising is about the mission, we are grounded in the spirituality of locating support for the ministry. These ideas will guide our material in subsequent chapters.

### **Affirmations**

There is power in the spoken word. Thus, the following affirmations are included to give your group a starting place for

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Trust God, use His wisdom,  
 prove and express His love.”



your prayer times and to use throughout the week.

“I have unbounded faith in the all-present spiritual substance increasing and multiplying at my word.”<sup>15</sup>

“I AM Prosperity!” (repeat 100 times)<sup>16</sup>

“Be still. Be still. Be still.

God in the midst of you is substance.

God in the midst of you is love.

God in the midst of you is wisdom.

Let not your thoughts be given over to lack, but let wisdom fill them with the substance and faith of God. Let not your heart be a center of resentment and fear and doubt. Be still and know that at this moment it is the altar of God of love; love so sure and unfailing, love so irresistible and magnetic that it draws your supply to you from the great storehouse of the universe. Trust God, use His wisdom, prove and express His love.”<sup>17</sup>

### Action Items

1. Form a prayer team as suggested in the chapter.
2. Ask your board to read this chapter before the next meeting. Include a discussion on one or more of these questions:
  - Do we as a church have a mission, or just a mission statement? What action steps do we need in order to have a mission that is understood and supported by the congregation?
  - What has been our primary method of fundraising in the church? How do we see that changing in the future?
  - How is the amount we want to raise going to accomplish our mission?

3. Become familiar with discernment as a way of decision-making. Without going into detail, one process looks like this:
  - Framing—identify a focus for the topic to be discerned.
  - Grounding—the guiding principles are agreed upon, for example, the core values and beliefs and the mission can all be used to define what a good decision will look like. Then ask yourself, “What is mine/ours to do?”
  - Shedding—lay aside all preconceived notions and ego involvement, coming to a place of “holy indifference” to the outcome.
  - Rooting—connect the situation at hand with a biblical story or other spiritual image, which can transform the process.
  - Listening—for the promptings of Spirit, for the voices of the community.
  - Exploring—playfully identify alternative solutions or directions that fit within the guiding principles.
  - Improving—with prayer and thought, improve each alternative until it is the best it can be.
  - Weighing—test the options according to the yearning of God.
  - Closing—move to a conclusion, choosing the best option in the context of God’s yearning.
  - Resting—test the decision by allowing it to rest near the heart, and look for a sense of peace or movement toward God, or distress (movement away from God)<sup>18</sup>
4. Create a process for the next time you find yourself in a reaction mode, as described in the beginning of this chapter. Include such items as a person(s) the minister can call for support in affirmation and prayer, how to involve the prayer team, how to engage in a discernment process about the

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Then ask yourself, “What is mine/ours to do?”



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situation at hand. What other steps would you like to include for bringing Spirit into the conversation and raising the consciousness?

5. Create a year-round communication plan. Include:
  - Ways of incorporating the mission into the consciousness of the congregation.
  - Disseminating financial information so that people understand they are participating in the mission when they give, not funding a deficit or paying the bills.
  - Sunday lessons on prosperity and tithing. In one study, it was found that churches had greater giving when there were consistent lessons on tithing throughout the year. Again, it is not to talk about the “needs of the church,” but about how people can align themselves with God, and bring their financial lives into their spirituality.<sup>19</sup>

### Recommended Resources

Barbara O’Hearne, Church Management Consultant, Association of Unity Churches. Resource for churches on boards, planning, church management and leadership as well as mission, vision, values. Phone 816-531-1585 or email [ohearnekc@aol.com](mailto:ohearnekc@aol.com).

*Cracking Your Congregation’s Code: Mapping Your Spiritual DNA to Create Your Future*, by Richard Southern and Robert Norton, © 2001, Jossey-Bass, A Wiley Company, San Francisco. Gives background about the systems needed to grow the church, along with a step by step process for creating mission, vision, values and beliefs.

Disseminating financial information so that people understand they are participating in the mission when they give.



*Discerning God's Will Together: A Spiritual Practice for the Church*, by Danny Morris and Chuck Olsen, © 1997, The Alban Institute. Offers a step by step process for discernment in any decision-making context.

*Growing Givers' Hearts: Treating Fundraising as Ministry*, by Thomas Jeavons and Rebekah Burch Basinger, © 1995, Jossey-Bass Publishers, San Francisco. Gives a great background about fundraising as a ministry.

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*Vision Discernment: The Congregational Workbook*, by Tom Bandy, available at [www.easumbandy.com](http://www.easumbandy.com). Offers a step by step process for creating your vision, mission, core values and beliefs.

*What Is Mine to Do...A Guided Process for Discernment*, CD by Rev. Aliza Bloom, Spiritual Discernment Ministry. Phone 816-272-5782, or e-mail [Revaliza@unityleessummit.org](mailto:Revaliza@unityleessummit.org)

(Endnotes)

1 **Footnotes**

*Like a Miracle*, by Ernest C. Wilson

2 *Prosperity*, by Charles Fillmore, © 1936, 24<sup>th</sup> ed., Unity Books, Unity Village, p. 60

3

*Open Your Mind to Prosperity*, by Catherine Ponder, © 1971, 7<sup>th</sup> ed., Unity

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*The Revealing Word*, by Charles Fillmore, 1959, 13<sup>th</sup> ed, Unity Books, Unity Village, p. 70  
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*Prosperity, How to Attract It*, by Orison Swett Marden, © 1922, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Success Magazine Corporation, New York, p. 5  
6           Ibid, Prosperity, p. 56  
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From Unity on the Bay, Miami, Florida, website, [www.unityonthebay.org](http://www.unityonthebay.org).  
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From Unity of Phoenix, Arizona, website, [www.unityphx.org](http://www.unityphx.org).  
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Taken from the internet, Worshipful-Work-Center for Transforming Religious Leadership, *Toward a Working Definition of Discernment*, 8/05/2005, www.worshipful-ork.org/discernment.html  
10           Imelda Shanklin, *Unity Weekly*, 1926  
11           Ask for *Timeless Treasures*, available by request at [astdev@unity.org](mailto:astdev@unity.org) at the Association of Unity Churches.  
12           *The American Heritage College Dictionary*, Third Edition, © 1993, Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston, New York.  
13           Ibid, *The Revealing Word*  
14           Ibid.  
15           Ibid, *Prosperity*, p. 25  
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*You Too Can Be Prosperous*, by Robert A. Russell, © 1950, 1<sup>st</sup> ed., DeVorss & Company, Camarillo, CA  
17           Fillmore, Myrtle, *Healing Letters*, Unity School of Christianity, Unity Village, p. 49  
18           *Discerning God's Will Together*, by Danny Morris and Chuck Olsen, p. 66  
19           *The Crisis in the Churches: Spiritual Malaise, Fiscal Woe*, by Robert Wuthnow, © 1997, Oxford University Press.

