

BISHOP'S MESSAGE

Your ministry story - your money story

People who give money to a charity want to know that their gift makes a difference. They want to know how their gift is used. That is why most charitable organizations carefully compose their story and their financial report to show how the funds they receive are spent. They use colourful brochures, clear graphs, and photos of those who benefit from our donations, to show how each donation benefits someone. How does your congregation tell those who support it financially what happens to their money? How do you tell your ministry story about the use of the money your congregation receives?

A Narrative Budget can help you to tell your story and show how donations are turned into ministries. Usually, the budget passed by the Parish Council each year is a "line item" budget. It shows such items as salaries, travel, contributions to the soup kitchen, the cost of Sunday School curriculum, fuel costs, the power bill, etc. This kind of budget only reminds folks that they have these bills to pay at home as well!

A Narrative Budget describes ministry and puts a total dollar figure with it. For example, most parishes can identify their areas of ministry in order of priority - e.g. worship, spiritual development, outreach, stewardship, children/youth administration. The clergy and paid staff need to do some analysis of their time. e.g. How many hours are spent with people who have no food? This goes under Outreach. How many hours preparing worship (including weddings, funerals, Sundays, sermon preparation)? This goes under Worship.

Then do the calculations. If the priest is spending 10 hours a week, out of a fifty hour work week, on Outreach, then 1/5 of the salary (and benefits) is assigned to costs for Outreach ministry. Some parishes list Diocesan Allotment as Outreach as well, since those moneys go for use beyond the parish. (An explanation of how Allotment is used for Diocesan Ministry may be found on the diocesan web site under Stewardship - Workshop Downloads - Where Your Money Goes)

After the time percentages have been worked out, general costs such as travel, power, oil, taxes, can be divided up and assigned to the ministry areas. Other specific costs can be identified and grouped according to ministry. (e.g. Worship - purchase of music, bulletin covers, flowers, bread, wine, etc.) Find the folks with a digital camera to take some good photos that you have permission to print in the brochure. Have the people involved with the different ministries write a two or three sentence description of the ministry.

Then find the people in the parish who have good computer skills to make charts or graphs and to lay out a simple brochure. Your parish ministry story, what you do, who benefits and what it costs the parish to do it - this is the narrative budget. It shows what ministries were supported by the previous year's offerings and also shows how the

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parish council is budgeting resources to carry out the congregation's mission. The Star System for Stewardship says this helps the Council demonstrate its accountability to the rest of the membership, so that its accountability inspires trust, and trust inspires commitment. When church members see that the ministries they make possible are continuing Christ's work in the world, offerings continue and even increase!

For more information and examples of Narrative Budgets, please go to the Stewardship page on the diocesan web site, point 3. "People will give to a project, or to disaster relief, or to a ministry, but not to a budget." Or get involved with the "Companions on a Journey" workshops.

As a diocese, we are working to build the health of our congregations. This is the second Bishop's Message aimed at providing practical guidance for this building process. If parishioners surround the visioning and the budgeting with prayer, you will soon see changes in your congregations.

May blessings abound as you work to build the Kingdom of God by strengthening your congregations.

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