



Spark Generosity for Mission

**FUNDRAISING AS
PROFESSION AND VOCATION:**

An Inquiry About Faith and the
Practice of Fundraising

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An Inquiry About Faith and the Practice of Fundraising

- Section 1 – A Foreword
 - Section 2 – A description, and presentation and interpretation of the findings, of the survey conducted on fundraising as vocation.
 - Section 3 – A description of the arrangements for, conduct of and findings and interpretations from the interviews of ALDE members regarding their understanding and experience of their fundraising practice as an expression of their faith, ministry or vocation.
 - Section 4
 - A) A summary of key findings of the survey and interviews, and their significance for ALDE.
 - B) Important questions and next steps to pursue to develop a deeper — potentially more useful — understanding of the connections between faith and the practice of fundraising.
 - References
 - Appendix – Survey Instrument
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— 1 —
FOREWORD

January 2017

Dear ALDE Member and Partner in Christ,

For years, one of ALDE's strategic objectives has been aimed at finding space within the profession of advancement to contribute our organization's voice and perspectives in order to blaze new trails of scholarship, awareness and engagement about the practice of philanthropy. This fall, we are pleased to report — mission accomplished!

We commend to your review and reflection a study and report conducted through a dynamic partnership with the Lake Institute on Faith and Giving at the Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, Indianapolis, Indiana. We look forward to your feedback. In many important ways ALDE was the perfect partner to engage with the Lake Institute due to our missional focus on vocation, faith-filled service and high-quality educational programming.

At the outset, supported by the intellectual curiosity and academic rigor of our partners at Lake Institute, we set out to pose the quintessential "chicken or egg" question about our work as Christians engaged in resource development. The question: Is our fundraising practice deepened and enhanced *because* we are active people of faith OR is our faith as men and women of God enhanced because of our profession?

We want to commend all of the ALDE members who took the time to thoughtfully respond to a 2015 research survey instrument designed to give our scholar partners solid baseline information. In addition to being contributory to the research report and findings, this information provides a panoply of data ALDE leaders can draw from in the months and years to come as we seek to design broad-based curricular offerings with the "ALDE difference," a focus on renewing and deepening our relationship as children of God.

Further, we want to acknowledge and thank ALDE members spanning the demographic and organizational continuum, who scheduled one-on-one conversations with Lake Institute research staff during the IGNITE: Chicago 2016 conference. Those individual reflections about advancement practice, faith formation and the art of living lives dedicated to profession and faith created a rich tapestry threaded throughout the report.

Finally, to our now dear friends David Patrick King, Thom Jeavons and Thad Austin from the Lake Institute, our deepest thanks for your wise counsel and scholarship, and for believing ALDE could contribute its full share to the understanding and practice of philanthropy and vocational discernment.

Blessings on your reflective practice,

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FUNDRAISING AS PROFESSION AND VOCATION: A Survey and Portrait of ALDE Members

Introduction: In the report that follows we explore how ALDE members understand their work as fundraisers, both as professionals and as people of faith. This first section of the report offers a summary of findings from a survey of ALDE members. Through the survey element of our study we explored the demographics of ALDE membership, collecting data on their professional characteristics; on their career paths and preparations and their motivations. In addition, we shared a first glimpse — in their responses to some open-ended questions — of their views and values as they relate to their professional lives and their faith.

We will offer a deeper exploration of these questions of faith and fundraising in a later section that summarizes and interprets the results of intensive, personal interviews conducted with a sampling of ALDE members. By both these methods we hope to have created a composite portrait of ALDE membership that is both (1) useful to ALDE for self-assessment and planning purposes and (2) informative to those in the wider field of philanthropy who are interested in the intersection of religion and philanthropy.

Background on the Surveys: In addition to offering a longitudinal analysis of internal ALDE trends, our study also compares ALDE members to fundraisers more broadly. This is possible because the first nationally fielded survey in several decades, “Fundraisers in the 21st Century,” was conducted by Drs. Sarah Nathan and Gene Tempel (2016) through the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy. Like the ALDE Vocational Research Survey, “Fundraisers in the 21st Century” was similarly fielded through professional membership associations such as the Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP), the Council for the Advancement and Support of Education (CASE) and the Association for Healthcare Philanthropy (AHP). In this larger study with 1,826 respondents, Nathan and Tempel’s study of fundraisers included a smaller subset of 50 fundraisers who self-identified as “religious fundraisers.”¹

¹ The Nathan and Tempel study (2016) yielded a response rate of 5% of 35,747 total surveys sent.

Estimates of the total number of fundraisers in America have varied widely over the past few decades. K. S. Kelly (1998) estimates the number at 80,000. Hager, Rooney and Pollak (2002) approximate 296,000 fundraisers, and most recently, the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics (2016) estimates that 138,000 Americans² are employed as fundraisers. Seiler, Aldrich and Tempel (2010) have noted that only a small fraction of professional fundraisers are members of professional associations. Relatively few fundraisers belong to the major professional organizations. Currently, ALDE has a total membership of 640 (or 0.5% of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimate). By comparison, AFP has a total North American membership of 30,000 (21.7% of the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics estimate; see About AFP). Because most studies — including the 2015 ALDE Vocational Research Survey — survey within professional organizations, their findings may be limited.³

Over the past 20 years, the average age of a fundraiser entering the profession has dropped (Nathan and Tempel, 2016). In 1996, the average age of a person new to fundraising was 33.5 years. As of 2015, the average age was 30.5. In this way, the fundraising profession is becoming younger. Currently, half of all fundraisers are entering the profession at or before age 27.

Nathan and Tempel (2016) report the average salary of fundraisers is \$92,218. The last ALDE Compensation Survey Report (2016) noted that the average salary of an ALDE member is \$77,648.

² This figure includes both those listed as “fundraisers” and those listed as “Public Relations & Fundraising Managers”

³ For instance, in her dissertation on the topic, Abbi Haggerty (2015) cites an AFP report detailing that African American fundraisers were underreported because of the nature of their titles and the size of grass roots organizations employing many from this background (p. 17).

ALDE Survey Methodology and Response: The 2015 ALDE Vocational Research Survey was administered online using an electronic survey. An email distributed on September 9, 2015, invited ALDE membership to participate in the study. Members had until September 30, 2015, to complete the survey. A total of 206 members completed and submitted their surveys to ALDE. Based on the 467 active ALDE members invited to participate (retired members and those without valid, opted-in email addresses were not included), this was a response rate of 44.1%, one of the highest for any ALDE survey. (A copy of the survey instrument is attached to the Report as ‘Appendix A’.)

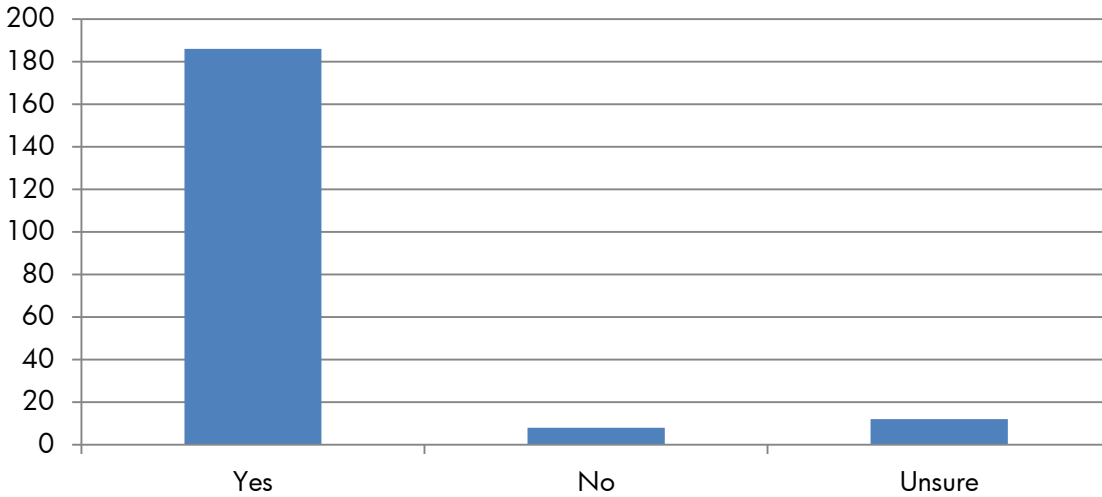
Response Rates for ALDE Compensation Surveys and 2015 Vocational Research Survey ⁴							
2004	2006	2008	2010	2012	2014	2015	2016
40.1%	33.8%	37.6%	39.0%	39.3%	36.6	44.1%	41.6%

Intriguing Findings: When asked to reflect on their work as fundraisers, an overwhelming majority (90.2%) of surveyed ALDE members affirmed their belief that fundraising is an expression of their calling, and almost as many members (88%) reported a strong connection between fundraising and their faith. Accordingly, it is not surprising that a majority of ALDE members (63.1%) reported engaging in spiritual practices (such as prayer and Bible study) to support their understanding of vocational call. ALDE members who work for a denomination or foundation are the most likely to make this connection when compared to ALDE members who work in other nonprofit subsectors. Ninety-one percent (91%) of ALDE respondents felt that working for a religious organization was important.

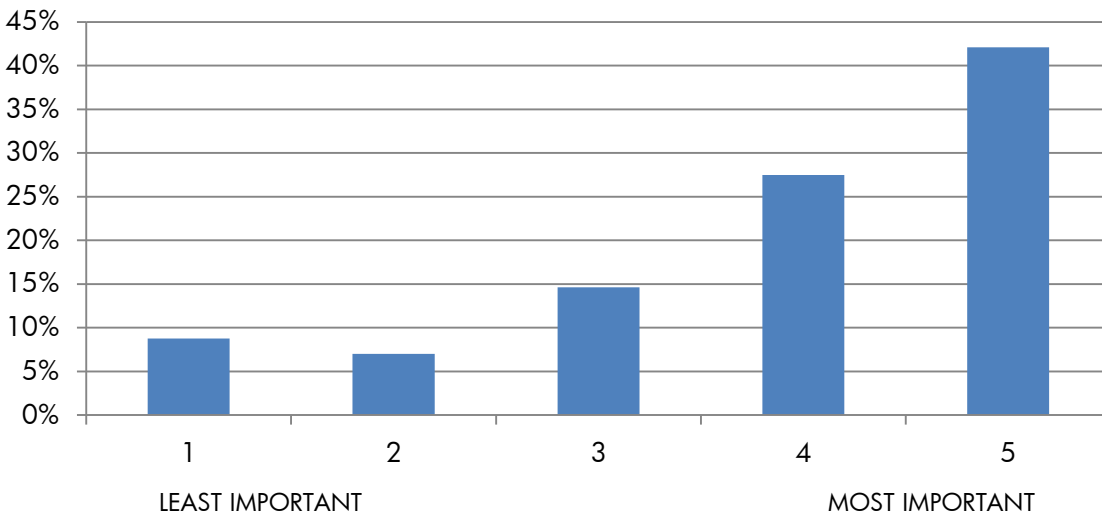
In addition, 72% of these respondents indicated the importance of working alongside people with whom they share values.

⁴ ALDE studies in 2004-2014 and 2016 that are referenced here are the ALDE Compensation Survey and the resulting ALDE Compensation Study, focused primarily on matters of compensation among ALDE members. The 2015 survey focused instead on concepts of vocation and calling.

Do you understand your work in fundraising to be an expression of calling?



Importance of working in a religiously affiliated organization



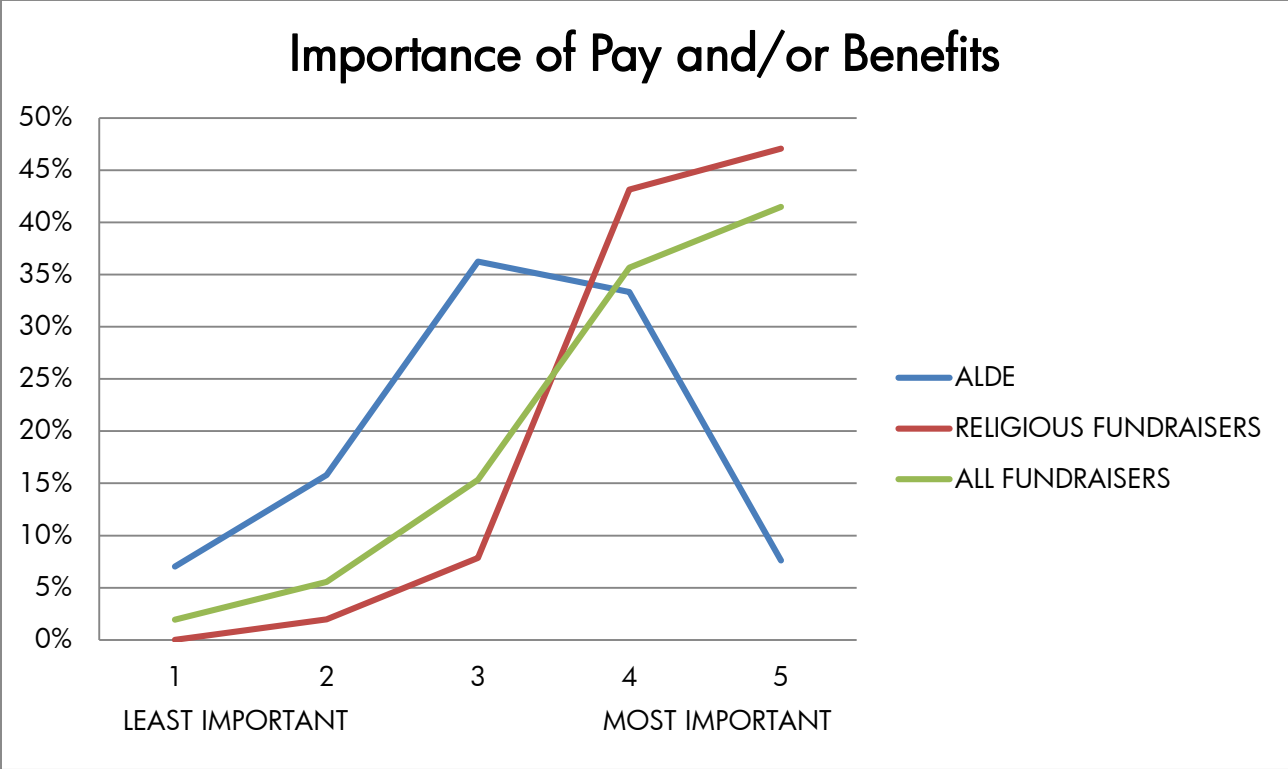
A Picture of ALDE Members: Like fundraisers more broadly, ALDE members have a positive view of the fundraising profession, want to be challenged in their work, have achieved similar levels of formal education, attend roughly the same number of professional development programs each year and want to be successful in reaching their fundraising goals. However, other characteristics distinguish ALDE members from fundraisers more broadly. Two of the most striking findings revealed by our study relate to the role of commitment and the importance of pay and benefits. Eighty-eight percent (88%) of ALDE respondents say that their commitment to the specific cause for which they raise support is very important to their choice of profession. By contrast, only 64% of fundraisers-at-large expressed this same level of commitment.

Additionally, ALDE members are more likely to express a greater commitment to, and affinity for, their employing organization than fundraisers overall, who tend to be more committed to the profession of fundraising than their particular organization. One ALDE member explicitly mentioned the importance of the firm's "philosophy."

Overall, fundraisers rate their opinion of the fundraising profession (compared to other occupations where they could be working) slightly higher than ALDE members. The importance ALDE members place on the particular geographical location of their job as a factor of satisfaction and reason for employment is much less significant than it is for fundraisers more broadly.

There is an extremely significant statistical difference in the importance ALDE members express regarding compensation and benefits when compared to other religious and secular fundraisers more broadly.⁵ In fact, an inverse relationship exists at the highest levels of importance (see graph below). We hypothesize that these differences emerge, in part, because of the level of commitment ALDE members have to their organizations. The fact that "cause" matters more, and that pay and benefits matters less, among ALDE members may indicate a stronger sense of vocation when compared to fundraisers more broadly. One ALDE member who had become a fundraiser after working in the for-profit world remarked, "I wanted something I could put my heart into."

⁵ Two-tailed T-test significance of < .001 when comparing ALDE members to either fundraisers overall or religious fundraisers, specifically.



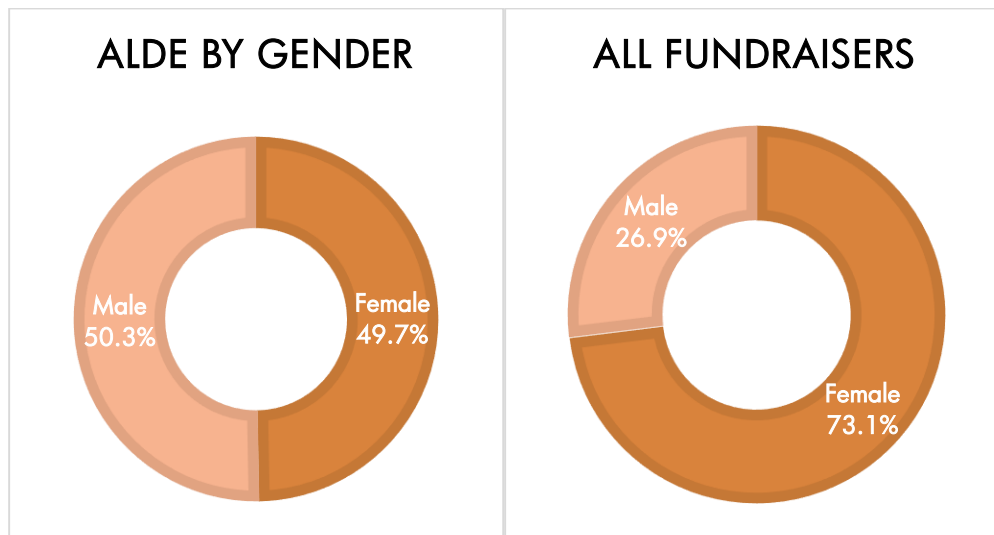
Among male ALDE members with 10 or more years of experience, pay and/or benefits became less significant when compared with less tenured ALDE members. We postulate that this change emerges, in part, because these long-term members might also have a deeper sense of vocation. The 2016 Compensation Study does not analyze gender and years’ experience, posing additional research exploration.

The larger the employing organization, the more important pay and benefits becomes for ALDE members.⁶ Interestingly, this finding does not hold true for fundraisers more broadly. There is no significant statistical relationship between the size of the employing organization and the importance of pay and benefits among fundraisers overall.

Gender of Fundraisers: With regard to the gender of survey respondents, ALDE membership is strikingly more diverse than the Nathan and Tempel (2016) survey. Haggerty (2015) explains that fundraising was one of the “first professions . . . open to women in the United States” (p. 18). For this reason, Nathan and Tempel (2016) note the “feminization” of the fundraising profession as they find 73.1% of all fundraisers are

⁶Pairwise correlation of 0.1760 significant at p < .05 level.

female. By comparison, our survey of ALDE membership found virtual parity among respondents (49.7% of ALDE respondents are female and 50.3% are male). The 2016 ALDE Compensation Study revealed similar findings (48% female and 52% male). Slightly different from the survey results, current ALDE membership records note 44.1% of ALDE members are female and 55.9% are male. Regretfully, records are not available to approximate historic ALDE membership totals by gender.⁷



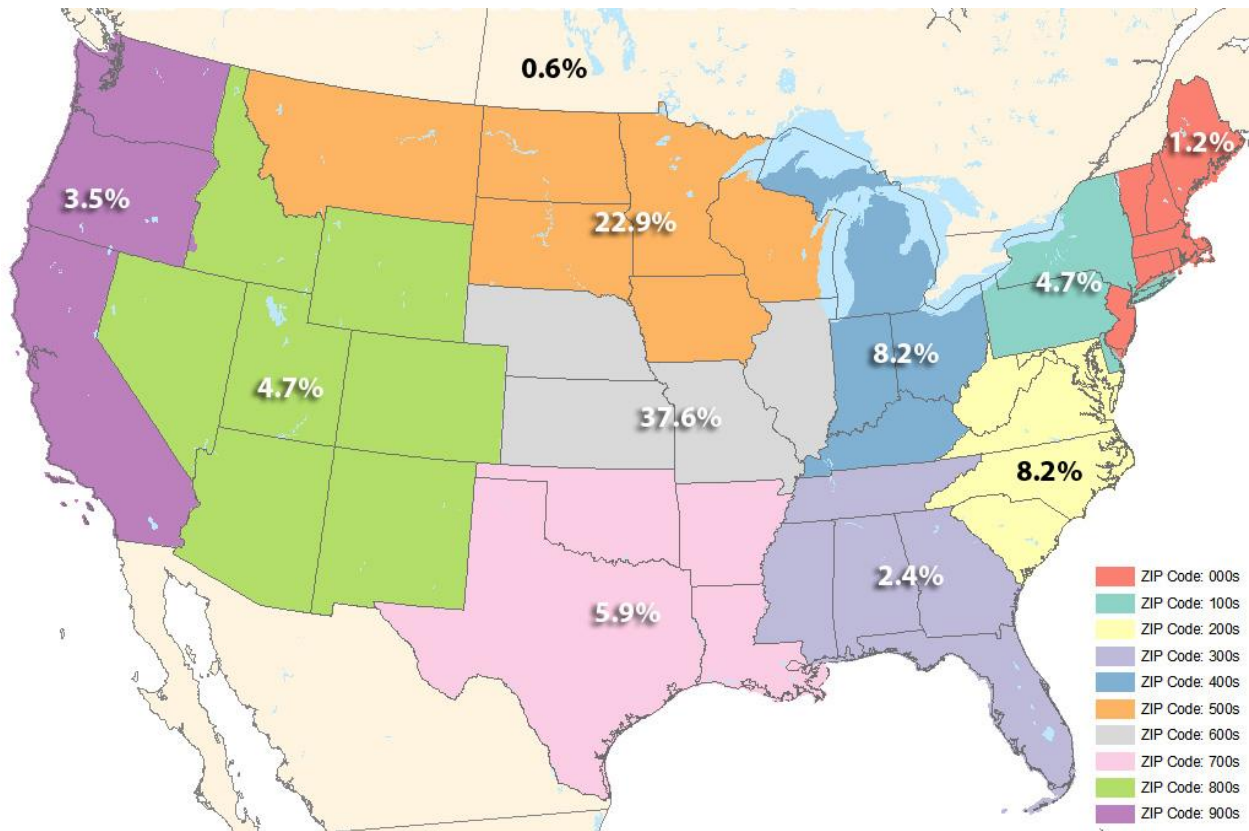
Faith Connections: As previously stated, an overwhelming majority (90.2%) of surveyed ALDE members believe that fundraising is an expression of their calling, and almost as many members (88%) report a strong connection between fundraising and their faith. Interestingly, however, women are less likely than men to connect faith and fundraising. Female ALDE members report having less experience working in fundraising than their male counterparts. Even still, when controlling for experience, women are less likely than men to report a connection between fundraising and their faith.

While 91% of ALDE respondents felt that working for a religious organization was important and 72% indicated the importance of working with people who share their

⁷ In the 2012 ALDE Compensation Study, women constituted 42.5% of respondents while men accounted for 57.5%. Given the known breakdown of ALDE membership by gender, the 2012 Compensation Study seems to better reflect ALDE’s membership by gender.

values, male ALDE members were also more likely than women to deem these factors significant.

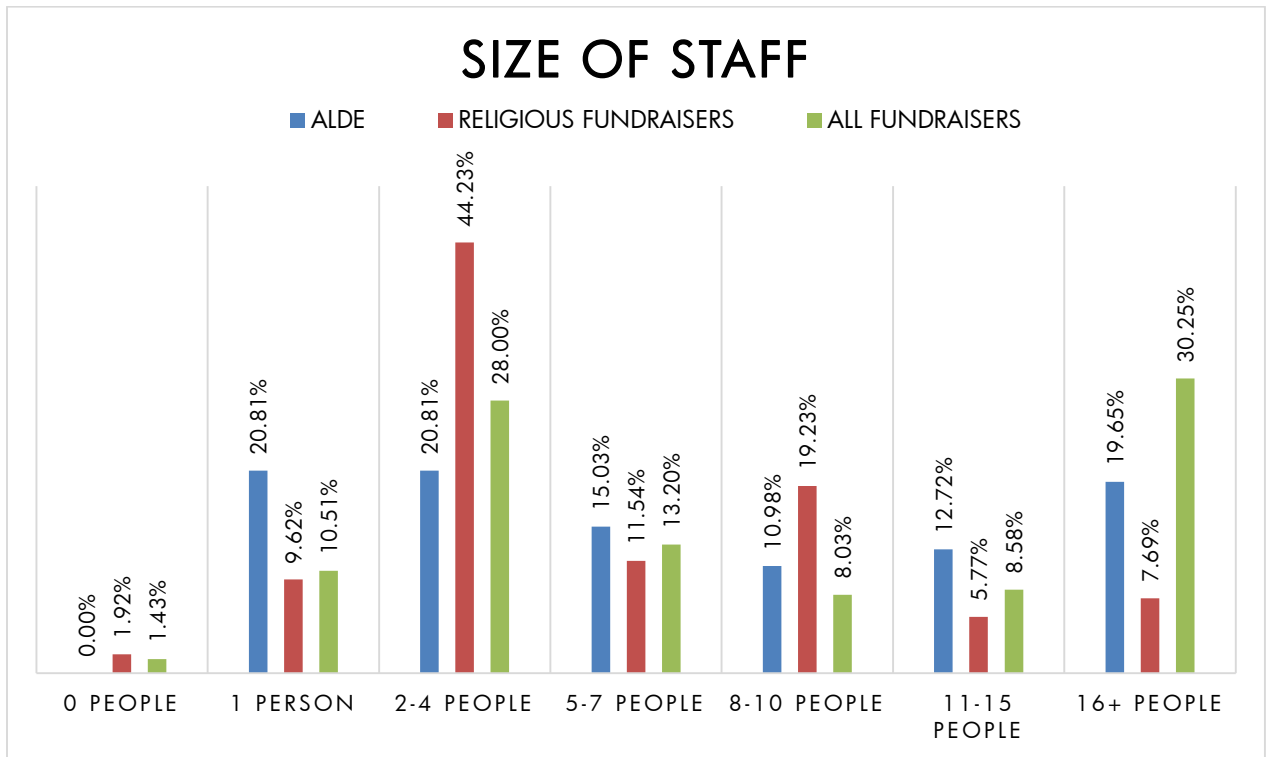
Locations of ALDE Members by Region: As expected, respondents to the 2015 ALDE Vocational Research Survey work overwhelmingly in the American Midwest (68.8%), followed by the Southeast (16.5%), West (8.2%) and Northeast (5.9%), and Internationally (0.6%). This reflects the immigration and settlement patterns of those ethnic groups, especially Scandinavians and Germans, who were primarily Lutheran, in the 19th and early 20th centuries. The Midwest concentration is beginning to diffuse as internal migrations of Americans carry more and more to the south and west.



The following chart lists 2015 ALDE Vocational Research Survey respondents by zip code, showing the difference between 2015 and the 2016 Compensation Study.

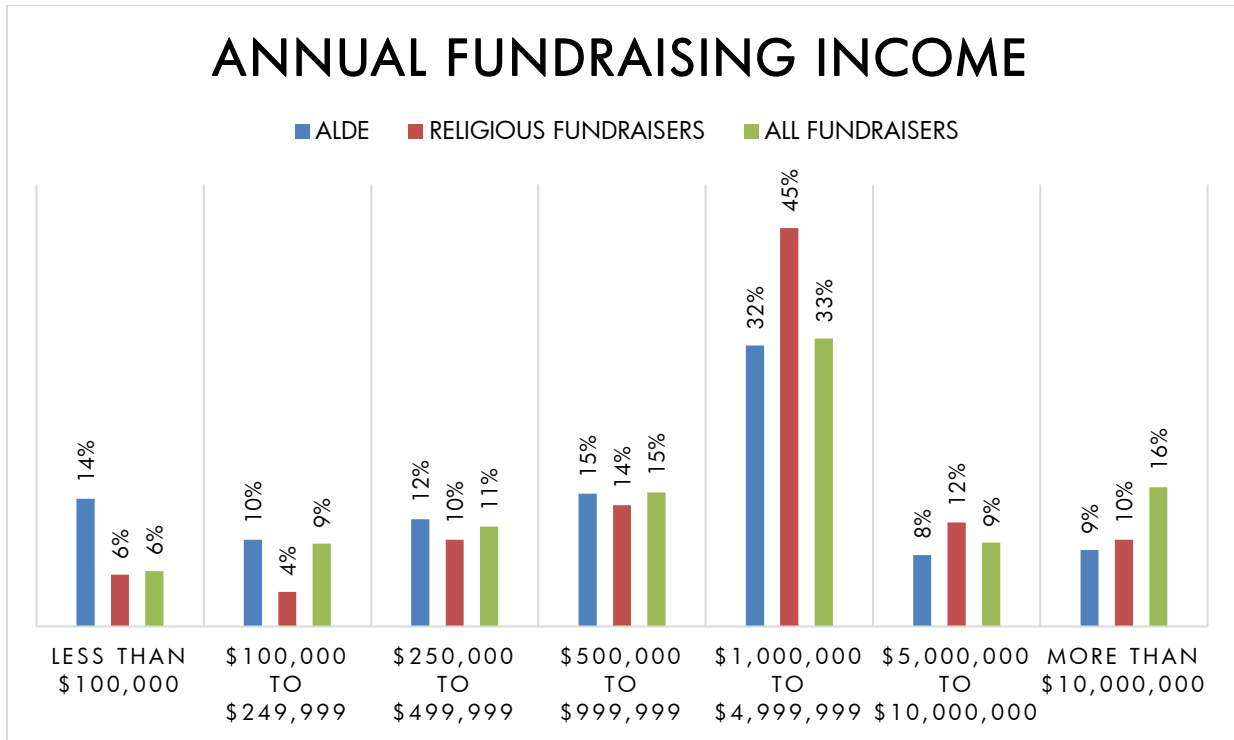
Zip Code	2015 % of Respondents by Zip Code	2016 % of Respondents by Zip Code*	Percentage Point Difference	Percentage Difference
000's	1.2%	-	-1.2	-100%
100's	4.7%	7.3%	2.6	55.3%
200's	8.2%	5.8%	-2.4	-29.3%
300's	2.4%	1.9%	-0.5	-20.8%
400's	8.2%	5.8%	-2.4	-29.3%
500's	22.9%	28.2%	5.3	23.1%
600's	37.6%	33.0%	-4.6	-12.2
700's	5.9%	8.3%	2.4	40.7%
800's	4.7%	4.4%	-0.3	-6.4%
900's	3.5%	2.9%	-0.6	-17.1%
Int'l	0.6%	1.9%	1.3	216.7%

Size of Staff and Fundraising Income: When comparing ALDE members to fundraisers overall, the difference between the size of paid fundraising staff is statistically very significant. ALDE members tend to work in organizations with smaller staff size and fewer annual donations than fundraisers more broadly. Whereas the average ALDE member works in an organization of two to four fundraising professionals, the average fundraiser works in an office of seven to eight. ALDE members who have more years in fundraising tend to be part of organizations with a larger fundraising staff.⁸

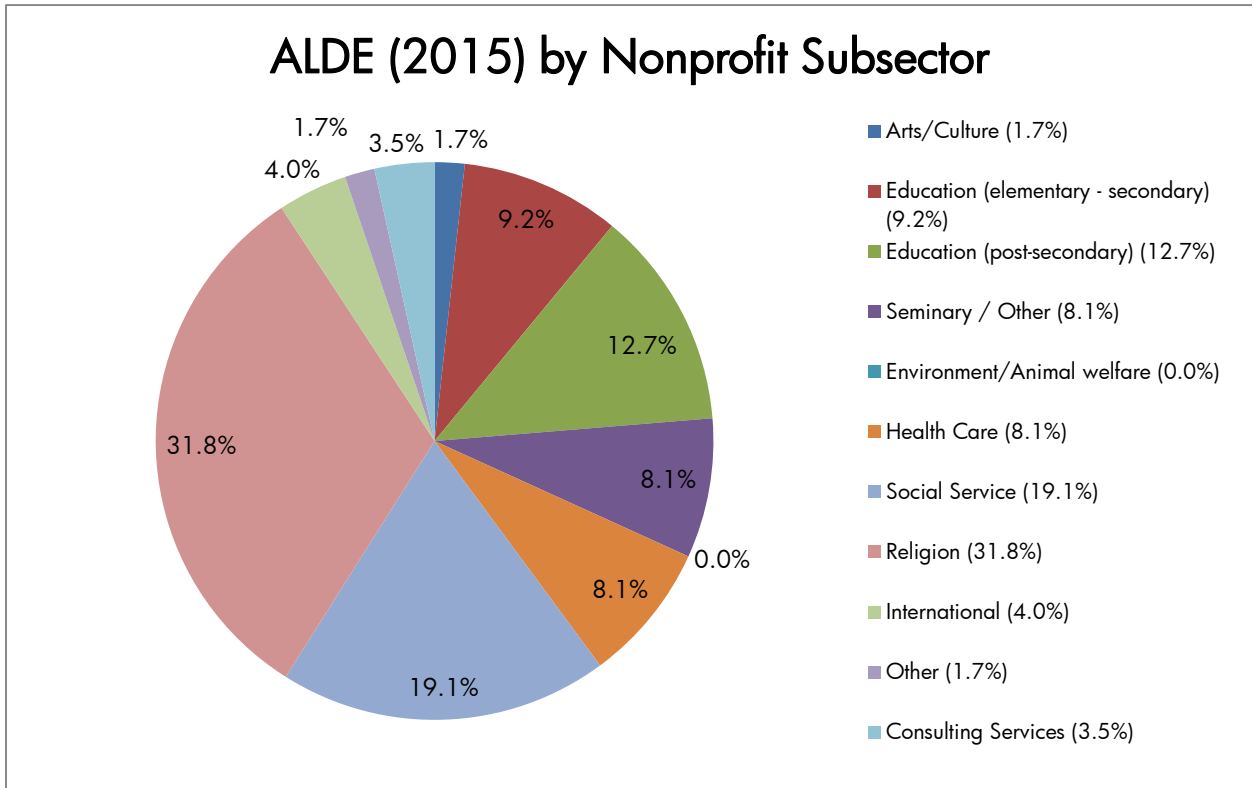
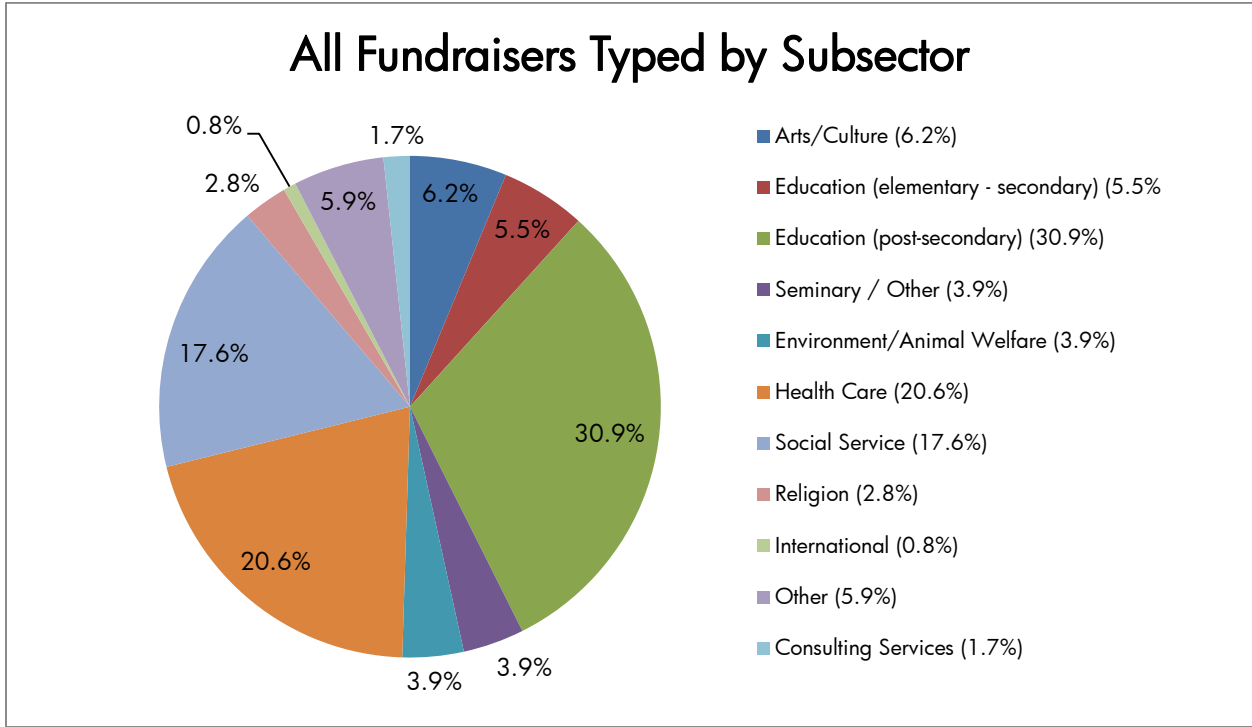


⁸ Pairwise correlation of .2038 significant at the $p < .01$ level.

Most fundraisers work in organizations that generate income between \$1 and \$4.9 million. However, ALDE members are much more likely to work for smaller organizations that bring in less annual income and employ fewer staff.



ALDE Members by Nonprofit Subsector: Most fundraisers in America work in Post-Secondary Education (30.9%) and Health Care (20.6%). Not surprisingly, and by contrast, most ALDE members work in Religion (31.8%) and Social Services (19.1%).



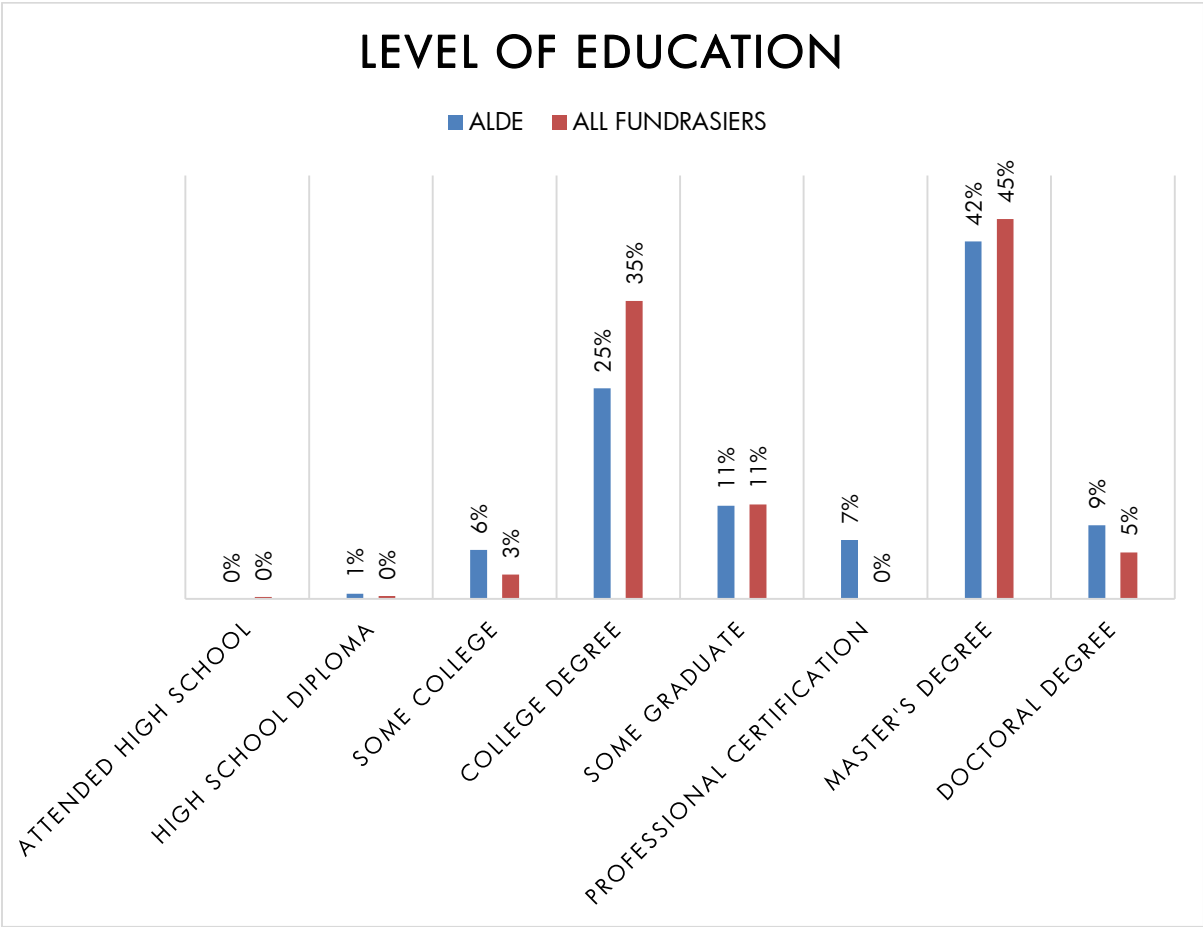
Nonprofit Subsector	ALDE 2016	ALDE 2015	Fundraisers Overall
Arts/Culture	N/A	1.7%	6.2%
Education (elementary - secondary)	6.8%	9.2%	5.5%
Education (post- secondary)	15.3%	12.7%	30.9%
Seminary / Other	6.8%	8.1%	3.9%
Environment/Animal welfare	N/A	0.0%	3.9%
Health Care	6.2%	8.1%	20.6%
Social Service	24.9%	19.1%	17.6%
Religion*	32.8%	31.8%	2.8%
International	N/A	4.0%	0.8%
Other**	5.6%	1.7%	5.9%
Consulting Services	1.7%	3.5%	1.7%
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

*Religion includes Congregational/Parish Ministry, Denominational Church Body/Missions and Camping/Outdoor Ministry.

**Other includes foundations.

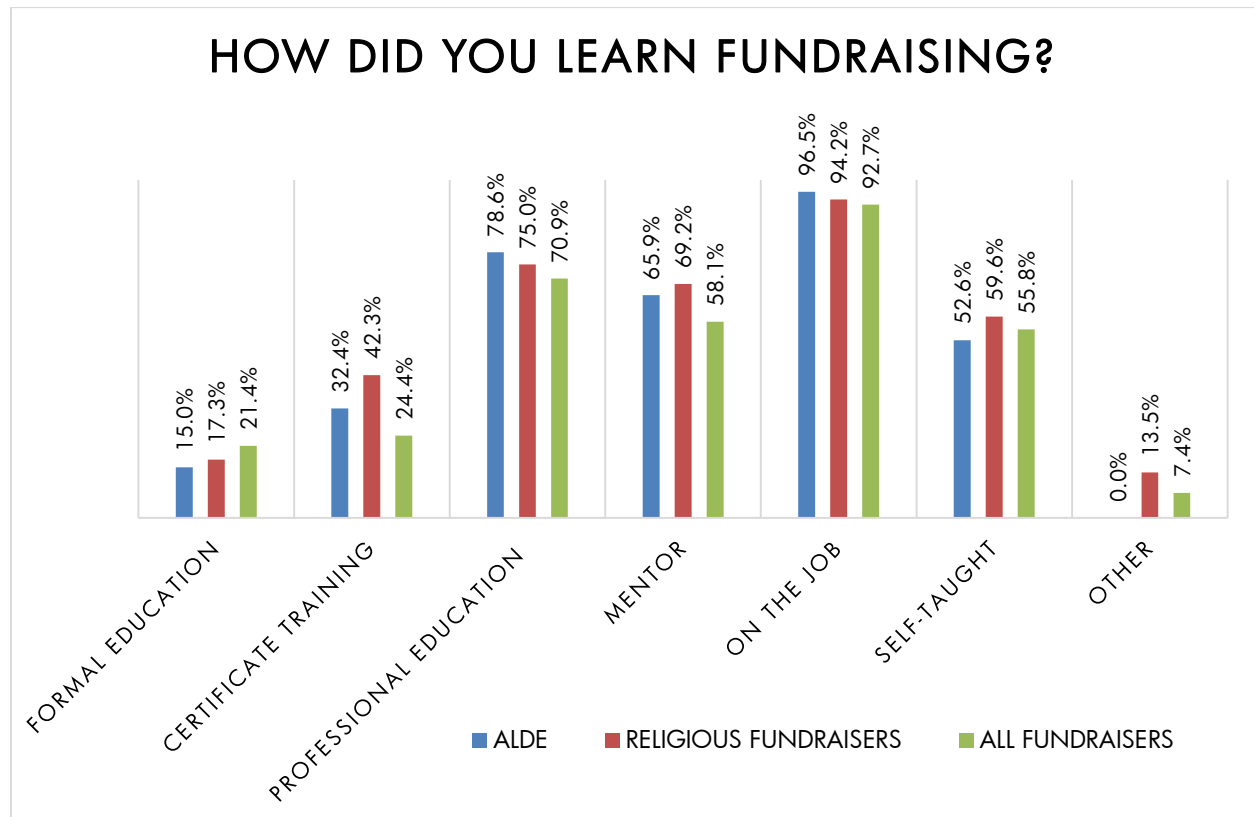
Since the 2014 ALDE Compensation Study two years ago, the subsectors that have experienced the most growth among ALDE members are Education (elementary-secondary) and Health Care, while Social Services has experienced the biggest drop.

Education and Training: ALDE members have achieved levels of formal academic training relatively similar to fundraisers-at-large (see graph below). However, an interesting comparison emerges when each group describes how they learned to fundraise (see graph below). While both groups admit that, at least in part, they learned fundraising on the job (92.7% overall, 94.2% ALDE members), ALDE members (17.3%) were less likely to have a formal academic degree in fundraising when compared to fundraisers-at-large (21.4%). Instead, ALDE respondents indicate having academic degrees in education, religious studies, social sciences, business, law, accounting, communications, fine arts, administration, management, life sciences, engineering and history.



ALDE membership is more likely to have learned to fundraise by completing a certificate program (32.4%), enrolling in professional education (78.6%) or being mentored by another person (65.9%), when compared to the broader sample of fundraisers (24.4%, 70.9%, 58.1%, respectively). In general, ALDE members were less likely to have learned

fundraising from formal education than respondents to the fundraising professional survey at large. Among ALDE respondents, we found increased education positively correlated with a desire to be challenged in one’s role.



Considering Fundraising as Vocation: We noted above that one of the key questions we wanted to explore in this research was the ALDE membership’s views of fundraising as an expression or practice of faith, and whether (and how) they saw their work as a “calling.” The survey instrument gave us a first glimpse of their views in the section for open-ended comments. A number of themes emerged and recurred in those comments.

ALDE members expressed a language of vocation in multiple registers, but they turned to several key concepts when asked to explain their understanding of their work. Some saw their work as ministry with donors. When asked about when they first had a sense of fundraising being a ministry, some ALDE members shared the influence that interpersonal relationships had upon them. The primary relationship to which ALDE members pointed was their relationship with donors. One respondent said, “I noticed right away that the development profession is ministry when I began to visit individuals. Making a financial

contribution is so significant to some donors that they weep openly when making a gift." Another ALDE member said, "I meet Jesus through [my clients] each day." These ALDE members sensed their calling being affirmed as they realized how donors express their faith, "live out their ... values" and "carry out God's mission" through giving. After helping someone make an estate plan, one donor referred to an ALDE member as an angel sent from God. One particular donor expressed their understanding of philanthropy as "carrying out God's mission ... to ... spread the Gospel message."

Others expressed a sense of vocation as a sense of being in ministry and "building the kingdom of God." One ALDE member wrote, "I found a real 'calling' in my work." Another said, "I facilitate such joy and peace when I help people be faithful stewards of God's resources." Again, others noted that their professional work is an expression of their "belief structure and morality."

For some, a sense of calling came almost immediately, as from God. One ALDE member wrote, "From the start, I felt like I was being used as a vessel to call others to give back, which is our Christian calling." Another said, "My calling was apparent from the start." Some felt the call to become a fundraiser even as a child, some as young as 10 years old. However, others experienced the call with time. One ALDE member shared, "[T]he need and desire came over time ..." Another respondent wrote, "I have learned that God puts us where [God] wants us so that [God] can use us as [God] wills."

An understanding of calling can also be part of a larger discernment process. One ALDE member said, "I don't think it was an 'aha' moment as much as a realization over time that what I am doing has profound impact ..." Another said, "I knew I wanted to connect the needs of the world with the church. I discerned becoming a pastor was not the call. Fundraising was." The feeling of being called only comes to some ALDE members after having worked in the profession for some time.

Engaging in the task of fundraising seems to stir up a sense of vocation for some ALDE members. One respondent said, "My first sense of calling came when I was asked to do a job ..." Another wrote that her calling is "confirmed everyday [when] I go to work." One's understanding of calling can change with the seasons of life. One ALDE member wrote, "I don't believe that a particular calling is necessarily for an entire work life. A calling can change over time ..."

Many ALDE members find that their understanding of vocation is renewed through relationships with "trusted mentors," "veteran" fundraisers, family members, "vocationally

mindful friends,” coworkers and other ALDE members. These connections remind ALDE members why they are engaged in their work, and the vocational network established through the ALDE organization serves as a key location in which a sense of calling is renewed. One ALDE member wrote, “Being a part of ALDE is a way that I reinforce the sense of connection between my vocation as a fundraiser and a Christian in service to God.”

Literature — including scripture reading — also strengthens the understanding of vocation among ALDE members. ALDE members repeatedly mentioned Henri Nouwen’s now classic *Spirituality of Fundraising*. One individual summarized the thoughts of many:

“That book gave me great insights to the vocation of financial development. Whereas before I was trying to sell a great cause for support, now my conversation with donors could be about how their gift is an expression of their faith.”

Many noted that spiritual disciplines — such as prayer, meditation, worship, participation in accountability groups and reading daily devotionals — remain an active component not only of the spiritual health of ALDE members, but also their sense of vocation. Some members stressed the importance of not only raising funds for their employing organization, but also working and volunteering in other departments to experience the day-to-day operations and impact of their particular agency. Through these experiences, some expressed a renewed understanding of their calling and increased commitment to their organization.

Finally, we were struck by the large number of people who took time to add a comment to the open-ended section of the survey. This strongly suggests a high level of thought many ALDE members give to such questions. Fortunately, we had the opportunity to explore these matters more thoroughly in interviews we conducted with 14 ALDE members. A summary and interpretation of the findings from those conversations follows in the next section.

PRACTICING FUNDRAISING AS PROFESSION AND VOCATION: Insights and Reflections From Conversations

Framing a Wider Context: The previous section of this report gives us an estimate of how many people now make their living as professional fundraisers. It may be helpful to recall that this line of work has come to be recognized as a “profession” only over the past three or four decades, and the field has only recently developed many elements that sociologists tell us typically mark a profession. Specifically, fundraising now has many professional education, training and research programs. These are located in multiple institutions of higher education, and with these programs the field is developing a substantial research literature. Now certification programs can draw on that research to prepare practitioners, and to assess their competency and ethics. Finally, the field has several mature professional societies, and more are developing.

Professional fundraisers work in all manner of settings and programs. Their work may vary by specialty — say annual fund versus planned giving. The work may vary by type of institution — such as higher education versus a congregation versus environmental advocacy. The work often varies by the scale of the organization. Working for a smaller organization, a single fundraiser may have to cover a wide variety of tasks, whereas in a much larger organization fundraising staff more commonly specialize by task — say event planning, prospect research or planned giving. Thus the experience of doing fundraising, of being a fundraiser, certainly varies widely along several lines, differing from person to person. The wide variety of roles fundraisers work in, and diverse range of organizations they work for, is attested to by the survey data we referenced earlier.

This portion of this report focuses on how the experience and practice of fundraising may be shaped in one more way — in accord with one more variable — which is religious identity and commitment. Here we are interested in the identity both of fundraisers and of the organizations they serve. Here we explore these questions: “How do people of faith who choose to work in fundraising as an expression of their faith experience and draw

meaning from their work?” “How does being a person of faith — perhaps working in a faith-based organization — affect how one does fundraising?” “Does the faith affiliation of the organizations fundraisers work for affect this?”

In this section we explore the ways in which 14 members of ALDE, almost all Lutheran fundraisers, most working for Lutheran organizations, experience their work as an activity in which they embody their faith. We examine how they undertake and describe their work as an expression of their religious identity.

Our goal in this small study is to begin to develop a composite portrait of ALDE members as a community of religious fundraisers. We want to examine how their faith and their professional work as fundraisers are integrated in their various roles with different types and sizes of organization. *We want to better understand how being religious shapes their professional practice.* Finally, we are interested in exploring how ALDE as an organization serves its members in supporting that practice.

The Shape of This Research: It is important to note at the outset that the study we report on here is primarily exploratory and descriptive, not closely analytic or comparative. Our goal here is to illuminate some distinctive facets of fundraising done in a religious frame. Because we did not interview nonreligious fundraisers, we cannot say whether they would answer some of our questions similarly. We can say, however, it seems very likely that many of the questions we are asking would just not make sense in fundraising envisioned as a strictly “secular” endeavor.

So the observations that follow derive from interviews of roughly an hour each held with 14 ALDE members at their 2016 annual conference. The people interviewed were chosen for two reasons: (1) because these individuals responded positively to a survey question asking if they saw their work in fundraising as a “calling or vocation rooted in [their] faith,” and (2) because, as a group, these 14 people comprised a broad and diverse sample of ALDE members in terms of age, gender, length of time in the field, types (or specialties) of fundraising practice and types of institutions (by field of service). Those interviewed ranged in age from their late 20s to their 60s. There were eight males and six females. The years of experience in fundraising ranged from two years to more than 30 years. (Note: Two more women were to be interviewed, but could not attend due to last minute scheduling issues.)

Organizing Concepts: “Vocation, Calling and Ministry:” The survey that initiated this study began with two questions designed to help us open an exploration of potentially

significant connections between the faith and the professional practice of fundraisers — specifically of ALDE members. We asked those members: (1) “How likely are you to connect fundraising as a profession with your faith?” and, (2) “Do you understand your own work in fundraising to be an expression of a calling or vocation rooted in your faith?” Out of a sample of 206 ALDE members who completed our survey, 88% responded they did connect their work in fundraising to their faith, and 90% responded that they did see this work as “an expression of a calling or vocation rooted in their faith.”

We took these positive responses to be clear markers of a significant faith commitment in each of these members. “Vocation” and “calling” are terms we (the researchers) have heard many Christian fundraisers use over several years to describe their work or career. These are deeply meaningful terms in the Christian tradition broadly, and in the Lutheran tradition specifically. We will explore variations in their meanings shortly. But we note here that vocation is a concept connoting a deeper, more personal and life-shaping relationship with God. This is not to say that persons who answered “no” or “unsure” to this question are necessarily less religious. Still, a positive response here stands as a strong indicator of a person who views her or his life and work in a specifically religious frame.

Thus we began our interviews with this question: “In your response to our survey you said that fundraising is a ‘vocation’ for you. Can you say more about what that term means to you?” This proved to be a good conversation starter.

Without fail all of those we interviewed affirmed feeling some sense of calling in their work in fundraising. However, as we probed further we quickly became aware the terms “calling” or “vocation” had a range of meanings for different people. The common core of most of the meanings involved receiving a sense of divine guidance about how best to live one’s life in a way that reflects one’s faith — often with special attention to the best use of one’s “gifts” — and sometimes very specifically in relation to one’s work or profession. The differences in individuals’ understandings of vocation often seemed to emerge around questions of how narrow or broad the divine guidance was. The question of how closely this guidance focused on one’s choice of work, or even how one performs that work, versus guidance providing direction for one’s life more widely, seemed especially salient.

For some, their view of vocation seemed to be very broad, in essence seeing “calling” as an invitation to discipleship, to living their faith. In keeping with a traditional Lutheran emphasis on “the priesthood of all believers,” it makes good sense that these fundraisers would see their work as one way they enact their faith. In this context, it follows that one sees fundraising as a kind of ministry to which one might feel called. One person we interviewed described her vocation as “God’s calling on my life to be where I can best serve God and [God’s] world with the gifts [God] has given me.” Another person who held a wide variety of jobs in several different institutions before coming to fundraising as a second career said “vocation” was simply “living out your life in the places where God has called you.”

For others, their calling was to a specific life path — say one of service or ministry — that could be followed doing different kinds of work. One person talked about knowing she was called to ministry, but not being clear about what type of ministry. Eventually she used an internship as an opportunity to test whether pastoral ministry was her calling (as some had suggested to her), and came away from the experience knowing it was not. Meanwhile, her experience working in nonprofit organizations led her to see that was work — including fundraising — in which her gifts were well used in ministry, and in such work she now finds fulfillment.

For a few others their calling was very specific. The most striking example was the story of a woman who had worked successfully for some time in advocacy work for political causes. She was good at this, but had reached a point of burnout. She felt a need to do something new, and wanted employment in which she could put her faith to work more clearly. She had several times seen a notice for a fundraising job with a Lutheran agency, which she set aside feeling she had no relevant experience. But finally she felt directed by the Holy Spirit to apply for that job. At the time we talked she was two years into that job, and she was clear about the challenges she was experiencing, but also about the satisfaction she felt in her new post. This was a specific position to which she “felt called.”

Finally, some we talked with saw “calling” less in terms of receiving specific divine direction, and more in terms of discovering how the work they were doing offered a context wherein their God-given gifts and skills aligned with opportunities that best fulfilled their interests and desires for service to a wider community. A most interesting example of this was a person who leads the development work for a major cultural institution in her city. As a person of faith working in a secular institution she still has a sense of vocation. She noted that in this setting her sense of vocation comes from being in

a place where “her wholehearted passion for and commitment to the work of this organization is an expression of her deepest values,” and she contributes to the betterment of her community as a whole, making God’s world a better place. She also sees the way she does her job — and how she runs her shop — as reflecting her values as a Christian.

In these rich conversations about fundraising and vocation we found (as expected) that all those we interviewed affirmed they were following their callings in their work. What we also learned, however, was that “following their calling” meant somewhat different things to different people. All of them saw fundraising as work that aligned with their deepest values. Most said the choices that brought them to this work involved a sense of divine direction. Some could even say they felt the specific influence of God in leading them in a very particular way to their current positions.

Discovering One’s Calling in the Work: One distinguishing feature of fundraising as a profession is that it is one that many people “stumble into,” as opposed to seeing it from a younger age as a career to be chosen and pursued. Often, when one asks a doctor, teacher, pastor or musician (for example) when they chose their profession, these people can tell stories about early life aspirations to their particular careers. This is far less often the fundraiser’s story.

In our sample of 14 people, only two began their careers having sought an education to prepare for a position where fundraising was a major responsibility. (Both had been educated for nonprofit management.) Some others brought backgrounds in public relations or journalism. Two had been in financial services first, and still others came from fields of service that fundraising supports, like social work, education or the arts. Two had backgrounds in sales, one was a lawyer and two were educated for ministry.

As we talked with these people we learned what they had in common was, not surprisingly, a strong interest in faith and values. Many then told us a story about moving into fundraising as a line of work where they could combine their professional skills — for example, in finance or public relations — with work that served spiritual and humanitarian goals. So, for example, a lawyer who now does planned giving work talked about the pleasure of working with people trying to figure out how to do good for their community with their family’s wealth, as opposed to the work of trying to resolve disputes over assets between angry litigants.

Most of those we spoke to did not begin their career after hearing a calling to become a fundraiser. Rather, most it seems had discovered — or were discovering — how their work in fundraising as religious people had become their calling. A younger Lutheran man working for a Lutheran seminary said he believed “we each hold some unique form of vocation,” and said that this was becoming clear to him in this (relatively) new job. He observed, “[I]n this role I’m seeing all these things coming together: my deep interest in faith, using my social work [background] in listening ... For me, in this way, fundraising has really become a ministry.”

From Calling to Ministry: This person’s observations explicitly raise questions about how fundraising becomes a “ministry,” taking that word here to mean “work that is intended to serve others and make the world better based on moral and spiritual principles and aspirations of faith.” Or, in simpler terms, one might define ministry as “anything we do that makes the presence or love of God more visible, tangible or meaningful in the world.” Many we talked to see the work they do in fundraising as aligning with such a description.

For some there is necessarily a measure of evangelism in this work. That is to say, while the work being done with the funds being raised may be “humanitarian” — for example providing needed aid to refugees or enhancing education for disabled students — another reason for doing it is to make one’s faith visible and appealing to others. Even when there is no specifically evangelical intent to the service provided or the fundraising itself, this work may still open conversations about faith. As one ALDE member put it, “I am in a place where donors want to talk to me about faith and service, and I can be helpful to them, and it becomes a kind of ministry.”

We will say more about tensions between goals and relationships for fundraisers and donors later. But now we should note that in our interviews at least three ways in which fundraising becomes a ministry suggested themselves.

First, and perhaps most obvious, fundraising is usually part of larger organizational efforts to provide needed services or important opportunities to others. In a religious context, fundraising is usually about generating resources that enable people to put faith into action in the world. The ministries of asking and giving make the doing of other ministries possible. As one person we interviewed put it, “[T]here are missionaries that are senders and missionaries that are goers.” He went on to say he sees himself as “a missionary that is a sender [as a giver as well as fundraiser] who makes the work of the

goers possible.” Those who give are playing a critical role in a ministry. So strengthening the sense of engagement and participation of donors in the work they support is an element of making fundraising a ministry.

Second, fundraising can also become a ministry by the way it takes on a pastoral quality. We will say more about this later. Here we just note that every fundraiser we interviewed observed that fundraising carried out in the context of a religious organization or endeavor seems often to naturally create opportunities for donors and fundraisers to talk about their own faith. Or, as it was regularly described, they have occasions to “share their faith stories.” For some of these fundraisers these conversations were among the most satisfying elements of this work.

It seemed this was in part because some fundraisers enjoy sharing their own faith stories, but also surely because they loved hearing and affirming donors’ stories. Indeed, one fundraiser said, “I have no real interest in sharing my story, but I am keenly interested in learning a donor’s story, for that will give me insights into how their giving can be most fulfilling for them.” This fundraiser noted that the joy in his work was about “helping his donors find their passions in giving.” It is clear that for some, perhaps especially those who work with older (or long-time) donors, they end up building deep and enduring relationships with these people.

A third way in which this work can be seen as a ministry is that it is work in which one’s faith can be public. The fundraising ALDE members do often involves publicly affirming the work of the church, or a faith-based organization, and (perhaps) even witnessing to one’s own faith in the process. Many of those we spoke with found the opportunities to witness to their own faith experience as part of their work very fulfilling.

We should caution, however, that is not true in every case. Here the identity of the institution matters. The two fundraisers we interviewed who work for large secular institutions are in roles where public pronouncements of their personal faith are not acceptable. They noted that in their institutions it was their professional (and legal) responsibility to create a work environment where people of all faiths — and those of no faith — feel welcome. Still, one of them was explicit in observing that her faith guides her by establishing the values that steer her in relationships with staff and donors every day. She strives to create a workplace that is both productive and caring, enabling success in their mission, and personal as well as professional fulfillment for all her staff.

This broader, perhaps softer, vision of how fundraising can be a calling and a ministry aligns with the way many people find their faith and professional lives connected. For some people discerning one's calling is basically about finding work where one both meets real needs in the world and knows deep satisfaction in doing so. One person we interviewed remarked, "I know [I am in my vocation] when the work feeds me, sustains me, in the sense that it is meaningful, of service, to those around me." This echoes the sentiments of the writer Fredrick Buechner, who observed one's vocation is found "in a place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet."⁹

In some ways "calling," then, is a term like "ministry" — one that can have many related meanings. In our interviews we heard all of our subjects describing the work — or at least aspects of the work — they do as ministry. For those who work with congregations, religious agencies or faith-based organizations, their vision of ministry forms the way they do fundraising, seeing and shaping it as work in which they are living out their faith and serving others in their daily tasks. But those working in secular organizations also seemed thoughtful about how their service in those contexts can be an expression of their Christian values, focusing on creating relationships of integrity and caring for the betterment of all involved, in addition to supporting good and important work in the world.

Goals Beyond the Money: So, if one sees fundraising as work that can be experienced as a calling or vocation, does that view alter the goals for the work? If giving can be understood as an act intended to witness to, and perhaps deepen, one's faith, then might Christian fundraisers have aims for their work that go beyond simply securing the gifts needed to attain a financial goal? We explicitly asked each person we interviewed, "Do you see your work in fundraising as a vocation as serving a purpose (or purposes) beyond raising money? If so, how would you describe that purpose?"

Most of these fundraisers could speak of other purposes or goals they hoped to accomplish, beyond "just raising the money," in their work. Some goals were explicitly spiritual. Others were basically informational or educational. Some were a mixture. Where these other goals came from and how they were understood depended in part on who was doing the fundraising, and for what purpose.

⁹ *Wishful Thinking, A Theological ABC*. New York, Harper & Row (1973), p.95.

Our sample of interviewees included only one person whose focus or role was entirely congregational. She served as a “pastor for stewardship and giving” for a large church. It is her conviction that a key aspect of the church mission is “nurturing generosity.” Her responsibilities reflect that broader vision, and include both shaping her congregation’s fundraising efforts and implementing a spiritual formation program around generosity. She spoke of two goals for her work, beyond raising the money that her congregation needs to fulfill its mission. Those goals are “to help people find the joy of giving, and to help people integrate their financial life with their spiritual life.”

It has not been common, at least not until recently, to hear explicitly spiritual goals held up for fundraising in the life of the church, and certainly this person has an unusual position. Yet, many of those we interviewed — all in more conventional fundraising positions — voiced similar aspirations. A major gifts officer at a Lutheran college spoke of hoping to “make giving more transformational” for her donors, and to that end wanting “to approach people to give where they feel good about giving.” We found another major gifts officer for a synod affirming that his hope in this work is to help donors “find the joy of giving.” We heard a planned giving officer describe “the joy of this work” as “helping people express their faith and find their passions in giving.” There were more in this vein.

Other responses to this question reflected the desire of those we interviewed to be sure their donors understood the significance of various elements of the church’s work in the world, as well as see the value of their support of that work. For example, a fundraiser for Lutheran camps wants to be sure his donors know how transformative the camp experience can be for a disadvantaged child, which their gift makes possible. The development officer for a ministry that supports Lutheran schools in meeting the needs of children with learning disadvantages wants to communicate how life-changing it can be for a child to receive those services in the context of a caring, faith-centered school.

This kind of communication between fundraisers and donors is by no means uncommon in the secular sphere. What may be different is that a desire to communicate in these ways may be urgent for those who are sharing these kinds of information with people they see as “members of their own faith community” — that is fellow Christians, or fellow Lutherans. These fundraisers want to share these stories of faith in action not only to confirm the good work being done, but also to affirm

the faith that motivates the work. A seminary fundraiser sees the communication process that goes on in and around his fundraising as an opportunity “to help people see the value of the church ... [and] to make the church more relevant.” He sees it as an occasion to “engage his donors in dialogue about ... how we can make the church better for the sake of the world.”

Finally, one fundraiser explained she had three goals for her work, beyond just raising money. She hoped that in her organization’s work they could (1) teach people to give in ways that deepen their generosity, (2) help get donors engaged in other ways with the work they fund and (3) help them get engaged in ways that allow them to see the results of their giving. These are all efforts that would likely lead to a deeper compassion and greater generosity among Christians for all their fellow human beings — lofty goals for the work of Christians in fundraising.

Other Roles of Fundraisers: In listening to fundraisers talk about how they experience their work as calling, or a ministry, we heard a number of interesting observations about the roles in which they find themselves, especially in relating to donors. Many of the things they do are simply activities that faithful Christians might do with one another. For example, lend one another a listening ear, or pray, or read scripture together. Nonetheless, when these activities arise in the context of someone who is a fundraiser visiting (in person or by phone) for a Christian organization this activity may assume a greater intensity or formality.

The fundraisers’ stories highlighted two personal and professional roles — or ministries — in which they find themselves as a result of doing their fundraising. These include elements of pastoring and organizational planning. Those we interviewed sometimes found themselves serving these other functions while, or as a result of, pursuing gifts.

That one may find oneself in a pastoral role while raising money is no surprise, especially if one is working with a long-time donor, or in gift planning. In such work one frequently is working with people with whom one has built lasting relationships, and discussed very personal matters of family or finances. Several of the fundraisers we talked to with the longest tenures spoke about how close they had become to some donors.

We live in a wider culture where attentive listening is often rare, and a gift many of us would like to experience more often. Elderly donors may be living more isolated lives, and hunger for more conversation. Add the element of a shared faith, and there are likely to be conversations that are deep and intimate. The fundraiser’s ability to offer a

“pastoral presence,” one of active caring listening, may be an important gift the fundraiser can offer the donor. Several of those we interviewed talked about consciously filling that role.

Several of the people we interviewed began their careers as pastors, or had extensive training as “lay ministers,” and so had some specific preparation for this facet of the work. Others have had other training that supports them in this. Virtually everyone we spoke with talked about the importance of listening to and caring about donors as people with whom they had real, multifaceted, relationships, often deepened by a shared faith. One spoke of the fact that in her organization they pray for donors as a part of the weekly staff devotional time. She said she was grateful for this because it takes her relationship with the donor beyond a question of “just ‘What’s in your pocket?’ to, ‘What’s going on in your whole life?’”

A second role fundraisers may play for individuals or congregations is in facilitating planning, either for raising money or in thinking about how to better use resources already in hand. A key byproduct of relationships like those just described is deep trust. Fundraisers who earn that trust may find their donors seek advice from them on other matters.

Finally, in our cohort of fundraisers were several who work for denominational structures in roles where their work is to help congregations or agencies plan fundraising campaigns, or help individuals set up planned gifts, or work with individuals in their estate planning. One spoke of working with a congregation that asked him to help set up an endowment gift it was about to receive. As he began that work they became aware that they needed a plan and policies for an endowment if they had one. That led to further questions about the purposes of an endowment, which prompted work on a strategic plan for the congregation, focusing on how best to keep the congregation healthy and make a difference for good with these new funds. This is the story of someone — as a fellow Christian, and a trusted counselor, and wise about money — being able to help a congregation around a variety of planning needs. This kind of story about going through a progression of services was not uncommon for people in these roles.

It can be a blessing when denominations support people who can work with congregations in ways like this. Even better when fundraisers can truly serve congregations in so many ways — that is, they can help not only with soliciting needed

gifts, but also with addressing issues and dynamics of a congregation that can support or frustrate those gifts being well used. One of those we interviewed said his work is not just fundraising, but “helping congregations ... figure out what their mission is, and think about the financial aspects of how they can fulfill it.”

Occasional Tensions Between Roles: It seems important here to recognize one area where tensions can be experienced between the pastoral and the task-centered roles of fundraisers. While not a concern for everyone, enough of our interviewees mentioned this tension that it seems right to note it. This has to do with the anxiety around “making the ask” from donors with whom one has a pastoral relationship.

Several senior fundraisers we interviewed said they see colleagues, often those new to the field, struggle with asking for money. Some, they observed, are very good at, and seem to greatly enjoy, building relationships, but find it hard to ask for the gifts they need. They suggested several reasons for these difficulties. One noted that “these conversations are difficult because conversations about money are difficult in our culture.” But it also seems that it is hard for some to ask because they fear it will put at risk the comfort of a relationship that has pastoral quality to it.

One fundraiser acknowledged feeling considerable tension between the demands of the practical versus the spiritual in her role as a major gifts officer. She feels she cannot devote as much time as she thinks some donors would like to visiting apart from occasions when she is there to make an ask. She noted that sometimes in visits “it feels like what is really needed is just to listen, and be present, but my fundraising goals impel me to push ahead to ask for a gift.”

Listening to these fundraisers’ stories, it seems likely that sorting out the dynamics affecting these kinds of situations requires a case-by-case analysis. It also appears probable there may be many instances where a fundraiser’s struggle with making an ask is more about the fundraiser’s anxieties, or lack of confidence in a specific proposal, or other situational uncertainties, than with any pastoral concerns. It additionally seems likely that there are times when pastoral concerns about the timing or context of a funding request are legitimate.

Finally, though, these seem to be the kinds of challenges where those who feel called to fundraising can potentially be greatly helpful to one another. ALDE meetings, chapters and networks can offer opportunities for conversations about such instances. Developing the discernment and skills to see how best to handle these challenges may be most

effectively done in mentoring or peer-to-peer conversations of the sort the ALDE network seems especially good at providing.

Practices and Preparations: In our discussions with interviewees about the challenges of practicing fundraising as a calling, we asked each one, “Can you describe a few attributes of your preparation for your work that specifically mark it, or have shaped it, as a ministry? ‘Preparation’ here could include your education, ongoing professional training or personal practices that are important to you.”

In response, all of them spoke about the positive value of participating in a group like ALDE. Most interesting, however, were comments on their use of or adherence to “spiritual practices” to ground themselves in this work. Specifically, three kinds of spiritual practice were mentioned by multiple respondents.

Not surprisingly, prayer was the practice most frequently cited as being especially helpful (if not essential) to doing this work in this way. By “prayer,” those we spoke with meant many things. These ranged from personal prayer being simply a part of their daily routine; to praying for guidance in one’s preparation for a donor meeting or drafting a proposal to praying with donors — perhaps grace over a meal or thanksgiving at the end of a meeting.

In this practice, prayers for guidance before a donor meeting were perhaps the most often cited form. Praying with donors seemed very common as well. However, several who do this also asserted the need to be sensitive and careful about when and how to pray with donors. One observed: “Prayer is a key element. Not with every donor, but you know when it is right.” A few also spoke of the value of praying for donors in staff meetings, as a way of building and affirming more holistic relationships with them.

A related practice was participation in small groups for devotions, Bible study, prayer or some combination thereof. Such groups might be rooted in the workplace. But our subjects also spoke of the value of participating in these activities with groups from their own congregation, or through other personal networks. One person talked about how her weekly Bible study group is “essential as a support group in helping me manage the stresses of my job” and busy family life.

Several people who worked with small staffs spoke of the value of having worship or devotional time with other staff incorporated into meetings. They felt these

occasions served two purposes: allowing staff to know one another better, and affirming the common ground for their work in their shared faith.

Several of those interviewed spoke of the practice of “tithing,” or generous giving, as being powerful, even critical, for those who see fundraising as their calling. The rationale for this was stated in several related ways. One said it makes asking easier because, “I am a giver myself, so I’m only asking people to do what I do myself.” Another said, “Tithing is an exercise in faithfulness, and one that frees me up to ask.” We know that giving is a learned behavior, and many people we interviewed see it as a behavior that can bring joy to the giver. So it makes sense that fundraisers should see themselves as — and try to be — modelers of that behavior.

Models of Fundraising: There was one recurrent use of language by many of the fundraisers we interviewed that was striking because it was so often repeated. This was the expressed desire to do fundraising in a way that is “relational” and not “transactional.” The precise meaning of this phrase was not always clear. However, it seems to reflect our subjects’ sense that all good fundraising, especially of the type ALDE members hope to do, should focus on building relationships as opposed to facilitating exchanges.

This, for instance, might mean encouraging gifts through a focus on helping the donors identify with an organization and mission, and helping them feel part of a cause and community, as opposed to “making a pitch” for a cause or project, or focusing on donor recognition schemes. Or it might be manifest when discussions about a planned gift place more emphasis on how that gift vehicle embodies the donor’s aspirations for the recipient organization’s mission, and less on tax benefits.

To the degree that a focus on relationships — one’s relationship to God, donors’ and fundraisers’ relationships to one another in “the body of Christ” — is so central to the Christian tradition, this preference for “relational” fundraising makes sense, as it mirrors a core value of the faith. Thus treating others, including donors, as we would like to be treated — with genuine care for their wellbeing, and hoping to bring them an experience of joy in giving — seems a core aspiration for the fundraisers who see their work as their calling and an expression of their faith. The centrality of the language of relationships may be deeply rooted in the faith of many ALDE members.

ALDE Roles in Supporting and Deepening Practice: If we start with the assumption that doing fundraising as a ministry is a particularly good and valuable practice, and we observe — as we have here — that it is also a significant challenge to do this well, then we might ask what can help us develop, enhance and sustain this practice over time. The traditions of continuing education that have become essential to professional development in many fields have become widely accepted in fundraising as well. The Association of Fundraising Professionals (AFP) has created highly respected certification and continuing education programs in this vein. They focus primarily on the knowledge, skills and craft of fundraising.

A number of those we interviewed commented favorably on the AFP programs. But they also noted the understandable absence (or limits) of conversations about values and faith there. These observations were not critical of AFP. However, they were often the beginning of very favorable and appreciative observations about ALDE from its own members.

We heard repeatedly how much ALDE members value the ways in which ALDE programs integrate professional education and spiritual formation. One man who is five or six years into his career talked about how the programming and network of ALDE was crucial in creating and continuing a structure that enhances his professional and spiritual formation together. Another person who had 15 years of sales experience before his (now) long fundraising career said, “ALDE has been an invaluable network and community,” in which “mutual mentoring is huge!” Another veteran fundraiser who works at a large secular nonprofit still sees ALDE as her most valuable professional network, noting that she “does not find anywhere near the kind of openness and honesty in sharing and mutual learning at other [organizations] as I find at ALDE.”

It seems clear that ALDE members, both as Christians and as professionals, desire high quality professional education, as well as deep and thoughtful conversations about their faith. They find that bringing these together provides critical support for their professional and spiritual development. Those we interviewed, who see fundraising as a vocation, look for this to provide support and growth opportunities to pursue fundraising practiced in a “faith-full” way.

They are very grateful that they find both offered in an integrated manner at ALDE, and they are deeply appreciative for the organization's culture of mutual sharing and mentoring that make such learning and growth richer for both newcomers and long-time participants. What we heard from those we spoke with indicated that members experience ALDE as an exceptional and rare network for learning key skills and finding professional support within a framework of shared faith.

CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS AND POSSIBLE NEXT QUESTIONS

About Fundraising, Faith and Vocation

Observations:

In painting our portrait of ALDE members, it is clear that ALDE fundraisers are more similar to than different from fundraisers as a whole. We believe this finding says something important about the growing professionalization of the fundraising field more broadly and the significant role of faith-based fundraisers in the overall development landscape. It is also important to note that faith-based fundraisers are not simply relegated to work in specifically religious organizations. While higher than other national studies, only 31.8% of ALDE members worked explicitly in the religion subsector. As this study clearly shows, faith is a motivating factor for ALDE fundraisers in a myriad of settings, and we believe it has been underexplored as a significant aspect of fundraisers' work, practice, and professional outlook. Attending to questions of faith and religious identity within fundraising and among donors more broadly is a significant task for further exploration.

Many of the findings are exciting yet not surprising. They are congruent with the experience of those who reviewed this report before publication. While faith-based fundraisers may be more alike than different from fundraisers overall, there are also clear distinctions:

- Their higher commitment to the cause for which their organization works
- Their lower ranking of pay and benefits as a motivating factor compared to the average fundraiser, especially for more experienced ALDE fundraisers
- Their desire to be challenged in their role correlating positively with increased education, and
- Their desire to work for an organization and with colleagues who share their values and mission

Faith-based fundraisers are more mission-centered. Why? We think that the understanding of their vocation through a lens of faith makes an important difference, and we explored with ALDE members how faith and spiritual practices shaped the way they perceived and practiced their profession.

Next Questions:

To test these connections further, we would need to explore additional questions and dig deeper into responses that arose from this research.

Digging Deeper:

1. Does the sense of vocation hold true for *younger* fundraisers? First, perhaps, we need to discern what we know about younger fundraisers. Are they entering the profession earlier than their older colleagues? If so, do they have a different language of vocation – to fundraising, to the faith-based mission of the organization, or to how faith informs their own religious calling. how this compares to other younger fundraisers? Are they entering the profession with a strong sense of calling or is it something that develops through experiencing work in a faith-based culture? Is there less a connection as a whole for the younger generation; will they develop stronger connections as they mature as fundraisers; or are faith-based young professionals different than the cultural norms?
2. What about *gender*? Are there differences between men and women’s sense of vocation and the development and support of calling? The finding of the long-term male members possibly having a deeper sense of vocation leading to less attention to pay and benefits needs further exploration. Does this gender difference still exist if controlled for age? How many of the long-term male members are pastors or called church workers (either past or present) and does that impact the gender differences? What is the significance of the gender balance within ALDE compared to the profession as a whole? Can we determine why women are less likely to connect faith with profession? What is the relationship to more men responding positively to working for a religious organization and with people with similar values?
3. Are the *occasional tensions between roles* unique to ALDE? Do other fundraisers have similar anxiety when “making the ask” to donors with whom they have a close, long-term relationship that can be characterized as “pastoral”? Are we

simply labeling anxiety that all fundraisers have at “making the ask” pastoral care because of the faith-based culture? How does anxiety over roles impact one’s work? Do the same issues exist in other professions, i.e. sales?

4. Does the *average length in the profession* impact the development of one’s sense of vocation? Or does the level of commitment affect tenure in the job and/or profession? How do those newer to the profession differ from those with many years of experience?
5. How does one’s *career path* affect one’s expression of faith? If someone entered the development field originally or if it’s a second or third career, what difference might that have on how faith is expressed?
6. The importance to ALDE members of working with colleagues with whom they *share values* — how are decisions such as tenure with the organization impacted if people have different values? Do similar values have to be prevalent to create a positive work environment or can they work with someone indifferent to similar values?

Additional Questions:

1. Ask these questions with other communities — explicitly other professional organizations of faith-based fundraisers such as the National Catholic Development Conference (NCDC) or the Association of Theological Schools’ (ATS) Development and Institutional Advancement Program (DIAP). This is an obvious place for further analysis. Do their members tend to work in organizations with smaller staff size and smaller? annual donations than fundraisers more broadly? Is the percentage of their members holding a formal academic degree in fundraising more similar to fundraisers in general or to ALDE fundraisers? Does awareness of fundraising as ministry exhibit itself in the same three ways that it does for ALDE members?
2. How unique is ALDE when held up against the few sister organizations such as those named above, and nonreligious associations such as AFP, which has a subset of religious fundraisers. Is faith-based fundraising really as professionalized and similar to other fundraising as this study demonstrates? Do pay and benefits matter less among ALDE members indicating a stronger sense of vocation when compared to other faith-based fundraisers and other fundraisers more broadly?

Does increased education positively correlate with a desire to be challenged in one's role? What is the primary relationship to which other fundraisers point? Is it donors as ALDE members noted? Is deep trust built as readily with general fundraisers as it is with faith-based professionals and their donors?

3. Who is missing from the study and how might we learn from their experience to paint a fuller picture? How do other Christians — Catholic, Episcopal, Baptist, nondenominational, etc. view calling and vocation? It would be quite interesting to see how those faith backgrounds inform views and feelings on vocation. What, if any, is the difference between mainline and independent denominations? How do people view this when they don't emphasize a priesthood of all believers?
4. How do nonreligious people view the ideas of vocation and calling? Many may still think of vocation, but in a different light.

The Practice of Fundraising:

In exploring fundraisers' reflection on terms such as vocation and calling, we focused on meanings for individuals, their actual practice and how this affected them in the context of their organization. It may be important in future research to focus even more on the *practices* of fundraisers: those that are part of their professional work and their spiritual lives.

1. How are the understandings of professional and personal intertwined or distinguished? Is religious language and vocation individualized for faith-based fundraisers, or more thoroughly integrated into their daily life? Is there a way to distinguish a larger discernment process, or is the act of engaging in the task of fundraising stirring up a sense of vocation? Do personal and professional values align?
2. Do faith-based fundraisers see a bigger responsibility than just representing their current organization?
3. How do other purposes or goals faith-based fundraisers hope to accomplish, beyond "just raising the money," affect their work and their understanding of vocation?

4. If this work opens conversations about faith, does this make it a faith practice of evangelism?

What do We Learn When We Survey the Organizations, Not the Individuals?

This leads to an additional question focusing on the *organizations* themselves. This study focused on individuals, but asking similar questions from an organizational instead of an individual perspective might supplement our study and offer a fuller picture of faith-based fundraising. Other questions might be:

1. How do organizations themselves encourage or inhibit the integration of faith and fundraising?
2. How does this affect their staff, the mission and vision of the organization and how success is measured?
3. Do smaller organizations “grow their own”, which might contribute to smaller compensation despite years of experience?

Views on Vocation and Calling of Non-Fundraising Stakeholders:

Finally, this study has focused on fundraisers themselves, but how might others involved in this work answer the question?

1. These vocational questions are relevant to many others in our organizations: professors, social workers or administrators. Not only are we interested in how they would answer these questions, but we might also ask how they view faith-based fundraising as well. Do we as fundraisers have a different view of ourselves than those with which we work?
2. How might we expand this study to questions of donors? Do they see a difference when in a relationship with a faith-based, instead of a nonreligious, professional? Are donor retention rates higher in faith-based circles? Is the desire to communicate more urgent for those within a faith community to not only to confirm the good work being done, but also to affirm the faith that motivates the work?
3. What about denominational officials and executive directors of nonprofits? All of these groups are facing similar questions, contemplating how the act of asking or

giving is integrated into their calling as a part of their faith journey. In expanding this study, we would expand these questions to other faith-based practitioners and other fundraisers. The interest in answers to such questions is high and the significance for the practice of fundraising is clear.

Impact on ALDE:

Throughout our survey and interviews, it was clear that ALDE stood out as an essential resource for the development of professional expertise, but most specifically as a place to encounter like-minded fundraisers and a safe space to reflect on the meaning of faith in the practice of fundraising. These multiple layers are worth further exploration.

1. Is ALDE membership attractive because it speaks to existing connections between faith and work, or is the connection of faith to work made stronger/caused/influenced by being a member? Does one develop the sense of vocation over time as a result of experiencing ALDE membership?
2. Does ALDE choose to embrace these findings as *descriptive* (this is who we are now and it may be changing) or *prescriptive* (this is who we choose to be so we figure out what that looks like in a changing world) or somewhere in *between*?
3. How has ALDE been able to succeed in creating such a community, providing an exceptional space for exploring religious identity as well as developing professional expertise? How might we replicate such an approach in other contexts?

ALDE meetings, chapters and networks have offered opportunities for mentoring or peer-to-peer conversations about the kinds of challenges faced by fundraisers. Is ALDE offering enough opportunity for such discussions, or does the membership desire more?

Since fundraising as a ministry is a particularly good and valuable practice, yet one with significant challenges, then we must continue to ask what can help us develop, enhance and sustain this practice over time beyond the existing integration of high quality education and faith formation and nourishment.

4. What nuggets can ALDE glean and use in marketing? Does this help with recruitment through channel marketing (direct mail, referrals, etc.)? If younger

professionals do not have as strong a sense of vocation as the older generation early in their career, might that suggest that the connection with ALDE impacts one's expression of vocation? Do retention rates demonstrate congruency with recruitment efforts, especially in conveying the role of faith?

Whether or not further research within ALDE or with other denominations and other audiences is achieved, we stand ready to answer, with a more confident stance, the quintessential question: Is our fundraising practice deepened and enhanced *because* we are active people of faith OR is our faith as men and women of God enhanced because of our profession? Yes! Faith, especially from the Lutheran perspective, is both/and. How that faith is expressed, deepened and enhanced is both because we display active lives of faith and because our profession supports our faith.

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SURVEY INSTRUMENT



ALDE Vocational Research Survey

*Required Question(s)

Progress:

ALL answers are required but it is a short survey.

*But yield who will to their separation,
My object in living is to unite
My avocation and my vocation
As my two eyes make one in sight*

—Robert Frost

As adults we hear the words "vocation" and "calling" typically within the context of living out our faith life in worship or Bible study. During the work week, we use our professional titles: development officer, planned giving coordinator, administrator, to describe our role and function. On Sunday, we employ words like Christian, coupled with our specific denominational appellation, to give meaning to our roles and responsibilities within the life of the Church.

Interestingly today, at many faith-based colleges and universities, young people are fluent in "vocational speak" as short-hand for the task of sorting through career paths and professional choices. Many of us might be encountering a new and vibrant "faith at work" movement that is considering calling in the workplace. It's almost as if there is a specific job out there with your name on it, with your only task to somehow find it - sort of like a game of vocational "capture the flag."

The broader task at hand seems to be aligning what we "do" with how we "be" or act as children of God within the context of delivering financial and other kinds of resources for our organizations, ministries and institutions. As Parker Palmer put it so gracefully in *To Know as we are Known, A Spirituality of Education*, "How shall we bring together these two lines of sight?"

In our work as fundraisers and nonprofit leaders, this is a pressing question for us too. We need your help. Your responses will help us understand how work and faith meet. Thank you!

* How likely are you to connect fundraising as a profession with your faith?

Least Likely Most Likely

* Do you understand your own work in fundraising to be an expression of a calling or vocation rooted in your faith?

- Yes
- No
- Unsure

Continue >



ALDE Vocational Research Survey

*Required Question(s)

Progress:

* Briefly describe the first time or experience in which that sense of calling became apparent.

1000 characters left.

* Have you pursued specific practices that support or sustain that sense of vocation?

- Yes
- No

* What are some of those practices?

350 characters left.

* What resources do you draw upon for this purpose?

350 characters left.

* Indicate the primary nonprofit area in which you presently work:

- Arts/Culture
- Environment/Animal welfare
- International
- Denominational Church Body/Missions
- Education (elementary - secondary)
- Education (post-secondary)
- Seminary
- Health Service Ministry/Health Care
- Social Service/Aging/Developmental Disabilities Ministries
- Camping/Outdoor Ministry
- Consulting Services
- Foundation (grant making)
- Congregational/Parish Ministry
- Other

* Please select the title closest to your current job title.

- Associate or Assistant (staff level)
- Parish Pastor
- Director of Development or Communications-Public Relations (senior level)
- Development or Public Relations Officer (mid level)
- President/CEO/Chief Administrator (executive level)
- Vice President (leadership level)
- Other

* Please identify your primary fundraising focus area.

- Generalist
- Annual Fund/Giving/Campaigns
- Major Gifts/Giving

- Planned Gifts/Giving
- Grants/Grant Proposal Writing
- Development Services/Prospect Research
- Alumni Affairs/Relations/Engagement
- Capital Campaigns
- Communications
- Constituent Engagement/Relations
- Corporate Relations/Donors/Partnerships
- Donor Relations/Services
- Prospect Development/Management/Research
- Stewardship
- Endowments
- Foundation Relations
- Gift Planning/Services/Operations/Processing
- Other

* What is the size of paid fundraising staff (professional and support) at your organization?

- 1 person
- 2-4 people
- 5-7 people
- 8-10 people
- 11-15 people
- 16+ people

* How much fundraising income did you generate for your organization in the most recent fiscal year? If you manage other fundraisers, please include the income generated by the team that you supervise.

- Less than \$100,000
- \$100,000 to \$249,999
- \$250,000 to \$499,999
- \$500,000 to \$999,999
- \$1,000,000 to \$4,999,999
- \$5,000,000 to \$10,000,000
- More than \$10,000,000

* Please rate each of the following statements to reflect their importance in your choice of your present position:

	Least Important				Most Important
Level of challenge or responsibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Chance to work with people who share my spiritual values	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Opportunity to work in a religious affiliated organization	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pay and/or benefits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Likelihood of success in reaching fundraising goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Chance to work with administration more committed to fundraising goals	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Commitment to the specific cause or program	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Personal or family reasons	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Geographical location	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

* What professional association(s) for fundraisers do you belong to? Check all that apply.

- ALDE
- Association of Fundraising Professionals
- Council for Advancement & Support of Education
- Association for Healthcare Philanthropy
- Partnership for Philanthropic Planning
- Other

* On the average, how many programs for professional development in fundraising (conferences, courses or workshops online or in person) do you attend each year?

- 0
- 1
- 2-3
- 4-6
- 7-9
- 10 +

* Approximately how many hours per month do you spend reading literature related to fundraising that is outside the scope of your immediate work responsibilities?

- 0
- 1
- 2-3
- 4-6
- 7-9
- 10 +

* What is the total number of years you have spent working full-time (all jobs and subsectors)? Round to whole number please.

50 characters left.

* What is the total number of years you have spent working full-time in fundraising? Round to whole number please.

50 characters left.

* How did you learn fundraising? Check all that apply.

- Formal education (Bachelor's or Master's degrees)
- Certificate training (such as CFRE)
- Professional education such as conferences or workshops
- Mentor
- On the job
- Self-taught
- Other

* Which statement best describes your present feelings?

- I feel more commitment to my organization than I do to working in fundraising.
- I feel equal commitment to my organization as I do to working in fundraising.
- I feel more commitment to working in fundraising than I do to my organization.
- I feel little or no commitment to my organization or to working in fundraising.

* Which statement most clearly reflects your feelings about your future in fundraising in the next year?

- I am presently looking and planning to leave fundraising in the near future.
- I am seriously considering leaving fundraising in the near future.
- I am unsure about my plans for continuing to work in fundraising in the near future.
- As far as I can see ahead, I intend to stay in fundraising for the near future.
- It is very unlikely that I would ever consider leaving fundraising before retirement.

* Compared to other occupations that you could be working in right now, what is your opinion about being a fundraiser? Indicate the rating that reflects your opinion of the importance and status of fundraising.

Least Positive Opinion Strongest Positive Opinion

* What is your gender?

- Female
- Male

* What is your employer's zip/postal code? (first three letters/digits only)

50 characters left.

* Please indicate your ethnic/racial background. Select all that apply.

- African American
- Asian American
- Hispanic American
- Native American, American Indian, Alaskan Native, or First Nations
- White
- Prefer not to answer
- Other

* Please indicate the highest level of education and/or certifications you have completed.

- Attended high school
- High school diploma
- Some college
- College degree
- Some graduate/professional school
- Professional certification
- Master's degree
- Doctoral degree - includes J.D.

Continue >



ALDE Vocational Research Survey

*Required Question(s)

Progress:

* What field did you study?

50 characters left.

Note: The second step in this research will involve personal in-depth interviews to more fully explore issues related to life and career histories, motivations for working in fundraising, content and activities of daily work life, and fundraising accomplishments and aspirations.

If you are willing to be contacted for a personal interview, please provide your name

First Name:

Last Name:

[Continue >](#)