

Church Financial Hot Topic

Church Treasurer Challenges

The role of church treasurer is becoming more complex as churches strive to keep up with governmental regulations and membership demands. As many churches struggle to fill this volunteer position, several issues should be communicated to the person considering this critical ministry position.

1. The individual should sense a calling from God to serve as a church treasurer. The work is too difficult, frustrating, and challenging unless someone feels God has called him to this important ministry position. A calling of God will help the church treasurer make it through the difficult times because he senses the bigger picture of God working in his church's life.
2. The potential church treasurer should be given a concise and clear job description that spells out the authority and power of the treasurer. Guidelines should communicate important information like the responsibility of the church treasurer in balancing the checkbook and other general ledgers plus the posting of contribution credits. Likewise, the job description should emphasize issues like the treasurer should not receive any church donations personally or make bank deposits.
3. An outside church audit should have been conducted to insure the new church treasurer is not inheriting any financial liabilities. The church audit recommendations of procedure changes should have been incorporated into the church accounting system before the new church treasurer accepts the new ministry position.
4. Likewise, accounting safeguards should be instituted before the potential church treasurer accepts the ministry position. For instance, a written policy should be developed requiring two signatures on checks and purchase orders.
5. The potential church treasurer needs access to training and resources. The church needs to budget money for the training for the new treasurer. Training is available through many organizations like Internal Revenue Service, state revenue departments, and state conventions.
6. In many states, the church should be incorporated to help protect the church treasurer from personal liability claims. Church incorporation does not protect someone from willfully committing a crime, but incorporation does help protect the treasurer's personal assets in a general liability lawsuit against the church.
7. The potential church treasurer needs to know if an existing network of church bookkeepers and CPAs who specialize in church and clergy tax matters is available. The treasurer needs to know who he can contact if he has a question about governmental regulations or procedures.
8. The church should provide an adequate church liability insurance coverage for the church treasurer. The coverage should include personal legal defense for the treasurer if he is accused of financial wrongdoing. The church insurance policy needs to include coverage for replacement of church funds in the case of a natural disaster or criminal act.
9. A discussion forum should be conducted with the potential church treasurer, the church staff, and finance committee to address a series of "what if" questions like budget shortfalls, designated funds, or authority issues to help eliminate conflicts or misunderstandings.
10. Finally, the potential church treasurer needs to be a role model for an assistant church treasurer. The church treasurer should be given the authority to help develop other church leaders to help fulfill the treasurer's role when he cannot serve temporarily or permanently.

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