First Mile, Second Mile and Third Mile Giving

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The objective of this proposal is to increase the use of supplementary streams of funding for sustainable ministry and mission of the ELCA. "Funding" means accessing the resources that enable the ministry and mission. "Sustainable" means that the funding will help the long-term continuity of the ministry. The introduction to first mile, second mile and third mile giving is nothing new. It is, however, refreshing to me to introduce all three of these ways of giving as streams that flow out of our baptism into Jesus Christ.

Hopefully you will find nothing here to stimulate your guilt. There are no "have to's" in this proposal, and there is only one use of the word "must" other than in this sentence. We Lutherans may still be a driven people, but because we are baptized into Christ, we receive the power to live a life that is grace-driven. It is a life that knows no end. It is a life of second chances and new beginnings. It is a life of second mile giving. Jesus said, "If one of the occupation troops forces you to carry his pack one mile, carry it two miles" (Matthew 7:41 TEV). It implies that we go the second mile even for our adversary or enemy. It is "going the second mile discipleship." "second mile giving" is also a Biblical giving. There are three kinds of financial giving that are mentioned in the Bible – tithes, offerings and alms. We call them first mile giving, second mile giving and third mile giving.

But all three ways of giving are grace-based, faith enriching and joy creating when the gift is given with a proper motive. The proper motive for all giving is gratitude. Joyful giving. A "cheerful giver." When we are grateful for what God has done and is doing for us in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit, we want to give. God created us in his image, to enjoy giving as much as God does. Giving is a gift of God. All three miles of it.

First Mile Giving

The Biblical word for first mile giving is ***"tithing."*** Tithes are unrestricted and undesignated gifts to God for carrying out God's mission. The word tithe denotes ten percent, although in the Old Testament there were several occasions on which God's people gave a second tithe and a third tithe of their crops. Another word that fits is "proportionate," "as God has prospered us" (1 Corinthians 16 and 2 Corinthians 9).

Our first mile giving is the first portion of our paycheck, rather than "leftovers" after we take care of our wants. Think of your tithe as the percent of your income that you put into your envelope to put in the offering plate. It is not relevant what the amount of dollars it may be, or whether you give more or less than I do. Your giving is based on how you are growing in comparison to your past giving. It is proportionate to how God has blessed you and continues to bless you.

There is ample reference to tithing in the Old Testament. Genesis 14, Leviticus 27, Numbers 18, Deuteronomy 12, 14, and 26, 2 Chronicles 31, Nehemiah 10, 12:44, and 13, Amos 4 and Malachi 3:8 all speak of tithes. New Testament tithing is in Matthew 23, Luke 11, 18, Romans 11:16, 1 Corinthians 16:2 and Hebrews 7. First mile giving includes growing in discipleship.

First mile giving remains the fulcrum around which all other giving turns. Second mile giving presumes the joyful experience of first mile giving in one's life. But, before going into detail on second mile giving, I want to cover third mile giving. It is a brief description. It is also the way of giving I know least about

Third Mile Giving

The Biblical word for third mile giving is ***"alms."*** Alms are situational gifts that are born out of a heart-felt desire to help someone less fortunate. It is above and beyond both first and second mile giving. The New Testament speaks of alms in Matthew 6:1-4, Luke 11:41, 12:33, Acts 3:2-31 and 24:17. It is usually

a spontaneous giving. It often involves an encounter with a person who has little or nothing. When we give alms, it may come from an encounter that generates compassion.

Alms are given exclusively to the less fortunate, such as the homeless, the hungry the thirsty. I think of them as the "inasmuch" people of whom Jesus says, "Inasmuch as you have done it (or not done it) unto one of the least of these my sisters and brothers, you have done it (or not done it) unto me" (Matthew 25).

Street appeals come to mind. I notice a man standing on the corner with a sign, "Will Work for Food," and I know I could be in his place. I have never lost a day of eating, but I know that I did not have anything to do with the family and culture into which I was born, and maybe he didn't either. Sometimes I, like the priest and the Levite, am in too big of a hurry to give the man some money, though I can't imagine what in his mind could justify me being in that big a hurry. Beggars give me an opportunity for 3ed mile giving, however I come into contact with them. Third mile giving includes any unrestricted donations we give to less fortunate persons, whether we respond to a media announcement or to an appeal in our congregation at worship. It includes all undesignated giving through the United Way that is not included in 2nd mile giving.

We now turn to a more detailed consideration of second mile giving. It may become a major stream of income for funding sustaining ministry and mission in the church for the future.

Second Mile Giving

The Biblical word for second mile giving is ***"offerings."*** Offerings are designated gifts. They are also gifts that are in addition to the tithe. Psalms 96:8, Hebrews 13:15 and Matthew 23:23 speak of offerings. Second mile gifts are directed to a specific cause or destination. We feel fulfilled when we see a specific way that our giving makes a difference in people's lives. This is an advantage for second mile giving. Examples of 2nd mile giving include the ELCA World Hunger Appeal, church organizations, building funds and any restricted funds.

Second mile giving is over and above first mile giving. It is going the second mile. Second mile giving offers a valuable source for developing sustainable funding for ministry and mission in the church.

In the Old Testament many "offerings" are mentioned, all designated for a particular purpose. There are "wave" offerings, "sin" offerings, "heave" offerings, to name a few (Exodus 25, 30, 35, 36 and 38; Numbers 5, 8, 31 and 2 Chronicles 31). Offerings are distinguished as in addition to tithes in 2 Chronicles 31:12, Nehemiah 13:5, Hosea 8:13 and Malachi 3:8. The New Testament speaks of offerings in Luke 21, Acts 21, 24, Ephesians 5 and Hebrews 10. Jesus distinguishes between tithes and offerings in Matthew 23:23.

Second mile giving streams are being co-created daily and there may be no end to the possibilities for second mile giving opportunities. Here are twelve categories of second mile giving, with some practical examples, some of which apply to more than one category.

1. **Giving By Reducing Waste and Cutting Costs.** Re-cycle paper, toner cartridges and aluminum cans, for example. As streams merge into rivers, merge functions to reduce duplication of costs, such as accomplishing several tasks on each trip. Purchase in volume quantities in order to take advantage of discounts. Finance creatively by minimizing interest costs. Take a bill from the church bulletin board and pay it. Use economy of scale as co-ops have done. Share staff with other agencies and congregations. Drop programs when they no longer generate support. Replace ineffective components of your church program. Review your ministry, and also the facilities from which ministry and mission flow. Add high quality staff members at less cost with part time people, and often you will find highly trained folks who have been looking for an opportunity to do ministry. Streamline the flow of your congregation's systems, beginning with daily prayer.

2. **Giving through Capital Appeals.** Conduct a one time capital appeal for debt reduction or a new building, or plan a capital appeal every three years for continuous flow and grow. Start a Love Fund. Support a student through seminary and subsidize a retired pastor whose retirement is inadequate, while at the same time adopting a missionary who is going in our place. Begin a Mission Investment Fund. Plan a Big Miracle Sunday. Have an Anniversary Offering or a Decade/Century Celebration. Design a special appeal that has a visual "hook" that inspires giving. I have a friend who did a capital appeal for "$___ per key for a new organ." The water image of baptism is particularly rich.
3. **Giving for Current Special Occasions.** Have a one time Thanksgiving offering or Christmas offering for whatever your heart leads you to care about, locally or across the waters. Take advantage of opportunities to have multiple special offerings, like every day at Vacations Bible School or throughout Lent. Start a Special Interest Circle that has a heart for music, guests at worship, families of persons in the military or any common interest that gives an opportunity for second mile giving. Participate in the ELCA's I'm Ready program that provides 100% of a donation any time during the year to support a specific new mission congregation starting from scratch. Get involved in promoting Vision for Mission, which is the global mission appeal that only occurs once a year, also sponsored by the ELCA. Watch for tax-deductible gift opportunities, and occasions on which you can give memorial fund gifts in sympathy or in honor of a loved one.
4. **Giving that Creates a Legacy.** We can do so much when we give beyond our lifetimes. Remember your congregation in your will. Making a special bequest. Take out a life insurance policy and make the church the beneficiary, thereby leaving a bigger gift that serves God. Look into a charitable remainder trust, which provides the wonderful opportunity to give your estate away, minus an income for yourself as long as you need it. Put your congregation's Mission Endowment Fund unto your giving plan. Place some funds into your synod's Endowment Fund. Leave some money to the ELCA Foundation. Learn about "one time large gifts encouraged by the tax code." Know how much you can give away per year and not be taxed on it. It's all about Planned Giving. It is fulfilling giving. You might enjoy funding a new staff position in your congregation, or in your synod or at a seminary or church college.
5. **Giving by Investing.** You might put your savings into the Mission Investment Fund, so that your money is loaned to congregations that would otherwise not be able to afford to build churches and educational units, and it remains your money when you want it back. You might generate or give through conscription, which refers to a way a person generates his own support to be able to go into ministry. For a while, we supported a campus pastor whose position was not funded without our help. It wasn't much that we gave, but walking together with others, we were able to provide a ministry to many students at that college. Consider investing in a stock purchase in the name of the congregation. That has tax benefits also, and there are no capital gains taxes taken out of the earnings.
6. **Giving from Capitalized Assets.** Private investments are often used to fund charitable and religious ministries and services. Start with whatever cause stirs your heart, give any amount you wish and add to it as you want. Consider encouraging the congregation to invest in senior housing, a parochial school, assisted living quarters, a youth center, a nursing facility, a pre-school or day care center. Buy some real estate for God, put some seed money into anything that would earn profit that you would give to God. One congregation gave $100 bills to anyone who wanted to earn a profit that would go to God and members brought in all kinds of profits and stories, some a "harvest that was sixty and a hundred fold." Dedicate some land for a garden, or a field for a crop that would be sold for God, called "God's Acre." One small congregation has added more and more land to the initial small plat, so that they now farm 160 acres for God. List everything you own, or that your church owns, that might be sold, rented or leased for God mission. Include personal property, real estate, contracts, rental properties and service agreements. Publish materials and sell them. Take a second job and give the earnings to God.

7. **Giving Through User Fees and Service Fees.** Place an ad, individually or as a business, perhaps the service that you offer will become a ministry and a mission. Allow members to advertise in your Sunday bulletins or weekly/monthly newsletters for a small cost. They will benefit ands so will the church. Your facilities are valuable to people for meeting places, parking space, for which they will gladly give a donation. Money received from courses you offer through you congregation, and the accompanying educational materials, can make a ministry and mission happen that would otherwise go unfounded. Raise fees that are too low, and suggest donations are appropriate for services people receive. Any meal can be accompanied by a basket with a sign, "$___ Donation."
8. **Giving through Grants.** Community Foundations exist to give. Private donors love to give. Scholarship funds are there to provide assistance for those who can't afford it. I still have a student loan fund, for which I was very grateful when I received it. My wife and I have started a small scholarship fund for individuals and congregations that are unable to raise the money for stewardship training. We enjoy giving it. Support your congregation's Mission Endowment Fund, and if they don't have one, start one. Public grants, such as Community Development Block Grants, do so much to help improve the entire community and your congregation may apply for a cause that fits that opportunity. Thrivent offers grants, and even more frequently, matches funds for a worthy cause. Denominational subsidies are available even in tough times for many ministries and missions. Seed money is available from Corporations. Grants are available to you if you want to help the disadvantaged, and if you are disadvantaged, funds are available for you.
9. **Giving through Program Expansion.** Dream a dream, and God will bless it if it will build up the body of Christ. Add a worship service on Sunday night for all those who watch over us at work during Sunday morning. Announce your ministries in the newspaper. Develop new ways to serve people in your community. I just learned of a free dental clinic that will soon help a center city neighborhood and church leaders are starting it. Design a quality brochure that will tug at my heart. Add a Minister of Stewardship to your congregation's staff. Advertise your ministry on TV, and take advantage of the free public service announcements. Develop a strategic plan to grow in ministry and mission. Don't forget to put announcements on the radio; perhaps they will give you an interview. Also add a Development person to your church staff, and your giving will increase greatly. On congregation advertises in a movie theatre. Start a satellite/branch worship center, offer quality educational courses with tuition. Sponsor large conferences that attract outsiders.
10. **Giving through Partner Support.** Sponsor a missionary. You can pick the missionary you want through Mission Partners, an ELCA service. Stand for growing in your congregation's Mission Support and total Benevolence giving. You will be blessed even more than those whom those funds help. Co-sponsor a ministry, any ministry that you believe in. Collaborate with others to create gift opportunities. Generate in-kind donations for all kinds of services, such as lawn care, landscaping, mechanic, painting, building skills, property care, electronic, instrumental and vocal music directors, baking communion bread, making communion wine, growing altar flowers, growing vegetables, trimming trees and shrubs. At your congregation's auction include "Rent-a-Servant." Support shared ministry every chance you get. Seek out ecumenical collaboration and multi-congregation activities. Consider developing a multi-congregation parish out of congregations that already exist and don't know any of these ideas.
11. **Giving by teaching others about Second Mile Giving.** Sunday School and Confirmation Classes love to hear about Heifer International, and all ages enjoy going through the ELCA's Response catalogs that let you shop for whatever you want to give. Young adult and adults would be a part of a small group that would touch the passion of their hearts. Bible classes, WELCA, common interest circles and support groups all provide giving opportunities. Young adults and other adults would also enroll in a course in debt elimination, leadership development, and training programs for council members. Board member would give more if they knew their expectations, and they would set an example if invited and challenged to do so. Invite them to

tithe. Build a case for your congregation and why it is the best investment our money could accomplish. Ask for sermons on joyful giving and how to give from the heart. Conduct open forums on mission interpretation and second mile giving. I even get paid for teaching second mile giving. You can too. Learn how to ask for money, and if you don't know whom to ask, ask for a course on learning how to ask and you might even become the facilitator for it. Write letters that generate generous giving, and again, if you don't know how, ask for a short course and you will be glad you did. Offer a money management course. Make it easy to give automatically, and remember that Simply Giving allows automatic withdrawal offerings for your congregation.

12. **Giving through Projects, Fundraisers.** This is usually the only category that people think of when they want to increase their funds. Sell magazines, candy bars, wash cars, have bake sales, you know the drill. They are often effective, though this category is only one of twelve remember. Youth activities can generate giving in support. Food sales and annual dinners have been excellent traditions for many congregations, often presenting opportunities for evangelism. Bazaars, concerts, craft shows and garage sales seem to attract surprising numbers of people. Mission trips are a must. (This is the only time the word "must" is in this paper.) Short-duration mission experiences are one of the most important hopes for the future of the church. Go on one. Start one. Have one every year. Habitat for Humanity sponsors them regularly. Oh yes, make it a practice to have an annual Mission Festival. Encourage multi-year commitments for second mile giving. Offer opportunities to learn more. Perhaps once every decade, appeal to retired members living elsewhere. Set up a "futures" task force to establish sustaining funding for a thriving ministry. Thank donors frequently. Above all, continue to emphasize first mile giving, our tithes.

A word of caution is in order. Many ways of growing giving might be objectionable to some people. Use sanctified common sense. Every way of growing in giving can also be abused. Build in safeguards and checks and balances, in a word, accountability to God and to each other. Add any of your ideas to these. Share them with me so I can pass them on to others. Tell me your stories. That just now gave me the idea to have a "Story Night" at you r congregation. People would come monthly if they were available. Cherish your creative imagination. It is a gift of God to you and to others that can become a rivulet or a stream that flows with the water of life to many.

Above all, invite anyone you want to participate with you in ministry and mission. Make it a daily habit. Invite them to know they have permission from God to participate in whatever way their streams of giftedness flow.

We have historically depended upon 1st mile giving for sustainable ministry. Undesignated in nature, it has been called "the engine" that drives the ministry and mission of the church. Undesignated giving (Mission Support) has long been the primary source for funding a sustainable ministry in the ELCA.

In our search for funding, the flip side is emphasized. All twelve of the categories of second mile giving are "giving" categories rather than "fund-raising" categories. It is this paradox of faith that Jesus calls us to live out, for it is in dying that we live, and it is in giving that we receive (Luke 6:38).