

CHURCH BUDGET PROCESS

Involving the entire church in decision-making

(Budget Preparation Form Attached)

(Budget Workshop Form Attached)

BUDGETING PROCESS

OVERVIEW

One issue that is paramount in doing a budget is getting the people to buy into the budget through ownership (*my* budget verses *their* budget). Once this occurs then they will have the confidence to realize the wisdom of the budget and the purpose of the budget. This requires a maximum number of church members to be involved in developing the annual budget. Such involvement could be construed as dangerous in that no one person has control over the final outcome, it is a product of the empowerment of the church.

A method of involving the most people in the budgeting process is most likely to produce these results. This process should produce top-down support for the budget and purpose of the church.

A group of church leaders needs to be organized as a budget committee to orchestrate the development of the budget. Typically this can be the Church Council or other body of leadership. Most important is that the leadership of the church is integrally involved in the process (fairness with no agendas except to seek out God's will). This group of people should begin their task at least five months prior to the beginning of the new fiscal year.

The charter for this group is to develop an annual church budget, which is tied implicitly to the mission and vision and resources of the church. It should be chaired by the chairman of the finance or stewardship committee (that group which has oversight of fiscal matters of the church)). The group should include as many key leaders in the church as possible. Often these leaders can be found in positions of lay leadership as committee chairs. Don't limit the participation to just these, but include other key people, as you are aware of them.

The Finance/Stewardship Committee establish the overall budget amount for the upcoming fiscal year. This is done with foresight into potential growth in revenue and challenges in ministry. The budget should be attainable and realistic, but challenging.

Each committee and organization that requires a budget line item is given the opportunity to request funding or specific activities. The guidelines given to these requesting agencies is that each request be supportive of a goal of the church as determined in the strategic plan or the Church Council. Any request that cannot be tied rigidly to the five-fold ministry of the church (discipleship, evangelism, fellowship ministry, and worship) should be denied. All requests should reflect the vision of that committee or organization as they sense God's direction. Those specific requests should be itemized and prioritized with adequate rationale given to explain their request.

The church staff (or some identified agency) should receive each and every budget request and review them for completeness, comprehensiveness, and redundancies. Where required they should make corrections and adjustments. The refined requests should then go to the Budget Workshop.

The refined budget requests should be discussed with all budget participants having

opportunity to discuss and approve each request. The requesting agency must given defense to their request and prove the case for receiving funding for specific activities. The workshop does not vote or approve budget requests until the last discussion is made. A running total of requested funding is maintained by the workshop moderator. When the total approved matches the established budget amount, the workshop participants must then shift and refine resources to maximize the effectiveness of the budget. When finally approved, the budget goes to the church for discussion and vote.

DRAFT REQUEST

This rightly begins with a visioning meeting where the committees or organizations discern where God is leading the in ministry. One way of accomplishing this is through a process of identifying (1) strengths, (2) weaknesses, (3) threats, and (4) opportunities for ministry. Members should be challenged to review the opportunities set before them for ministry, the resources God as laid at their disposal to perform ministry and discern where the church should be going.

It is important that each ministry or committee responsible for projected expenditures realize that their activities are not in a vacuum, but they must coordinate with other agencies to support one another. Thus, budget requests might well depend on the activities of other ministries. Ministry leaders should realize their need to work together in this request process.

The staff should prepare a draft calendar for the budget preparation that includes most projected church-wide activities, such as VBS, revivals, and mission trips. This is intended to remind ministries of potential impacts to their budgets and not to limit their vision.

Each organization or ministry within the church should be asked to provide a draft budget request. It is important that these requests be tied directly to the mission statement of the church. People should realize that the church is on mission and is directing its resources to the accomplishment of that mission. These requests should be solicited two months before any decision needs to be made. It would be best to use a handout for guiding the preparation of these requests. Appendix A has a suggested format.

The staff should then review the draft requests to discern obvious overlaps and redundancies. With annotations they are then forwarded to the budgeting committee.

When completed, key people of the budgeting committee or staff should review these draft requests to determine what changes need to be made, if any. This is important in that unrealistic numbers or missing information may skew the budgeting process.

Upon accomplishing this review the draft budget request is returned to the organization or ministry for consideration of changes or inclusions. A revision is expected for the upcoming budget workshop. Assigned people will take these suggested changes back to the originating groups and negotiate the necessary changes.

WORKSHOP

This is a time when the decisions of the final budget are to be made. Everyone involved in the budgeting process will have an active participation in the determination of the final budget. The workshop is designed to provide the maximum number of people the opportunity to know how the mission of the church will be tied to budget allocations and church resources.

Plan to invest 5 or 6 hours in this budget workshop. It should be scheduled at a time to provide the maximum participation; a Saturday or Sunday is preferred. The place for this meeting should be large enough to comfortably handle the number of people attending and provide resources necessary for the decision process. One necessary resource would be an overhead projector and viewing screen. It may also include a video projector for computer generated spreadsheet presentations.

Seating should be provided for the budgeting committee and all participants. In order, each participant will present his or her budget request with rationale. Both the budgeting committee and other requesting agencies will have full opportunity to understand their request and how it fits into the overall mission of the church.

As a tool to coordinate the workshop, Appendix B contains a view graph that can be used for discussion and decision-making.

It would prove beneficial to analyze the previous year budget to provide some insight for the group. If possible, each budget item should be identified by its function in the ministry of the church. Typically there are five recognized ministries of the local church: (1) evangelism or witnessing, (2) education or discipleship, (3) worship, (4) ministry and (5) fellowship. Possibly some balance should be preserved in these functions. This would necessitate that expenditures such as stamps, and salaries and utilities be designated for support of the relative function. This is not impossible, but must be intentional to be descriptive of reality. Other ways to analyze a budget may include looking at expenditures related to specific age groups: (1) adults, (2) youth and (3) children or some other breakdown. Such analysis can give insight into spending priorities.

No decisions should be made until all budget requesters have had full opportunity to make their request before the committee. If decisions are made during this time then all available resources will probably be depleted before each agency has had opportunity to make their request. At the conclusion of the budget requests the budgeting committee will begin to deliberate on the allocations for each requesting agency. Each member of the budgeting committee and each representative of the requesting agency will be given a vote in the final decision for allocating budget monies.

By the conclusion of this workshop the final budget numbers should be allocated. The final action of the workshop is that every member should be able to give vote of affirmation to support the proposed budget.

The people of God respond to the challenges set before them. Stewardship awareness and education are more than annual sermons. The people need to be challenged to consider what part they should bear in the support of the operation and conduct of the church. This provides the opportunity to set before God's people their responsibilities and also determine where they are at in their spiritual journey.

DISCUSSION

Two weeks prior to the adoption of the annual budget, designate a time for a presentation of the proposed budget before the entire congregation. A Sunday evening would suffice for this presentation. It might be optimal to do this in a morning worship service where the doctrine of stewardship is promoted.

No decisions are to be made at this meeting; it is only a time for discussion and review. The church may decide to make this meeting an approved business meeting to give the congregation assurance that they have a direct input into the final budget. In any event, information which comes out of this meeting may well lead to changes in the final budget when further consideration is given. The congregation should realize that there is still an opportunity to make changes if they deem necessary.

VOTE

The adoption of the annual budget should be made by secret ballot during a morning worship service. This vote will be taken without discussion from the floor. By this time the church congregation has had ample opportunity to review the proposed budget and amend it. It is now time for a decision. It should be stressed that stewardship is more than money, it also includes our time and abilities.

IMPLEMENTATION

Once the budget is approved and the new fiscal year begins, it is imperative that accurate and precise bookkeeping be performed to provide quick feedback to the financial or stewardship functions of the church.

APPENDIX A

BUDGET PREPARATION FORM

Planning Group _____
Chairman _____

MISSION TO BUDGET WORKSHOP

Pray for God's leadership as your group dreams and plans for 20____. Define the work your ministry group will contribute to the church mission statement. Then develop strategies that enable your committee/organization to join _____ Church **addressing** needs and objectives that help us fulfill our mission. **YOU SHOULD NOT START WITH LAST YEAR'S EVENTS AND PROGRAMS AND THEN TRY TO DUPLICATE LAST YEAR.**

Together we want to ask God to reveal His will and show us what He desires for us to do.

Vision Statement:

Please follow these steps:

I. What is the purpose of your organization in light of the church's mission?

II. With your purpose in mind, what are the objectives your group will attempt this year?

1.

2.

3.

4.

III. What action plans will help you with objectives?

1.

2.

3.

4.

IV. Budget Request (By Action Plan)

Action Plan 1 _____

Action Plan 2 _____

Action Plan 3 _____

Action Plan 4 _____

Action Plan 5 _____

Action Plan 6 _____

DEADLINE FOR THE RETURN OF BUDGET REQUESTS: _____

Planning Group _____ Chairperson _____

INSTRUCTIONS

- I. How does your organization or ministry fit into the overall mission of the church?
Develop a statement of how your organization can help to make that mission possible. Review the mission statement so that you understand each facet of our mission. This process is best started by becoming spiritually aware of what God is doing in our midst and determining how we can join Him in His efforts. The budget process is not an isolated business process devoid of spiritual perception; we have been gifted to do ministry in His name with those resources. He has privileged us to be stewards of it. It might be wise to have a visioning meeting with your organization to allow members to express their views.

EXAMPLE: Suppose you represent the Stewardship Committee and need to prepare a budget request for the coming year. What is your part in the mission of the church? A statement might be: "The Stewardship Committee strives to make all church members aware of the talents and resources of which we have been gifted and maximize the use of those resources so that the church can achieve the mission set out before us."

- II. What are the objectives that your organization wishes to accomplish in the next fiscal year? Some of those objectives may be stand alone objectives and others may be continuations of objectives begun in previous years. Each objective must be tied directly back to part of the mission statement; if it cannot then we don't need to be doing it.

EXAMPLE: *The Stewardship Committee then must determine what objectives it wishes to accomplish during the next year. One objective might be "to make every church member aware of how his or her money is being used to forward the spread of the Gospel around the world." This enhances our participation in evangelism and provides opportunities for reaching others with the Gospel message. Although this directly deals with learning (discipleship) it promotes witnessing (evangelism). Another objective might be "to determine the spiritual resources within the church so that those resources might be cultivated and enabled." Such resources include spiritual gifts, talents, inclinations, and material wealth.*

- III. What must the organization and church do to accomplish these objectives? Define a course of action to implement your concept..

EXAMPLE: *The Stewardship Committee has developed the following action plans to achieve these objectives. First, the church will hold a Stewardship Fair in the month of April to learn how church funds are being used. Also, guest speakers will be solicited from supported agencies and organizations to share their successes and needs. A second action plan might include the use of surveys and tests to discern giftedness and interests among the membership.*

APPENDIX B

BUDGET WORKSHOP FORM

PROPOSED BUDGET

ORGANIZATION	ORIGINAL REQUEST	NEGOTIATED REQUEST	FINAL ALLOCATION

INSTRUCTIONS

During the budget workshop it will be necessary to keep track of changes to the budgets of various organizations. This form provides an easy method of listing changes to various budget requests.