

Kitchen Table Philanthropy



In a recent study, more than 50% of women respondents strongly agreed it was important to them that their children continue their tradition of charitable giving.

—Women in Philanthropy: Gender Differences in Charitable Giving (Offord Group, 2009)

And let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good deeds, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the day approaching.

Hebrews 10:24–25

This Scripture passage reminds us to provoke one another to love and good deeds, and as Women of the ELCA, we live that out by supporting one another in our callings and encouraging others to engage in ministry and action—the core of our Purpose Statement.

The writer of this Hebrews text alludes to “the day” approaching, but none of us has any idea when “the day” will arrive. So we live out our life of faith by continually living out our mission, listening to the words of grace and hope given to us and answering the call to serve.

Encouraging others to recognize their own capacity for philanthropy and service is central to our purpose as the women of this church. We care about what God cares about, and we see what Women of the ELCA has accomplished and will continue to accomplish. For example, we have revealed to others our witness for peace and justice and our commitment to women’s spiritual and physical health.

Our generosity is further revealed in our response to the needs of the poor and those living in crisis, for God's word leads us not away from the strife and despair of our societies but rather through the disasters and the grief. Through our stewardship and service, not only to this organization but to many other ministries and organizations, we support, comfort and provoke one another.

What are your giving beliefs? Have you shared your sense of call as a steward, a philanthropist and a provoker of change with those closest to you?

Sit down with your spouse, partner, children or grandchildren and tell them what is important to you and why you give. The next time you're sitting around the kitchen table together, try one of these conversation starters:

Think of one Bible story or passage that talks about sharing with others.

Why is your offering at church important?

How can you encourage a friend to "do good"?

Sowing the seeds: How your giving shapes your family

In theory, teaching kids to give is a pure good idea. In practice, I wasn't sure how to do it.

—Emily Bazelon, senior editor at *Slate* magazine

Do you believe your family lives out certain philanthropic values? You should feel encouraged to discuss your philanthropic ideals with your spouse and children and give your family real, concrete examples of the ways you give.

Research shows that, on average, 65-70% of all women donate either time or money to charity. How do you fit into that statistic, and how do you share your commitments with your family members?

Your philanthropy is in part about how you spend your time. You may find that some of your examples of how you share your time are routine parts of your life but still a powerful witness. Maybe you attend your library board meeting once a month. Your child may think of it as just one more time you are not at home in the evening, but have you explained that this is a way you are contributing to your community? Have you explained why it is important to you? Have you ever asked your children to accompany you to the meeting or asked what they like best about going to the library?

How to Use This Resource

The purpose of this resource is to give families ideas on how to start talking about philanthropy and to help them learn how to pass on to the next generation their commitment to charitable giving. You can find more stewardship-related resources at womenoftheelca.org. If you would like to speak with someone directly about stewardship and giving, please contact Women of the ELCA's director for stewardship and development at 1-800-638-3522, ext. 2736, or women.elca@elca.org.



Your philanthropy is also about how you spend your money. Sitting at the table and discussing as a family your beliefs about giving is a great way to teach about both managing and spending money.

How many of us have given our children a dollar for the offering at church? Maybe they understand that they are giving to the church, but they are merely passing it from your purse to the plate. Some families use the spend, save, share method when they give their children an allowance. They find that this is a more powerful witness because their children are learning that giving is a part of their lives, too, and that every family member participates.

Have you tried the spend, save, share method when giving your children an allowance? Does it work?

What methods do you use when teaching your family to give?

How can you encourage your family to “do good”?

Name someone in your life who has encouraged you to give.

Creating a legacy: How your family shapes the future

Family philanthropy not only has a positive impact on society but also teaches children and grandchildren the skills and competencies necessary to lead fulfilling lives and steward their money responsibly.

—Charles W. Collier, senior philanthropic advisor at Harvard University

Involving your children not only in your own philanthropy traditions but also encouraging them to be part of decisions for the family is a way to encourage their philanthropic spirit. Ask your children if there are specific places or causes they would like your family to volunteer or give a donation to. You might be surprised to hear what they have to say. They probably know more about your church or your community than you think!

Here are some questions to ask the budding philanthropists sitting at *your* kitchen table*:

If you had \$1,000 dollars and you could use it to change someone’s life, what would you do with it?

What is one problem that you hope doesn’t exist in 50 years?

If you could invent something that would make the world a better place, what would you invent?



What is the best charitable gift you have made?

Do you think our family gives back enough? How can we do better?

Is there a project or organization you would like our family to support?

And finally, remember that your philanthropy can continue in your estate planning and that it is helpful to include your family members in those decisions. Your family will want to know your plans, and you will want to give them some input into the charitable gifts that should be made from your estate. Their input should be important to you! Making a planned gift is part of your role as a philanthropist, and leaving a gift, of any size, is a powerful way to express your compassion and values, witness to your faith and model the importance of philanthropy to your family.

Talking about giving with your family is an important and healthy thing to do. So the next time you're around the kitchen table, talk about it!

*These questions and other suggestions for discussion can be found in *S'Mores and iPhone Apps: Family Philanthropy Conversations* at the Philanthropy Potluck website: <http://blog.mcf.org/2010/08/17/family-philanthropy-conversations/>

Did you know?

Women of the ELCA resources, such as this one, are available free to individuals, small groups, and congregations. Covering a variety of topics, we are bringing Lutheran perspectives and new voices to issues that matter. By making a donation to Women of the ELCA, you will help us continue and expand this important educational ministry. Give online at womenoftheelca.org or mail to Women of the ELCA, ELCA Gift Processing Center, P.O. Box 1809, Merrifield, VA 22116-8009.

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