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## Implement Narrative Budgeting in your Church

*\*adapted by B. Marden and R. McKinley from a PPT created by The Reverend David M. Ponting of the Anglican Diocese of Niagara*

### I. What is Narrative Budgeting?

- ◆ Narrative budgets tell the sacred story of the ministry of the church.
  - Much of Scripture is the sacred story of God's care for the people of God. (Exodus 16 and Manna from heaven)
  - Just as individuals have sacred stories of God's providential care for them, a narrative budget tells the sacred story of our church's ministry and how people are giving through their church to touch the lives of other people.
- ◆ Sharing our story is one of the most important ways we can effect on-going stewardship education.
- ◆ Narrative Budgeting educates your congregation about how their giving supports the ministry of the church.
- ◆ Narrative Budgeting honors this giving principal.

**Givers don't give money TO the church,  
they give THROUGH the church to touch the lives of other people.**

People give generously when they feel their gifts are having an impact.

**We have a theological starting point. We are NOT a secular institution.**

Our faith calls us to view the deployment of money differently than secular institutions. We must overcome years of secular thinking and begin to view money from the perspective of a faith community. We need a whole new way of thinking about the line item budget in the local church!!

**Line item budgets** are an *accounting* tool  
**Narrative budgets** are an *educational* and *visioning* tool

We need both but we must be more intentional in how we use both

- ◆ Line item budgets have limitations
- ◆ They do not show how money is being invested in ministry

- ◆ They do not show how servant time and talent are impacting church life
- ◆ Worst of all – they do not inspire!

## II. The Narrative Budget

- ◆ Clearly shows how money is invested in the various components of church life
- ◆ Helps givers to re-frame what the church is all about
- ◆ Inspires givers and helps them see their giving is really making a difference
- ◆ Is a proven tool for increasing financial commitment to church ministries
- ◆ Recognizes that church goers are not inspired at the prospect of funding administrative costs, postage, heat, water, cleaning supplies, photocopying, etc.
- ◆ Givers have a better sense of the impact the church's ministry has on peoples' lives. Experience shows they become inspired and take a much greater ownership of the many ministries of the church.

### So how does Narrative Budgeting work?

Each church has several key components to their ministry...

*Your church's ministry might easily be segmented into four to six components.*

- ◆ Pastoral Care
- ◆ Christian Education
- ◆ Worship
- ◆ Evangelism and Hospitality
- ◆ Outreach
- ◆ Fellowship

All Church Expenditures can be assigned to one of these areas!

*You will have to make some decisions about what categories are right for your church.*

Notice what category is NOT included in a Narrative Budget

*Do you see the ADMINISTRATION category on this list??*

If you use ADMINISTRATION as a category in your Narrative Budget

You will be defeating the entire purpose of Narrative Budgeting!!!

I BEG you. Don't go there!

Don't get caught up on delivering accuracy and treat the Narrative Budget as directional. We try to be as accurate as possible but we also recognize that we are reframing minds and getting givers to think about how their giving is used. Narrative Budgeting is an evolving process improving each year. People will begin to think of the funding of the ministry of the church in a new way.

Once assigned to categories, the line items in a church budget are recalculated into budget percentages depicting the total budget in these ministry categories. These percentages enable us to say, for example,

**14 cents of every dollar I give goes to Pastoral Care,  
34 cents of every dollar I give goes to Outreach.**

Then we tell the story of each category of the church's ministry with a narrative for Outreach, a narrative for Evangelism, a narrative for Pastoral Care, etc.

### **Sample Pastoral Care narrative**

*The ministry of Pastoral Care at St. Paul's involves the following services:*

- ◆ taking home communion to three local nursing homes each month
- ◆ on call at two local funeral homes and follow up with the mourners from 30 funerals
- ◆ frequent visiting at three local hospitals to parishioners recovering from illness or surgery
- ◆ More pastoral care ministries
- ◆ counseling services to couples and individuals in marital crisis
- ◆ care of college students in crisis due to stress-related pressures of school
- ◆ self help group set up to care for unemployed in the area

Then we can get more specific and share sacred stories.

*Kristen is a first year college student in Biology and it is her first time away from home. She has been having a difficult time with her classes and her marks have slipped dramatically since high school. Her mother was badly hurt in a car accident last month and Kristen is not coping well. She walked in off the street last Wednesday morning and all her pain came gushing out in the pastor's office. She and the pastor connected and she came to church the last few Sundays feeling like she has found a place to care for her.*

## **A Word about Meetings. . .**

***We must change how we view money and ministry!***

Long before Charge Conference, begin the job of education and awareness around the Narrative Budget. We recommend leaving the line item budget in the church office at your annual meeting.

Ask leadership to support taking only the Narrative Budget to your annual meeting. Tell the left brain accountant types in the church that there are five copies of the completed line item budget available in the church office for anyone interested.

As a faith-based organization, be determined in your desire to talk about money and ministry in a new way. Don't vacillate and fall back on the line item budget for decision-making.

Share that the Church Council decided in favor of talking only about the Narrative Budget and the leaders aren't standing alone in making this decision. Maybe in your church, Charge Conference will no longer be viewed as the annual BUSINESS meeting of the church, but will become

## **THE ANNUAL MISSION AND MINISTRY MEETING**

You may actually find...

*members get excited and start looking forward to your annual meeting!!*



Givers become engaged by the efforts we make to show them...  
*their giving is having an impact on the lives of people in need!*