



Tools to Sustain Our Missional Congregations

A topical newsletter for Pilot Series teams

Presbytery of Genesee Valley

Know Christ ■ Live Christ ■ Share Christ

Roderic P. Frohman & James S. Evinger (Eds.)

#4 in a series (April, 2018)

From Toxic Charity to Development: More from Robert D. Lupton

God bless our Pilot Teams! You told us what was working in our workshops – and what wasn't! Thank God for your direct, honest, and thoughtful responses. (Bashful you were not.) One component your Teams consistently valued was the Workshop entitled, ***Beyond Toxic Charity to Mission that Transforms***. Repeatedly, your Teams endorsed it for its leading you to new perspectives and insights about the outcomes of your social mission projects. You found it effective in opening up possibilities for how your projects could result in new and better outcomes for people served. This newsletter extends the conversations started in that Workshop.

Upon discovering that Robert D. Lupton from Atlanta, Georgia, author of *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help (And How to Reverse It)*, was to be speak at Asbury First United Methodist Church in Rochester, we promptly registered to attend. We spent two hours in his April 29 afternoon workshop which was open to the public for people who had read his books. The next day, we spent two-and-a-half hours with Bob over breakfast, discussing his work and this workshop series. (He read our text, and called it a “really fine work.” Take a bow, Pilot Teams; it's better because of you!)

What follows are portions from our conversation with this warm, friendly man of deep faith with insight from decades of experience. Next, read the notes of Beth Laidlaw who attended Bob Lupton's evening presentation on the 29th. You're getting a double dose.

Covington United Presbyterian Church, *Pavilion*

First Presbyterian Church, *Batavia*

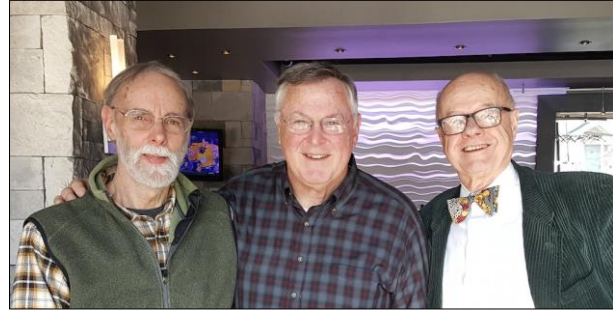
First Presbyterian Church, *Pittsford*

First Presbyterian Church, *Chili*

Central Presbyterian Church, *Geneseo*

Pilot Team members have always made it clear (very clear) to us that you are seeking ideas, suggestions, and recommendations which are concrete and practical.

To that end, here is our distillation of Bob Lupton's most relevant material for you from his time in our region.



1. Envision transforming a long-standing **Charity** project which, because of its structure of one-sided giving, is now toxic and reinforces dependency in those who are served. Aim for outcomes which over time will nurture people's pride and self-sufficiency.
 - Take a *food pantry* (hands out free food items donated by people in the congregation) and turn it into a *food co-op* which people join and take a role in shaping how it functions. [See Urban Recipe in Atlanta, GA: <https://urbanrecipe.org/>] Or run a weekly shuttle to a grocery store for people who live in food deserts.
 - Take a *clothes closet* (receive donated, used clothing and give it away at no cost) and turn it into a *thrift store* which charges shoppers a small fee and employs a few shoppers to operate it.
 - Take a *toys-for-tots* project (collect children's toys and give them away at no cost) and turn it into a *Christmas store* which charges shoppers a small fee.
2. Envision bettering the lives of people by bettering the geographic area where they live, like a few blocks in a neighborhood or a Section 8 housing unit. What are the first steps? Meet people and build relationships.
 - Move the food pantry project out of your church which is not in your guests' neighborhood. Find a partner church in their neighborhood which will invite your project and volunteers to operate there.
 - Town churches have an advantage of scale. They can more readily "get their arms around" problems which impact people in their locale.
3. Envision reducing the toxicity of an existing **Charity** project by improving the quality of how it is conducted.
 - Take a project which gives away items (like food) and create opportunities for your guests who are able and willing to assist with the preparation or set-up, distribution or serving, and clean-up. Move toward **Relationship Charity**.



Development is the goal of **Transformative Mission**.
Development strengthens people's capacity to address their own needs and move toward self-sufficiency. **Development** "equips the saints."

Notes from Toxic Charity Talk by Robert Lupton

Rochester, NY, April 29, 2018

Beth Laidlaw

In late April, Asbury First United Methodist Church, Rochester, New York, brought Robert Lupton to our area for a weekend of events, some of which were open to the public. Sunday evening the 29th, Beth Laidlaw attended his presentation. It was based on his 2011 book, *Toxic Charity: How Churches and Charities Hurt Those They Help (And How to Reverse It)*, which is a primary resource for Workshop 7 in the *Activating Our Missional Congregation* series. Presented here with Beth's gracious permission are her notes from Bob's presentation.

We want to aim for less transactional mission work and more relational mission work.

When we give charity,
it affirms the superiority of the giver,
it binds the recipient,
it demands gratitude of the recipient,
it humiliates the recipient, and
it reduces the recipient to a lower state than he had before.

Charity distribution usually evolves into a system of who can have what when... like the temple police guarding the resources.

Volun-tourism (when groups come into a neighborhood to do service projects) are unwelcome by neighbors. "I hate when those volunteers come here. They insult me." "Neighbors don't decide which projects to do and when." Service groups are often an expensive, unwanted burden.

Give once = appreciation
Give twice = anticipation
Give three times = expectation
Give four times = entitlement
Give five times = dependency

Beth is a member of Third Presbyterian Church, Rochester, NY. Through her congregation and Presbytery of Genesee Valley, Beth has long been an integral part of social mission efforts in her community. She is with the Dining Room Ministry team at Third which to date has completed five *Activating Our Missional Congregation* workshops. Beth is a professor of philosophy at Monroe Community College, Brighton Campus.



Lupton made a new rule: **Only give charity in a crisis.** Being hungry – it's not a crisis; starving is a crisis. Crisis-giving happens only for a short while and only after an emergency.

Chronic need is what we have in the urban communities in America. When you give a crisis intervention to a chronic need, people are harmed because it increases their dependency, decreases their work ethic, and decreases their dignity.

Principle 1: I will never do for others what they can do for themselves.

We distribute food as emergency response only because there are lots of fish feeding stations and very few stations teaching people how to fish. Maybe we (people with resources) are the reason poverty is increasing. Following ***Principle 1*** takes creative thinking. *You need to see the people in the community as your primary source.* Example: senior citizens are excellent crime watchers. Graffiti taggers are excellent makers of public art. It is our responsibility as stewards of resources to setup *systems of reciprocity.*

Adopt-a-family at Christmas morphed into setting up a deep, deep discount store which hired those who had no money to buy gifts. The traditional adopt-a-family model deprives moms and dads of the joy and pride of giving their children gifts and it deprives moms and dads of the joy of finding a bargain.

The food pantry does not empower. It may organically self-organize into a dignity-giving food co-op charging five dollars a visit and hiring, among the community members, a secretary, treasurer, food buyer, food deliverer, and volunteers who make a hot meal for the community. So, the food co-op replaced what we called dining room ministry. This kind of ministry takes a very long time because it must grow organically within the community and needs to start very small. The change begins by eliminating charity and only giving when a crisis occurs. Service projects are unwelcomed in our neighborhoods. Neighbors wanted to decide the needs of what was to be done and neighbors needed to manage the project. This way it becomes mutual evangelism.

Principle 2: I'll limit my one-way giving to crisis and seek always to find ways for legitimate exchange.

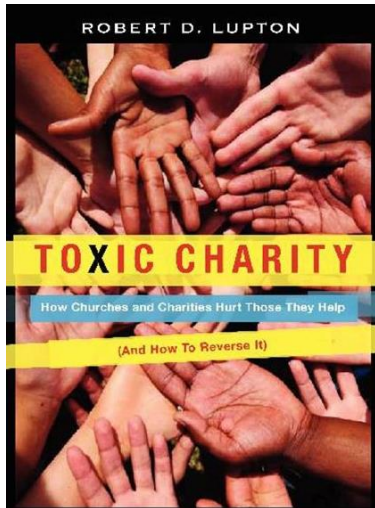
Principle 3: I will empower by hiring, lending, and investing, and offer a gift sparingly as incentives to reinforce achievements.

Investing is the highest form of charity. Investing is making money with the poor, not for the poor or on the poor.

Principle 4: I will put the interests of the poor above my own or organization self-interest, even when it means setting aside my own agenda.

Principle 5: I'll listen carefully (to those I serve) for spoken and unspoken needs, knowing that many clues maybe hidden.

Principle 6: Above all, to the best of my ability, I will do no harm.



For more information:

Lupton Center

Atlanta, GA

<http://www.luptoncenter.org>

Resources include:

Workshop: **Changing the Charity Paradigm**

Interactive seminar: **Reimaging Charity**

6-part video-based course: **Seeking Shalom**

On-line training

Books

An interview with Bob Lupton regarding toxic charity

https://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/10/12/robert-lupton-toxic-charity_n_1007751.html

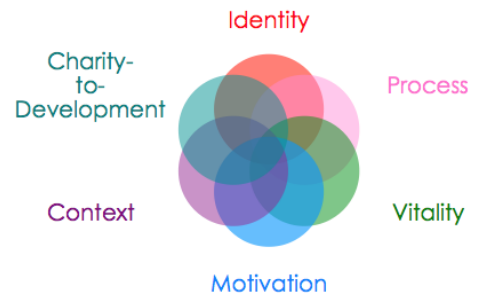
Gather your Team to discuss this topic!

You can connect this newsletter to...

Activating Our Missional Congregation

- **Workshop 7 – From Toxic Charity to Development**

Ecology of Missional Culture



Do you have a topic you would like to see explored?

Do you have a question other Pilot Teams are asking, too?

Let us know! cityrevRochester@gmail.com 727-2676 (cell)

Save this Date!

Saturday, June 16, 2018, 10:00 – 11:45 a.m.

Pilot Congregations Support Workshop # 3

at First Presbyterian Church of LeRoy

Childcare & 9:30 a.m. continental breakfast are provided.

“...to **equip** the saints for the work of ministry,
for **building up** the body of Christ...”

Ephesians 4:12