

Church Financial Hot Topic

Creating a Budget that Motivates Generosity

Budget development lies at the center of a complex matrix of church activities. Annual calendar planning, ministry evaluation, staffing, building administration and debt retirement may all converge at budget planning time. The budget-planning group must act in concert with other church leaders to negotiate a comprehensive approach to ministry that is inclusive and redemptive. Creating a budget that motivates people to give can be a challenge, but budget planners can use the following tips as part of a process to grow stewards and ultimately benefit Christ's Kingdom.

- **People give to people, not budgets.** Tell the story of your ministries through people, not just dollars and cents. Include testimonies during worship services and church conferences about how God is moving through the various ministries of your church. Rather than focusing on program needs, focus on people needs. Emphasize how much ministry is being accomplished rather than how much money the church has (or doesn't have). Money follows mission and ministry when understood by the congregation.
- **Develop an atmosphere of expectancy.** Simply adding a percentage to each budgeted line item does not inspire members to give. Evaluate items in the budget and consider deleting items that do not relate to your church's mission. Include a visionary challenge as part of the budget presentation.
- **Seek ways to get your church membership involved in the budgeting process at least every three years.** Ask questions such as: "What is the mission God has given our church?" "What are the ministries our church will be engaged in next year to accomplish our mission?" "Is there a better way to do our ministries?" "How much will these ministries cost?" As people become more involved in the life of the church and setting its priorities, they generally become more committed to its finances.
- **Communicate with the congregation.** A clear budget presentation builds confidence for generous giving among church members. Use visual presentations to personalize ministry expenditures. A video or photos shown in a visual format will help church members visualize what their gifts are accomplishing. Personal testimonies and open discussions add warmth and encourage greater investment in the life of the church.
- **Encourage personal giving commitment.** Budget development and adoption are not complete until members have been challenged to make personal giving commitments. Budget goals and church mission statements have no integrity unless they are underwritten with the offerings of God's people. In all our efforts to write an acceptable ministry-financing plan, remember that the Lord is still looking for "cheerful givers." Lead the church to participate in appropriate year-round stewardship enrichment activities.
- **Seek God through prayer before proceeding.** Ask God for wisdom in how to best communicate the purpose for having a church financial ministry plan (budget).

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