



CONGREGATIONAL
STEWARDSHIP
WORKBOOK

Principles of Congregational Budgeting



**Congregational Stewardship
Workbook 2000**

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Notes

Synopsis

Because budgeting is intimately connected to our understanding of “holistic” stewardship, it is important our churches know the term and put it into use as they use a budget as a ministry tool. This section offers a brief introduction to “holistic” stewardship as it is based on God’s gift of faith and trust in Him. Without such a basis, church budgets often become ego-centric and shortsighted, allowing the church to operate only on a survival or maintenance level.

Sections of the older version of “What, Why and How of Budgeting” are used because of their intrinsic value and because to change them only means reinventing the wheel. The sections move from a church scene of budgeting struggles to the realization stewardship is basically a church term to the values we place on possessions and how they impact budgets, to narrative budgets and accountability to the congregation. Exercises are interspersed throughout the sections to help understand the process.

Introduction

J. David Schmidt in his book, “Choosing to Live,” paints this scene about a long congregational budget meeting. It is growing late (close to 11 p.m.) on a weekday. Committee members are tired. For three hours, seven people were hammering out a budget, trying to shape a plan for the next fiscal year. The last 30 minutes of the meeting were rough. Decisions came easily to fund new Sunday-school furniture, a computer upgrade and painting the narthex. Adding a full-time associate on staff was more difficult. Providing more funds for missions and service beyond the church walls was a main problem. Through much rancor and anger, the question to reduce funding for missions dominated the discussion. Some wanted to cut back by 5 percent. It sounded something like this:

“Just because their name is on our sign and constitution, does that mean we always have to give them more each year?”

“I don’t see how we benefit. I swear they must run printing presses non-stop. All we ever get from that place is a steady stream of propaganda.”

“And appeals.”

“We need this 5 percent to underwrite the new staff position.”

“But don’t we owe them something?”

“Look. We are supporting missionaries they don’t support.”

“They’ve got deep reserves. They don’t need our money this year.”

And the pastor remained silent.¹

Sound familiar? Could this be your annual budget meeting? What does this say about stewardship and how it impacts a church budget? What do we mean by “holistic stewardship”? How do faith and trust impact a congregation’s plan to carry out Matthew 28? If the world doesn’t have a clue about stewardship, are we in any better position to teach it? Take a look again at the above scene and discuss the attitudes, values and behaviors of these people. Apply it to your church.

