Mission
The Lake Institute on Faith & Giving exists to serve the public good by exploring the multiple connections between philanthropy and faith within the major religious traditions.

Resources
Find us on Twitter!

Course: Faith & Fundraising. This public course is a joint offering of the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving and The Fund Raising School of the Center on Philanthropy at Indiana University and will be held May 16-19 in Indianapolis.

Tips from the Top: Lessons from successful faith-based nonprofits

As we embark on a new year, we look to glean lessons from the old. In 2010, despite a difficult economic climate, a number of faith-based organizations topped the Chronicle of Philanthropy’s Philanthropy 400 list, which ranks charities by their fundraising prowess. In our travels around the country, clergy and lay members involved in the financial and stewardship issues of their organizations often ask us to share what we know about organizations that seem to be faring well during challenging times. With that aim in mind, we interviewed the leadership from a number of the religious organizations found on the 2010 Philanthropy 400, including the Christian Blind Mission, Mercy Ships, Food for the Hungry, Birthright Israel Foundation, Catholic Medical Mission Board, Matthew 25 Ministries, and Wycliffe Bible Translators. Each organization experienced significant percentage increases in their fundraising from 2009 to 2010 as evidenced in the chart below. To earn a spot on the list, charities count cash and other types of noncash gifts, including stock and real estate, to determine how much they raise from private sources. The Chronicle compiles the rankings using data from each charity's Form 990, the informational tax return that charities must file.

For more information, click here.
Seminar: **Creating Congregational Cultures of Generosity.** You asked, we answered! A public offering of this seminar is scheduled at the beautiful Montreat Conference Center in North Carolina May 23-25. Learn: (1) how to talk about money with theological integrity, (2) how to extend the practice of pastoral care to care for donors, (3) how to create an organizational climate of fiscal transparency and accountability.

Learn more about this program and register online.

**Commentary**

Are Megachurches Riding the Kind of Economic Bubble that Created the Banking Crisis? a view from Institute Director, Bill Enright

As might be expected many, if not all, of the organizations we interviewed gave the credit for their success to their religious values, values shared by their faithful supporters. Along with the spiritual dimensions of their answers, we also identified a few key practices that the organizations cited as integral to their fundraising success:

- **Take donor care seriously.** All consistently reported how seriously they took the job of caring for the needs of their donors. It seemed clear to those we interviewed that the reason for their fundraising success had a lot to do with the values that they shared with their donors. But rather than allowing this value alignment to lull them into a sense of comfort, these organization were proactive in offering their donors an increased menu of exciting partnership opportunities aligned with the expressed needs of the donors.

- **Create a culture of transparency with your donors.** The organizations understood that donors value and, in fact, require increased levels of transparency and accountability. Leaders in these organizations have worked hard to design streamlined systems of reporting to their donors and have created ways to allow their donors to "get on the inside" of their operations, essentially creating more donor-centric approaches to their fundraising programs.

- **Strive for efficiency and let your donors know about it.** Many of the

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Percent Increase from 2009 to 2010</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Christian Blind Mission USA</td>
<td>172.5%</td>
<td>$110,132,886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mercy Ships</td>
<td>138.6%</td>
<td>$52,864,728</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food for the Hungry</td>
<td>78.9%</td>
<td>$193,512,938</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birthright Israel</td>
<td>46.8%</td>
<td>$71,470,042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic Medical Mission Board</td>
<td>35.5%</td>
<td>$279,664,537</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew 25 Ministries</td>
<td>32.9%</td>
<td>$110,006,423</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wycliffe USA</td>
<td>31.3%</td>
<td>$188,851,629</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

organizations stressed the importance of communicating metrics to their donors. For example, most reported that donors have a keen interest in their efficiency, as evidenced by low overhead costs, and are eager to see numbers to that effect.

- **Don't put all your eggs in one basket.** Most of the organizations also pointed to diversification as one reason they have weathered the recession's effect on philanthropic giving. They worked to find out what appealed most to their donors and positioned various programs to meet their changing interests.

- **Explore using "gifts in-kind."** Several of the nonprofits were successful because they were large-scale recipients of in-kind gifts. Though not a possibility for all nonprofits, this trend suggests that the efficiency of recycled items, volunteer hours, and other non-cash gifts appeals to many donors. You may be well served to consider how you might use these same strategies to enhance the financial health of your own organization.

- **Be intentional in scripting your shared religious values.** The organizations emphasized the common bond that they share with their donors. Compelled by their shared faith, the organizations saw fundraising not as a way to pay the bills but as a way to join together to fulfill the basic teachings of their faith.

- **Focus on what is unique about your mission.** One might think that large, successful nonprofits have a well worn strategic plan and just stick to it. Our interviews indicated that, even large nonprofits spend time rethinking, reviewing and re-messaging their core mission. Each of these nonprofits could articulate the unique role it plays in the world of religious nonprofits and successfully leveraged that role with the donors for whom their mission has special significance.

- **Don't waste a good recession.** While acknowledging the negative effects of the recession, these organizations also saw the recession as an opportunity to crystallize their fundraising strategies, trim unnecessary expenses, and then communicate in compelling ways the value of the partnership that exists between their mission and the donor.
The Lake Institute is proud to welcome Dr. Richard Gunderman, Professor of Radiology, Pediatrics, Medical Education, Philosophy, Liberal Arts, and Philanthropy at Indiana University, as the 2011 Lake Lecturer. On Thursday, March 24, he’ll discuss "The Undiminished Flame: Education, Giving, and the Quest for Faith," followed by a Q&A.

After the lecture, Dr. Gunderman will be available to sign copies of his book, We Make a Life by What We Give.

March 24, 2011
Lecture 5:00pm
Reception & book signing 6:00pm
University Place Auditorium
IUPUI Campus