Episcopal Parish Network
Where the Church Gathers

Summary and Transcript

Raising Money, Building Connection: Practical Tips for Annual Stewardship

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Summary

The Episcopal Parish Network hosted Susannah Wade Lewis of St. Bartholomew's Church in New York City, Patrick Sanders of St. Peter's By-the-Sea in Gulfport, Mississippi, and moderator Sandy Webb of Church of the Holy Communion in Memphis, Tennessee for a conversation on annual stewardship. Raising money and building connections, they agreed, are exactly the same thing: effective fundraising deepens relationships and increases engagement. Lewis described how St. Bartholomew's replaced a draining, year-round appeal with a structured four-week fall campaign grounded in education, proportional giving, and a sense of abundance, while Sanders, a longtime stewardship consultant, reflected on joyful worship and good ministry as the true drivers of generosity. Both shared practical, scalable advice for congregations just getting a campaign off the ground, and both closed by urging leaders not to shoulder the work alone.

Key Takeaways

1. Fundraising is relationship building. There is an old adage in professional fundraising: people give to people. When stewardship moves from guilt and obligation to relationship and joy, our experience teaches that the money will follow.

2. Structure the campaign and break down the need. St. Bartholomew's replaced its year-round "three-million-dollar bucket" with a four-week fall campaign aiming to pledge at least half of the next year's budget, so the parish can know where it stands by January 1st, stop talking about the need, and celebrate when the goal is met.

3. Educate for conscious, prayerful giving. Ongoing teaching on the mechanics, the meaning, and the spirituality of pledging -- especially proportional giving -- helped a socioeconomically diverse parish engage: pledging units grew 28 percent between 2024 and 2025, with gifts ranging from ten dollars to mid-five figures.

4. The best stewardship campaign is good ministry. Joyful, well-done worship and visible ministry draw generosity out of people; money follows mission. Meeting with the groups already doing ministry -- altar guild, flower guild, youth group, vestry, ECW, Daughters of the King -- is the fastest way to plan a campaign.

5. Make a clear ask, put the pledge card in hands, and don't shoulder it alone. Beautiful, invitatory materials, a ministry guide with the pledge card inside, a QR code in the Sunday leaflet, and simply handing people the card carry a campaign over the line -- and a wide circle of leaders

sharing the work keeps it joyful.

Transcript

Will Stanley: Welcome everyone. My name is Will Stanley, and I serve as the vicar here at St. Stephen's Episcopal Church in Richmond, Virginia. I'm also a member of the board here at EPN, which is where the church gathers. We're really happy to welcome you to this webinar examining how effective fundraising efforts deepen relationships and increase engagement. We're so thankful that you are here and hope you'll take advantage of the many learning opportunities available through EPN.

Again, thank you all for being here, and now I'm happy to introduce Sandy Webb, rector of Church of the Holy Communion in Memphis, Tennessee, a member parish of EPN, who will start the discussion and introduce the rest of our speakers. Sandy, over to you.

Sandy Webb: Will, thank you so much. As Will said, I'm the Reverend Sandy Webb, and I'm the rector of Church of the Holy Communion in Memphis, Tennessee, and I'm so glad to be joined this afternoon by two outstanding Episcopal fundraisers. Susannah Wade Lewis is the Director of Development at St. Bartholomew's Church in New York City, and the Reverend Patrick Sanders is the rector of St. Peter's by the Sea in Gulfport, Mississippi. The three of us serve in very different ministry contexts: urban and rural, Northern and Southern, larger churches and smaller churches, lay and ordained, congregations with seasoned Episcopalians and congregations with limited Episcopal backgrounds, two congregations with significant online streaming ministries, and one that's all in person. The list goes on. But what we've found to be true in each of our contexts is this: raising money and building connections are exactly the same thing.

There's an old adage in professional fundraising: people give to people. The heart of effective fundraising is building meaningful relationships among people and with your organization. Raising money and building connections are exactly the same thing. Too many Episcopal fundraising strategies are grounded in guilt or obligation. We need to move to a strategy of relationship and joy. If we can do that, our experience teaches us that the money will follow.

In our time together this afternoon, Susannah and Patrick will each offer a brief description of their ministry context and the relationship-based fundraising strategies that have worked for them. I'll offer some observations from my own context as we go, and we'll reserve plenty of time for your questions at the end. Our hope is that our reflections today will inspire your own reflections for your own context, and that the particular ideas we share will be able to scale effectively in just about any setting.

Let me begin by introducing you to Susannah Wade Lewis, the Director of Development at St. Bartholomew's Church in New York City. Susannah?

Susannah Wade Lewis: Thank you, Sandy. It is a pleasure and a privilege to be here with both of you today and with everybody who's watching. I am the Director of Development at St. Bart's in New York City, and have been in this role for the last year and a half or so. But I've been a parishioner at St. Bart's since 2003. And that is the primary context in which I come to this work.

Susannah Wade Lewis: When I joined St. Bart's, stewardship was immediately the area that I got involved in, because the sustainability of this parish and of the building it inhabits were compelling to me and something that I wanted to help work on. And that involvement started -- I mean, it spanned from being part of the 20s and 30s group and trying to bring the young adults along in that work, right up to joining the vestry and ultimately chairing the development committee for a period. And then it was about a year and a half ago when the then interim rector, now priest in charge, Peter Thompson, reached out to me to ask if I would potentially be interested in joining the staff. And that was a call. It's mission work for me.

It's hard to talk a lot about stewardship at St. Bart's meaningfully without a little history lesson. So I'll try to do that quickly and get to current day and the practical stuff that hopefully will be helpful to everybody here. St. Bart's is an almost 200-year-old parish located on Park Avenue, smack in the middle of commerce-dense Midtown Manhattan. Its building, its home now, which is its third, is a National Historic Landmark. Early into the 1970s, St. Bart's was one of the three or four largest Episcopal parishes in the country. Its endowment in the late 60s was $15 million, which, if you adjust that for inflation, time, all of that, would be $360 million today. Identity-wise, it goes back to its founding: it has a history of being sort of a force for social justice in the city. Its organ, which is the largest in New York City, and the combination of that and a number of very prominent musicians internationally who at times were our choir masters sort of put the parish on the scene musically. And it has always been a seat of great preaching. So our third building -- this is just a little building fun fact -- was designed such that there is no seat in the main sanctuary that does not have a clear view of the pulpit. So that has always been central to us.

So going back to that earlier time, late 1960s, early 70s, we were in essence a very well-resourced body with rich social and cultural presence in the city. Enter, at the same time -- in the late 70s -- a number of very highly publicized legal battles between the New York City Landmarks Commission and various real estate developers who had shown up. Probably the most relevant of those to St. Bart's is the story of Grand Central Terminal, which, very quickly, sort of in 1978, a real estate developer had approached Grand Central about acquiring the property and building an office tower. And in 1978, the US Supreme Court ruled in favor of New York City landmarks, that Grand Central could not be demolished. And St. Bart's is located just four blocks north of Grand Central. So temporally and proximally, that is kind of an important comparison point for where St. Bart's went next. In 1980, a real estate developer approached St. Bart's -- not to construct an office tower on the site of the church, but on the site of the adjacent community house. And this became a battle between St. Bart's and the New York City Landmarks Commission over the course of the next decade. And it also became a huge point of contention in the parish that ultimately really caused a huge rift and pulled the place in two. Fast forward to 1991, a decade later, a decade of legal battles and infighting, the US Supreme Court ruled again in favor of the New York City Landmarks Commission that this office tower could not be built.

By that point, a good chunk of the endowment, most of it, had been spent on legal battles. And the parish was also not getting the internal support from its parishioners, their giving, in virtue of the fights that had happened. So it was a time of reckoning for St. Bart's. There were motions that the Vestry heard to sell the building, to declare bankruptcy, and things of that magnitude. And it was in

that context that in 1993, the Reverend Bill Tully was called as rector and given the charge of sort of, see what you can do with this. And he spent the next 20 years of his ministry at St. Bart's really pulling the place back from the precipice and starting to build the St. Bart's that we all know and love today. Part of that pulling back and moving forward into the future was the introduction of kind of what we know as church stewardship now, here today. And that effort at St. Bart's, of necessity, has grown to the point where it funds about -- it's about 33% of our operating budget, and it's the single largest income stream supporting our operations each year. So it is a big deal to us.

Susannah Wade Lewis: So, and then the parish today, all this time later. The building ended up tremendously influencing the kind of church that we are. We are a big tent parish that is diverse in every sense, including socioeconomically. We welcome people from all faith traditions, many from no faith tradition. So we are no longer sort of the traditional Park Avenue Episcopal parish. We are vibrant, dynamic, and radically welcoming. Our members are people who care deeply about the ways in which we are living out our faith, both within this building and in the wider city. And we work really hard at doing a good job of bringing new people into those traditions and responding to places where those people coming to us need those traditions to evolve. So we are a radically different parish than we were going back to this earlier time. And yet we still welcome people into this grand, imposing, exquisite building that speaks for itself, and everything that it speaks out loud really is this traditional old-money parish in a very well-resourced area. So that, in terms of getting to current-day stewardship, that is probably one of the biggest hurdles that we face. Our appearance and our reality are very different. And it often takes somebody being here for a good bit before they really understand.

The other big hurdle that we face really is -- I mean, the gift of this place and its challenge is its diversity. We are not a parish of people who all come understanding pledging, in its mechanics, in its role in our tradition. And so that is a big educational piece that we contend with in an ongoing way. It's a heavy lift every year. So we need to raise a minimum of $3 million each year. And more than that would be better.

So what makes that all feasible and possible then? Rewinding a little bit, but in this era of needing this stewardship money, we started -- and this goes back to sort of my memorable history at St. Bart's, living this -- for a long time, we would begin on January 1st talking about the three-million-dollar bucket that we needed to raise that year. The money was not raised in the prior calendar year. We talked about it as stewardship. We talked about pledging, but it was not in the highly structured campaign format that is the typical practice of Episcopal churches. So we really did spend the whole year talking about that huge amount. And ultimately that was really draining. It was daunting to people. They didn't know how it was going to happen. We were already in the year when we needed the money. And so over time, that had the effect of creating a really fear-based context for giving, and a sort of give now or maybe we won't open the doors tomorrow. And coupled with that, a congregation that had a reasonable number of people who, just because of their income structures, that kind of thing, were most comfortable making substantial gifts at the end of the year -- just had a lot of years of literally, on December 31st, it was sort of like, okay, we did the budget this year. So that was exhausting for the parish. It was not life-giving. And the volume that we were always talking about felt unmanageable to a degree. So we've changed that.

We have -- and I'm gonna say more about this -- we have pulled back into a highly structured annual campaign that happens in the fall of the year, in week two right now, to raise a chunk of our money for the following year. And that has given us an opportunity to sort of sit back -- it's a pressured time, but to think in more life-giving ways about the giving that's happening. The forward-looking nature of it -- what do we want to do? What will we be able to do and build together next year? -- is a very different context. The other thing that we did was to break down that $3 million. Our reality is not that we're going to raise $3 million in four weeks. It's just not, with our congregation. So our pledge campaign -- at least, this is my goal in this role -- is at least 50% of that number, so that we can get to January 1st and say we know where at least half of this budget is coming from this year. And the reason that probably sounds low to a lot of places, the reason that is comfortable here, is partly because we do have this reality that a lot of our money still comes in in the fourth quarter of the year. Ideally that wouldn't be what it is, but year after year we still see that. However, what it has enabled us to do is to know that that chunk of our budget that comes from those individual pledges, we know what that is by January 1st, and then we're able to stop talking about it. And that has also been a huge shift for us. And I think psychologically, spiritually, a much healthier place for the congregation, just because they are not constantly bombarded by, oh my goodness, we have this overwhelming need, keep giving, keep giving. So there is just more of a sense of abundance in it, more of a sense of accomplishment. Last year was the first year when we set a goal and reached it. It was the first year in decades that we reached a goal, and within four weeks got there. And the sense of accomplishment and efficacy for the congregation in their ability to sustain what we all love so much and what we're growing here and building was a huge benefit, and just something that everybody really needed. So here we are halfway through year two of that mission, and we will do it. In my mind, we will reach that goal in four weeks.

Susannah Wade Lewis: So I think there are a couple things. We've worked really hard at educating our parishioners about what our needs are, because our appearance and what we need don't match. And then we do a lot of work around ongoing education about the nuts and bolts of pledging, sort of what it is practically, and then also what it is in our faith, what the meaning of that tradition is, so that people understand that. And then through that, really, really talking about the spirituality of it, so that we are building a culture of really conscious, prayerful giving. What we absolutely don't want it to be is the, here's the pledge campaign again, how many zeros will be on my check this year? That is what we want to get rid of. We want people reflecting about what they have, what they want to give back, what St. Bart's means to them. And we are getting there.

So just to put a couple of benchmark numbers on that. Last year, during our four-week campaign -- and a piece of that education, too, importantly, is around proportional giving. A lot of people would hear the number we needed to raise and, particularly given our socioeconomic diversity, kind of tune out and just feel like there was nothing that they could do that would put a dent in that. And so they just did not engage. And so conversations around participation and proportional giving -- as a piece of the pledging education last year, we increased our pledging units by 28% between 2024 and 2025, which is huge. And I would love to grow it that much this year. We'll see. But that was a huge win. And the other thing that we saw was a much greater range in the amount of pledges. We saw pledges as small as ten dollars -- which I might argue isn't quite the place of

reflective and prayerful that we want to get to. We did start acknowledging pledgers on the last Sunday of the campaign, which may have had something to do with it. And then as high as mid-five figures. So it was the big tent -- our parish, a lot more people were in there. And yet that group of pledgers still accounted for only 30% of our list of discrete givers of record last year. So you can see that we are -- and some of that will always be the case, because we have a lot of visitors who will give once and we never see them again. So that's fine. But it underscores the fact that we are kind of in a process of really building this culture where our people feel like our work is sustainable, that they are contributing to it meaningfully, and that this is how we roll, this is what we do every year now. So it's very much a work in progress. And you know, I'm only a year and a half in here. We'll see. But I hope that's helpful to people.

Sandy Webb: Susannah, thank you so much for sharing that reflection. I think so many of us come into congregations with established pledge patterns in place. And I really can't imagine trying to build that from the ground up after a season of division, and a season where congregational generosity wasn't the key to success. But you've been building that, you've seen great success. And the things that I heard from you that I thought were most applicable were: break down the need so that it's not this big bucket that you're trying to fill; build out a giving calendar so that you can approach people at different times in the right way; focus on parishioner education; and then try to build that sense of possibility and abundance and joy. And I really think that that would work in any context where a congregation was trying to build up its stewardship culture, whether from the ground up or trying to do a full revamp. Thank you so, so much for that.

Susannah Wade Lewis: Thank you.

Sandy Webb: When you speak to a culture of abundance and joy, there is no person that comes to my mind more than Patrick Sanders. Not only is he the rector of St. Peter's by the Sea in Gulfport, Mississippi, he's also a stewardship consultant who's worked with a number of different congregations, including my own, in different contexts. And Patrick, I'm just so delighted to have you here, and I would love for you to share your reflections on abundance, joy, and possibility in giving.

Patrick Sanders: Yeah, I'm so honored to be here. I was honored to prepare with y'all. Y'all are so very gracious and generous. Y'all take way more notes than I do, I just want to be clear about that. So yeah, I've been the rector of this church for about eleven years, ordained twenty. And I started doing stewardship consulting pretty early on in my ordained life, just because it seemed like people were having a hard time talking about money. So at first it was just about that. I just seemed to not have the filter about it. And when people could bring someone in from a long way away to talk about giving, my name would come up. And so it's super fun to go into all these different churches, both really small churches and then much, much larger parishes.

The thing in my local context, I guess I'll just do that. I got here eleven years ago. They had been a pretty divided parish in their recent history over national church issues that everybody was struggling with at the time. And they were kind of digging their way out of that and were looking, I think, to sort of blow the doors off the place. So we started our work together, and that's after they had survived Hurricane Camille, casinos moving in, and Hurricane Katrina, and rebuilt right there

on the beach. So they were already fearless. And we started -- you know, they weren't beaten up, they were pretty hopeful -- but it was a smaller congregation, and we've gotten pretty big now, you know, for a small Mississippi Episcopal church. We have anywhere from 200 to 250 people coming to church on Sunday. It's beautiful. We just started our stewardship campaign that was not going the way that I wanted it to go when we started. And so we had to pivot, and that has turned out to be a pretty amazing opportunity to get creative and be really transparent and joyful about what we're doing.

Patrick Sanders: I will say, I want to echo what Susannah said about -- for so long, even in my consulting work early on, the tithe, or that obligatory type of giving, was so prevalent. Even trendy, the tithe was. I mean, Florence, Alabama, I showed up to a church in their last stewardship campaign, their slogan was Roll Tithe. So it was really popular, and maybe I guess a little effective. But the longer I've done this work, the more that I've realized that I'm just not sure that that motivates people to give from the center. That feels like people giving from here and not from the soul. And so getting people to understand that, wrapping themselves into the common life of the church -- if we could get people to do that, and we could get them to find joy and restoration and redemption and hope for what God has in store for them and for the world around them, that money would follow. And I have just not seen evidence to the contrary. And this year I think is gonna be no different than that. But I really entertain anything you wanna hear about, Sandy. I could go on and on, obviously.

I mean, I think the turning point really, just off the top of my head, is if we ever become self-aware enough to know when we're thinking, gosh, I really hope those people step up in a place that I really love and care about. So we walk into whatever doors of a church, and we find something we love there, and then we engage it and we become a part of the we. All of a sudden, and then before too long, it becomes something we're invested in and we love, and we look around and go, gosh, I wish these other people would do more and give more. And the minute we become self-aware enough to realize, oh, somebody else in the room is looking at me, hoping I will do more or give more or engage more -- and if we're doing worship right, Sandy, if we're doing it right, then people will find themselves self-aware in the middle of our beautiful liturgy and services and homilies and prayers and music. And I'm hoping that it happens there. And so I just want to say, I think the turning point, to answer your question finally, is the church, when it's at its best, is co-creating with God joyful experiences of worship first, and everything flows from that. And if that is joyful and organized and intentional and spiritual, then that's gonna motivate people to engage the work that's going on outside of that service, and then that's gonna draw giving from them.

I wish I could, like, know who wrote this answer, but why do we praise? It's because God's very being draws praise from us. And that's just in the catechism of our faith. I was teaching a confirmation class and went through it, and I was preparing, and I saw that, and it just makes so much sense to me that we shouldn't really give ourselves credit for rejoicing, because it's God that's pulling that from us. And I would say the same thing about generosity, of anything. I mean, I'm a real big believer that we talk about money when we're talking about money. We could talk about talent, we're talking about talent, but those are two different things. But God's calling both of those things out of us, and when the church is doing it well, I think people are gonna find

themselves connected to that being of God, and their praise and their generosity is gonna be drawn out of them. They won't be able to help it. They just won't be able to stop it.

Patrick Sanders: I just want to repeat the question: that people are joining in from different contexts and different sizes of parishes that are probably in different phases of their stewardship program, and what do we see as important, or things to know, if you're just trying to get a stewardship campaign off the ground -- two or three of those things. Is that Susannah, is that what you got? Is that what we're doing? All right, cool.

Susannah Wade Lewis: Mm-hmm.

Patrick Sanders: I think the most important thing -- thank you for letting me go first, I'm so hyped about it -- I think the most important thing is stop worrying about it and start having fun with it. Get together with a group of people that you love and who inspire you. If you're the priest in the church, find people with whom you talk about how much you love Jesus a lot, and people with whom you can dream. And get together, and then start thinking about what you can do over the next week or two to get cranked up. A pledge card that pops -- you know, this is maybe more for smaller parishes, I think this is even more helpful, but making things that don't look like paperwork, that are ministry in and of themselves, that are invitatory in the way that they appear aesthetically. And then being just as communicative as you can about the ministry that you're already doing. And then, when you get towards the end of your campaign, then you can start talking about the things you want to be able to do. And that's really when you push it over the line. But the ramp up to that is what are we already doing? What do you already love? To put it in a maybe -- not to beat a dead horse, but here are the things that will draw generosity out of people. It's simple, but it's beautiful. We just do a ministry guide. This is our newest one. We give it some art. Pretty simple. And then we put the pledge card in it, and it just lists everything we do and who you can talk to to be a part of that ministry. So once you do that, everything else is talking to people, getting people to share their stories. And so I think just making sure you get a pledge card out, and then a good solid list and presentation of the things that you're hoping will draw generosity out of people, the things that you're already accomplishing in your community and in your church.

Susannah Wade Lewis: Not so different. So I think if it were a context where it was sort of, where do we begin, the first thing would be getting together with all the people who are bought in and there and engaged, and thinking about all the things that you really love that that place is and that place does. And starting from that, and then yes, communicating that really effectively -- really, to Patrick's point, in your materials, in your verbal communication, just drawing people to the things that everybody there is looking forward to, and really highlighting those and bringing those out. And then this is the development director in me: being really clear with your ask. If you're getting off the ground, people aren't gonna know just what you want of them. And so articulating that really well for them, that would be the other thing. And I would say, just to what we experience here and what we contend with here, doing that in a way that brings people along.

Patrick Sanders: I think one of the biggest mistakes that I see parishes make all the time -- it's crazy how many folks do it -- is the pledge cards back there. You know, like the whole, you just put stewardship spiel, and then you go, pledge cards are right back there, grab them on your way out,

or pick one up on Wednesday. You gotta put it in their hand. I mean, I think that goes along with what you're saying about being clear with your ask. I'm not ashamed to talk about it. I'm certainly not ashamed to hand you this thing. And so, you know, print triple.

Susannah Wade Lewis: Yeah. And depending on how tech-dependent you are and all that, we've got a QR code right in the Sunday leaflet. People can do it right there when they're sitting there. And so just making it easy. And we do exactly what -- it's a different graphic, and all that. I'll show you ours this year. So this is our brochure this year: it's an outline of the building with all of the life that's happening within it inside. And then the content inside really is kind of designed to have people looking forward. Last year we had an incredible year of growth in terms of numbers and just ministries and all of that. And so we did some graphics around all the ways and places that we're growing. And this year we did -- and this is, some of it is kind of a helpful education point and some of it is just kind of intriguing and fun to look at -- a pie chart of our funding model in 1976 and a pie chart of our funding model today. And it just sort of draws people in. And then yes, having the pledge card right in there, so that it's in people's hands.

Patrick Sanders: I did a -- go ahead, Sandy. Can I say something real quick just to follow?

Sandy Webb: Yeah, absolutely.

Patrick Sanders: So I did a kind of a web thing with a small church kind of collective in our diocese, because we have a lot of those in the Diocese of Mississippi. This priest, Elisabeth Malphurs, is just an amazing priest -- associate at Chapel of the Cross in Madison now -- but really passionate about smaller churches. And so she put together the stewardship thing, and I got asked to speak to that. And as I started talking about the artwork and the little brochure, the little program -- you know, we make little stickers, and it's all kind of -- when I started talking about the pledge card that pops, one of the things that kept coming up for people in these smaller parishes was, well, we don't really have -- I don't know how to make a booklet. We don't have a copier contract, or how many things you're doing. So I think it's really important to make sure you can look for folks that can do those sorts of things. You can even be clear with your ask about the work that you need to do to make the ask. Does that make sense? Like, you can be really clear about, hey, we really want to put the word out, we want to get these pledge cards in people's hands, we need a little help doing that. And so you can start there. Look, late October is not too late. I mean, so many people wait till November, December -- I mean, your budget people might freak out a little bit, but good stewardship's worth it.

Susannah Wade Lewis: We used to wait till January. You know?

Patrick Sanders: Yeah. You know, it's the budget that's hard. But I just mean for those resources, like, just don't be afraid to also ask for help making the ask, I guess the point.

Sandy Webb: So let's try and be as precise as we can for folks who may be trying to launch something here. Both of you talked about giving through joy and possibility and abundance. Is there any messaging that you found to be particularly successful? I know in our congregation we've been using generation to generation a lot, thinking about what was done for us and thinking about what we can do for those who come after. Are there any other phrases or ideas that you

might offer to a congregation that was just getting started?

Patrick Sanders: Money follows mission. I keep saying that one. That's good messaging.

Sandy Webb: Patrick, you have an approach that ministry is the best fundraising, and that solid ministry rarely goes unfunded. Tell us more about some of the language you have around that.

Patrick Sanders: Yeah. Sandy, I kept trying to think, it's like there's one more thing I want to make sure I nail. So yeah, I heard this phrase and I just believe it: the best stewardship campaign is good ministry. If you're making the ask and you're having a hard time getting people engaged, it might be time to take a deeper look at the sacred work you're doing, and get with those people -- what do they need? And particularly, when I go into churches -- and I'm happy to walk people through this even after this, 'cause it's so freakishly simple -- it's what we used to call the Every Member Campaign back when the Alabama Plan was a thing. The Every Ministry Campaign is so effective: you just get yourself, as a rector or stewardship chair or warden or concerned member, whatever -- get yourself in front of as many people doing ministry in your church as possible late in the year. And you'll just start having conversations about what they're doing and what they need and what they're concerned about and what they're happy about, what they miss, what they dream for. And by the time you're done with those conversations, you are off to the races. So I'll say this: if you're watching this thing and you have not started your stewardship campaign yet, just make meetings with your altar guilds, your flower guilds, your youth group, their parents, your vestry, your men's group, your ECW, Daughters of the King -- line up the next two to three weeks meeting with those people. And when you get to the end of that, you'll have a fundamental idea of what you should do next, without question.

Susannah Wade Lewis: Yeah. And if I can just add to that idea of ministry leading it all. I've said a lot about kind of tactically what we've done in the development office and that kind of thing. But the other piece is what has been going on at St. Bart's, particularly in the past year, ministry-wise, with transitions that have happened and all of that: people love the ministry that's happening here, and they love their leader. And I can sit and create campaigns all day long. But if what people are seeing and experiencing on Sunday morning and every day in between, when they're engaged with the community, isn't grabbing them, it's not gonna matter. It's just not. So that absolutely is the starting point for it.

Patrick Sanders: It always brings back to joy, Susannah, right? That, like, this is -- Sandy started at the top: people give money to people. I agree with that. People give money to joyful people who they want -- you know, they want that thing to infect them, whatever that is, you know what I'm saying? And so getting people rallied around what you're doing and what you're feeling is fanned out.

Susannah Wade Lewis: That they want to be an active part of.

Patrick Sanders: Yeah, a hundred percent.

Sandy Webb: Our stewardship chair spoke in church this past Sunday and began by telling the story of when I asked him to be the stewardship chair. And he said, you know, I really don't like asking people for money. And I said, well, you don't have to, you just need to talk about Holy

Communion and why you love it, and everything else follows. And it really does work that way.

Sandy Webb: Y'all, we have shouldered our way through some technical difficulties here, and thirty-one people have stuck with us, which is wonderful. Are there any sort of closing comments you would offer before we wrap up our time today?

Patrick Sanders: I'll just say -- it took us a while to kind of ramp up to it because we had so much good stuff to offer -- I think it's just so vital to remember that having relationships and conversations with people in that smaller circle of leadership is just so, so important. That no one person should shoulder it. The rector should not just be planning all the speakers and writing the letter and doing the thing and making the bulletin and the thing. I mean, it's engaging people. You look at the way a capital campaign works, right? You want your lead gifts in the room on that committee, and then it blossoms out from that room. And that's modeled in the gospel. Everything starts in the upper room and then explodes out into the world from it, post-resurrection. I mean, I just think -- don't shoulder it alone. There are people that love doing this work out in the church. Don't do it alone in your church. Talk to people about it and ask for help, and I think you'll be absolutely amazed at how compelling a thing you can pull off in whatever context you're in.

Sandy Webb: Susannah, last word to you.

Susannah Wade Lewis: I would say I would echo that. One of the things we do -- we've adapted here what conceptually, or sort of in the primer, is the all-parish canvass. We have a calling program during the campaign, but it's not an ask. It's people checking in with each other and asking the questions of some of the things that Patrick has talked about. What do you love? What's going well for you here? What do you wish we were doing? And those conversations, and getting that wider body involved and thinking about what they love and what they want and what they can help build, is a critical piece of the puzzle. And I would also just say, if I can be helpful to anybody who's on this call, I'm happy to be in touch. So please feel free to reach out.

Sandy Webb: When EPN asked me to put together this forum, I thought immediately of the two people in Episcopal fundraising that I would most want for the church to meet. And today we've achieved that. Patrick, Susannah, thank you so much for your time. To those of you who are part of the forum today, thank you for sticking with us through the technical difficulties. And the technology is such that the recording will be clear, so you can go back and take a listen to anything that you might have missed. I echo what Patrick and Susannah said, that all of us are delighted to be in conversation. We're here because we love talking about fundraising and talking about the Episcopal Church. And if you would like just a conversation partner, our names and addresses are all on our websites. Thank you so very much for being here, and we look forward to further conversation about this important topic. Have a wonderful afternoon.

Patrick Sanders: Yeah, thank you.

Susannah Wade Lewis: Thank you.