



## When times are tough, look outward

By Bill Webb

**T**ough economic times have a way of confirming what is most important to us. Such times are a good test of our vision.

We may become keenly aware of the effect of the times on ourselves and our loved ones and make adjustments to protect our resources. We realize we've been lax in saving appropriately and haven't planned for rainy days. We cut back so we can put back some reserves for potentially leaner times. We fret about our potential for a stable, if not comfortable, retirement.

Others become keenly aware of the plight of others, many of them without the ability to replenish their family reserves because they have lost their livelihood. They are unemployed or have been forced to live on much less than they've been accustomed.



It makes sense for each of us who can to live more simply when it comes to finances. We refer to such prudence in the faith community as exercising good stewardship.

But the faith community also lives with the tension that we have a responsibility to reach out to others in ways that demonstrate our faith and our resulting regard

for people, especially those who are going through tough times.

It is encouraging to pick up the local newspaper or tune into the evening news to discover how a group of young people has been moved to help others in the community or even in another part of the world. Sometimes adults lament that because we can't do very much, we probably shouldn't try to do anything at all. Fortunately, children still lead us to be benevolent.



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What is equally interesting — though not surprising — is that not all charitable work is done by the “haves” for the benefit of the “have nots” in our communities and our world.

In most of our towns and cities, some of the most significant advocates for those who struggle are those who live on a very thin margin themselves. We could understand them shoring up their own savings or spending on their own obvious needs. But for some crazy reason, they care about people and can't help but show their compassion, usually in concrete ways. These are people to be admired.

I like the tradition we enjoy at our church on the first Sunday of every month when we are invited to contribute an offering as we leave the sanctuary to meet benevolent needs in our community. That's not all our church does to meet human needs, but it is an approach that can involve every member regularly. In case we forget, it reminds us that together we can make a difference in people's lives.



God forbid when we in the worshipping community fail to value people, no matter what their circumstance.

When we ignore people and their plight, we betray our calling as people of faith.

*Bill Webb is editor of Word&Way.*

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