**Five Steps to Writing a Narrative Budget
Step 1 - Getting ready**

**Recruit** the right people to help prepare the Narrative Budget. Three or four individuals –

* who know the ministry
* who know the numbers
* who are skilled at writing
* who have photography and/or desktop design skills

Gather them together and begin with prayer and Biblical reflection

**Three Stewardship Prayers**

1. Mighty and tender God,

Creator and giver of life and all things

We give our thanks and praise
We are especially thankful for *(Add your own) …*

Mighty and tender God,
We ask your blessing upon our work and ministry, our response to your call to be the Church

* + To celebrate God’s presence
	+ To live with respect in Creation
	+ To love and serve others
	+ To seek justice and resist evil
	+ To proclaim Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope.

From *A New Creed*

Mighty and tender God,
Hear us as we pray

For the church throughout the world in its life and ministries;

For the nations and peoples of the world as they strive for peace and justice;

For all who suffer: people who are sick, grieving, lonely, oppressed;

For peaceful relations among friends, colleagues, family, and strangers.
*Add your own)…*

Mighty and tender God,

In your loving purpose help us to use and share the gifts you have given us to contribute to your mission.

In all things give us the grace and wisdom to accept your will.

In Jesus’ name, we pray. **Amen.**

1. Gracious and generous God, Creator and Giver of all that is good, we thank you for our many blessings. We acknowledge that all that we have is from you. We offer you thanks and praise for the beauty of the earth, our work, our family, our loved ones, and all the gifts we have been given.

Help us to hear your call to be good stewards, caretakers, and managers of all your gifts by sharing them for your purposes. Help us plan to serve our church, our community, and our world with your gifts.

May we serve you and pray with a joyful spirit of mind and heart. Amen

We remain your faithful stewards. **Amen**

1. Generous and loving God,

You call us to be disciples of your son Jesus

and good stewards of your many gifts.

Open our minds and hearts
to a greater awareness and deeper appreciation
of your countless blessings.

Transform us through the power of your Spirit
to nurture a stewardship way of life for all our days

marked by celebration of your presence,
care for your creation,
service to others,
and justice seeking.
We pray in the name of Jesus, crucified and risen, our judge and our hope.

**Amen**

**Bible Reflection: Micah 6:8**

Invite one person to read the verse aloud.

What does the Lord require of you
but to *do justice,* and to *love kindness,* and to *walk humbly with your God?*

**Questions for reflection:**

* How are you (as an individual) engaged in the “Micah Mandate” to do justice? To love kindness? To walk humbly with God? Are you able to cite any examples?
* How is our congregation engaged in the “Micah Mandate”?
* How is our denomination engaged in the “Micah Mandate”?
* How might our lives, congregation, community and world be any different if we were serious about that mandate?
* What does the “Micah Mandate” require of us in 2013 and in 2014?

**Step 2 - What is your Ministry?**

Identify your congregation’s key ministry areas or practices. Typically the following ministry areas or practices are identified:

* 1. Worship
	2. Christian Development/Formation/Education
	3. Pastoral Care (including Welcome, Hospitality, Fellowship, Inreach)
	4. Outreach & Community Presence (including the *Mission and Service* of all the people of the United Church of Canada as well as local outreach activities)

**Step 3 - Creating the Narrative & Making Allocations**

**Creating the Narrative**

For each Ministry Area or Practice provide the following information:

1. **Describe the ministry in this area**One or two descriptive paragraphs – enable readers to understand the IMPACT of this ministry on the lives of other
Use stories from the previous years; testimonials
Source photographs (use people – with permission – whenever possible)
2. **Biblical quotation** which connects this ministry with our faith story
3. **List ministries** contained in each category (strive for stories of the results of your ministry

# of Programs

# of Individuals served

1. **Total cost**
2. **Percentage of the total budget**
3. **Percentage of personnel time** – Invite each staff member (and key lay leaders) to track the amount of time they spend in each area and then come up with an average of the total number of hours. Allocate these for all personnel time.
4. **Number of volunteers and volunteer hours** – Carry out a similar exercise as above.
5. **What more we could be doing** – Describe the expanding needs for this ministry
6. **Highlight M&S ministries**, including those close to home. Indicate other local outreach activities.
7. Sample:
<http://orleansunitedchurch.com/blog/2012/02/09/narrative-budget/>

**Making allocations**

Using your line item budget allocate expenses based on the estimate of time that ministry personnel and other staff (and even volunteer leaders) spend in each category of ministry. For example 40% spent in matters related to the ministry of Worship; 25% related to the ministry of Christian Development; 30% related to the ministry of Pastoral Care; 5% related to Outreach.

Some expenses relate ONLY to one ministry area where others will be across two or more. The same deductive process is used with each budget line item. Approximations are all that is expected. The final picture emerges when all the calculations are done.

This is a time consuming process THE FIRST TIME – one estimate is about 15 hours, depending on the complexity of the congregation’s work. However, once this initial investment is made the annual process for revising this document is fairly straightforward. **Step 4 – Pulling it Together**

Design a brochure / booklet – Use pictures, especially of people. Avoid photos of an empty building

Produce a powerpoint presentation

**Enhancements for your Narrative Budget**

* 1. Introduction from the Ministry Team
	A letter from Ministry Personnel setting the theme for the coming year
	2. Write and include a prayer written especially for your congregation’s ministry and used regularly throughout the year.
	3. Track the gift of time – volunteer opportunities and impact
	4. Include more stewardship information

Giving Charts
Q&A about the Stewardship Program

* 1. Include more Mission and Service information

M&S at a Glance; National Narrative Budget, UCC Annual Report

* 1. If you are putting this on your website, include video testimonials:

Why I come and why I stay
Highlight the impact of a ministry area

 **Step 5 - Share the Narrative**

Your Narrative Budget is now a document with multiple internal and external applications. For example:

**INTERNALLY**

In the annual report – along with financial statements

Highlight ministries –

one a week building up to the congregational annual meeting
one a month
prepare bulletin insert on each ministry area
include as part of any stewardship program

Use it as the Board Meeting agenda –

use the topic areas to drive the meeting agenda

Include in a new member package

Create a children’s edition of the narrative budget; use the Narrative Budget Sunday School session - attached

Use it as a reflection, planning and evaluation tool –

Are we happy with the focus of our mission?
What theology (view of God) does this budget express?
Is our vision supported by our budget?

Use as a way of also highlighting the ministry of volunteers

**EXTERNALLY**

Use on website; basis of blogs; social media

Visitor information

Include in grant applications

In advocacy initiatives

An evangelism and communication tool

With ‘silent’ or lapsed United Church people;

With the wider community empathetic to the United Church’s positions and actions in social justice, equity and environment

Share with presbytery and ecumenically

**SHARE YOUR NARRATIVE BUDGET WITH THE WIDER UNITED CHURCH:
send a copy along to** stewardship@united-church.ca