

## The Generosity Movement

### Can it really benefit world missions?

The topic of generosity is creating lots of buzz these days among church leaders. In fact, it's now being called a "generosity movement." And it has literally gone global. In order to try to understand some of the implications of this new wave for church missions leaders, *Postings* interviewed two people who are helping to expand its strategic global impact: Dr. Sas Conradie and Barbara Shantz.

Sas, based in Great Britain, is the coordinator of the [global generosity network](#), a cooperative effort of the Lausanne Movement and the World Evangelical Alliance. Barbara, based in the US, is TWR's global development liaison and an international trainer in the global generosity movement.



Sas Conradie

**Postings:** The "generosity movement" seems to be gaining a lot of momentum. Tell us what this movement is all about.

**Sas:** We describe it as a groundswell of people starting to live more generously. It is people giving more of what they have to those around them but also to those beyond them. Intentionality is an important aspect.

Initially the movement was focused on money, but it is wrong to disconnect "the giving" from "the living." Generous living is "as God has given us freely, so we freely share." We bless because we have been blessed. So we're not just talking about finances. It's lifestyle.

Within this movement you have different groups or hubs. Some are linked to the Global Generosity Network but the roots are much deeper in things like Andy Alcorn's teaching,

Crown Financial Management's impact, and Patrick McDonald's book, *Generous Church*.

What may have started with these US resources and ministries has now become a global awakening, what we like to call a global culture of Christian generosity. The Global Generosity Network has articulated [16 key principles](#) that form the foundation.

**Postings:** Money has always been a taboo subject in most of the West. Sermons about giving have been viewed as guilt-inducing. Now suddenly generosity is a hot topic. What has changed?

#### Stewardship Solutions

After identifying barriers to effective giving, Paul Schultheis lists five practical solutions that could help the church to improve in its role as God's steward:

- Apply Luke 12:22 and 12:31 corporately—mobilize prayer for financial stewards, as well as for mobilization initiatives and the granting process itself.
- Teach well in churches to combat strongholds such as pride in giving, fear of giving, storing up resources, guilt, and lack of prayer.
- Establish a process for the development of theologically sound, biblically based best practices.
- Become financial partners with ministries, rather than donors and receivers which can lead to dependency.
- Conduct an evaluation of the giving process and the relationships at each link in the giving chain. This will help to develop your stewardship strategy.

From [Kingdom Stewardship](#) pp. 40-41, a paper presented at the 2010 Lausanne Conference in Cape Town.

**Sas:** There's been a reconnection between giving and generous living. We've recognized that it is a whole culture of biblical living, not just a discussion of money tacked on to the end of everything else Christians do. We want to focus on how we manage all God's resources entrusted to us—talents, time, and also financial provisions. One dimension of that is generous living—how we share our God-entrusted resources with others by investing our time. And another aspect is financial giving. The "living" is usually harder than the "giving."

Guilt is no longer the motivation. Rather, it is focusing on one of God's characteristics which is generosity. Building Christian character has to include generous living, and we have to get over the taboo of talking about it, especially in the evangelical community. In the New Testament, Paul was always encouraging the believers to give.

**Postings:** Is the Generosity Movement directly related to missions? If so, how?

**Barbara:** When we talk about generosity, it is crucial that we begin with the "why" of giving. We should give because we are Christians, and Christians individually and corporately are called to be expanding the Kingdom. Our vision statement as believers and as the church is the Great Commission and Acts 1:8. Therefore, missions is not a sideline in the church; it's not just one of many programs. It is at the core of what we are about.



Barbara Shantz

Why do we have the gifts and resources we have? Not for our own materialistic consumption. God gives us these things to equip us to accomplish our purpose—to advance the gospel here and to the ends of the earth. Each church has its own unique personality because of the skill sets God has given to the believers in that particular body to reach that global goal. The reason we have so many bored Christians today is because they aren't plugged in where their skill sets and vision are engaged.

At its best, the generosity movement challenges God's people to identify all of their gifts and steward them well for the expansion of the gospel locally and globally. That's what we

were designed for and what gets people and churches excited.

**Postings:** That sounds so simple. Why don't we see generous living transforming every church?

**Sas:** Materialism—the worship of the god mammon as the greatest good—is competing for people's hearts. Matthew reports that Jesus said to some of His followers, "I was ill and you visited me, a stranger and you welcomed me." For me, these are practical examples of generous living. That is the lifestyle, the kind of discipleship, that we need to encourage.

Our international prayer leaders had an interesting perspective on this. At one point, people in our Generosity Network were being attacked spiritually in various ways. These prayer leaders reminded us that the love of money is the root of all evil. So in essence, as we challenged people to live more generously, we were trying to break a spiritual stronghold. No wonder we were being attacked!

**Barbara:** Generosity will require that we get our hands dirty—in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth—and do it together. Because of our individualistic culture, we can easily forget that we are meant to serve/work in community. By the way, it's not "work," rather it is generously contributing our gifts as we live life "along our way." It should be natural for us, a habit that we develop.

**Postings:** How does that kind of generosity relate to missions giving in the church?

**Barbara:** God has given us individual gifts and put us in a body. So together we need to figure out what to do with them. Are we going to find this just by calling a church meeting? No, we need to fast and pray. Then we can come together and each of us can report, "Here are my skills and resources. Here is what God has invested in me for the task."

Then as a body, we can seek God's way forward to use these gifts and skills together for greatest impact for the gospel. That's very different from just assigning a committee to split up the missions money pot! When you begin to understand this, all the lights go on.

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And, equally exciting, we are becoming aware that what we've just described as the core purpose of the church is not just the purpose of the Western church but the church globally. Even the poorest church has its own personality made up of their God-given gifts, and they can generously give from those resources.

**Postings:** That's a radical message for most believers in the West. They are used to being asked to give to those in need. Yet the generosity movement is challenging believers everywhere to give, even the poorest of the poor in the Majority World. Is this really possible?

*And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send a contribution for the relief of the brethren living in Judea.*

Acts 11:26, 29

**Barbara:** God has invested generously in every church so that they can also give generously. This truth is transformational. I recommend everyone watch [The Grace of Giving—Bishop Hannington](#). You can't see a story like that without realizing that we rob the global church of great joy and blessing if we don't allow them to be generous givers.

Jean Johnson of [World Mission Associates](#) puts it this way, "Why would we want to continue giving in a way that makes the national church look like beggars? We want the dignity and generosity of every local church to shine. When Westerners come in and give them money, dependency begins."

**Sas:** It is true that if we don't use our resources well, there is danger of creating dependency. But the inequality between different regions is huge. We need to find ways to collaborate within the body of Christ to help people fulfill their calling without destroying their initiative.

**Postings:** So what does that look like? How do Western churches practice generosity but avoid dependency?

**Barbara:** We have to be careful that we don't assume an attitude that we know what is best for the people to whom we give. The local people should be pointing out the problems that need to be fixed and how to fix them. They know what is needed. We need to listen. As Eldon Porter recently described, we need to [get rid of that briefcase](#).

Far too often we communicate to our global brothers and sisters that we know how to do it. And because we have all of the money, they actually believe that. Instead, we need to give the indigenous churches the freedom to do what we just said Western churches need to do: Fast and pray and ask the Lord what their skills and personality are. What is God calling them to do? After they determine that, then if there is some way we can help, great, but we don't dictate it.

**Sas:** The Global Generosity Network has produced the [Lausanne Standards: affirmations and agreements for giving and receiving money in missions](#). This document is quite extensive and provides some concrete guidelines.

**Postings:** Will you share a couple of practical ways that churches are helping their people catch the vision of God's plan for His people to be generous in healthy ways?

**Sas:** A good illustration of how an asset can be used generously is the handful-of-rice offering. This story is also available as a [video](#) you can share with your congregation. The model can be transferred to different contexts. For example, someone who owns a rental property could dedicate all of the income from that property to ministry.

We need more stories of generous churches. Hearing about what one church has done will motivate all of us. The [www.generouschurch.com](#) site is a place where such stories are being shared.

**Postings:** So what's the best way for a church, individual, or organization to connect to the Generosity Movement?

**Sas:** The Generosity Network wants to be more of a resource hub. For example, we have posted a number of generosity documents on the [Lausanne conversation](#). The results of a very broad [survey of giving](#) that we conducted may be useful to some of your readers. It points up that much of our giving is church focused rather than Kingdom focused. Another resource there that churches will find use-



[The Grace of Giving—Bishop Hannington](#)

ful is an article by Patrick Johnson, [Seven Attributes of a Generous Church](#). Issachar Initiative has just published the [Count for Zero small-group curriculum](#). It describes the need of unreached people groups but goes beyond that to challenge specific, intentional giving.

**Barbara:** Church leaders will find practical ideas in Robert Lupton's [Toxic Charity](#). The Chalmers Center that produced the popular *When Helping Hurts* also offers [seminars](#) and [online resources](#). Jean Johnson's [We Are Not the Hero](#) provides guidelines for those working on the ground.

At TWR we have produced some resources to help further the conversation. One of those is our [Faith Reliance booklet](#) which includes some background on the dependency issue, TWR's commitments within our ministry context,

helpful resources, and the Global Generosity Network's "Generosity Declaration." It is more directly applicable to mission agencies than local churches, but it can help church

*"...little will really change until local churches around the globe embrace and implement the principles of generosity."*

leaders clarify what they want to look for as they choose international partners. We have also produced a video that shares a simple but powerful

[analogy of a bicycle](#) that is helping many churches understand the basic concepts.

I was challenged by a foundation leader who said, "Major donors and organizations are becoming wiser givers, but little will really change until local churches around the globe embrace and implement the principles of generosity."

That's a powerful statement. It's challenging. Fortunately, we are beginning to see it happen.



[The Great Commission Bicycle](#)

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