

# THE NARRATIVE BUDGET

## "Telling Your Congregation's Mission Story"

(3rd Edition; 1999...to replace our previous booklet entitled "A Declaration for Mission")

### INTRODUCTION

The community of faith at St. James understands mission and ministry. For the past 3 years they have used a narrative budget to ensure that the mission of their community is expressed in clear, concrete terms; both within the community and beyond. Each year the budget is an expression not only of their mission and ministry, but also of their vision for the future.

This manual will provide you with a process to transform your congregational budget from dollar figures to the story of mission and ministry that they represent, because:

#### **A budget tells a story.**

No matter what process is used to determine the final totals, a congregation makes its boldest theological statement each year when it adopts its budget; just as we, as individuals, express the depth of our faith through our stewardship.

#### **A budget is a theological statement.**

It reflects the community of faith's

- concept of what the church is;
- belief about the nature of God;
- commitment to stewardship and the Gospel.

#### **A budget reflects the congregation's statement or understanding of purpose.**

Some congregations have developed and articulated their purpose in a format called a "Mission Statement." In these cases, the budget should become an intentional reflection of that Mission Statement or an understanding of purpose which the congregation shares.

When members of a congregation can see that their budget addresses real needs in the lives of people, and that their involvement is vital in supporting such mission, they are more likely to:

- give generously
- discuss the needs
- tell the mission story to others
- see their own stewardship as an expression of faith and a declaration for mission

#### **What is a Narrative Budget?**

- A way of presenting a congregation's yearly budget in descriptive terms.
- A way of effectively interpreting the financial needs and expenses of a congregation, while demonstrating

what mission is being supported by their givings.

- A way of helping people relate their giving of time, talent and treasure to the congregation's ongoing mission.

#### **What about the Line Budget?**

- Line budgets are a necessary part of the financial management of the congregation's resources.
- A narrative budget is not intended to replace a line budget, but to supplement it.
- When the only budget presented is the usual line format, the mission story can be lost.

#### **Why use a Narrative Budget?**

- As an educational tool; it increases each member's knowledge of the tangible ways that their offerings are ministering to others in the community and around the world.
- To help members develop an increased sense of participation and commitment to the congregation's ministry and mission.
- It clarifies what mission the congregation is supporting and allows members to make necessary adjustments to the priorities in order to fulfill their purpose or "Mission Statement."

#### **Who is involved in the process of Narrative Budgeting?**

Although everyone in the congregation should have input into the development of the budget, when this is impractical (or impossible) the group working on a narrative budget should consist of people who represent the different aspects of the congregation's life, i.e.:

- treasurer and chairperson of the board
- chairpersons of all congregational committees and groups (Christian Education, Music, Outreach, etc.)
- representation from staff and ministry personnel
- someone who can provide solid biblical understandings for the connections between mission and stewardship
- a person who can and would be willing to take clear and concise notes throughout, as well as write up the final material

Having selected the members of your Narrative Budget Task Group, before starting you need:

- copies of your congregation's Mission Statement (if you have one)
- copies of your congregation's line budget
- copies of the worksheet included in this resource
- pens, pencils, markers, flipchart (or chalk and chalkboard), calculators, etc.

## You are ready to begin...

### Step 1

- Have members of the group transpose the line budget items and their assigned dollar amounts into the first and second columns of the worksheet.

### Step 2

- Look over the list of expenditures from the line budget and, as a group, talk about the types of mission and ministry your congregation is involved in. Make a list of these categories.
- Across the top of the remaining worksheet columns, list the categories, i.e.: worship, pastoral care, Christian education, mission beyond the community, evangelism, etc. (it's wise not to select too many categories)
- Write one brief sentence to describe what each area of ministry and mission means to the group members.

### Step 3

- Assign each line budget item to a ministry/mission category by placing the dollar amount in the appropriate column.
- In many cases, it is clear which items match a category. However, salaries, benefits, church building maintenance, etc., may be active in more than one category. This means the group will need to determine what percentage of the budgeted amount is to be included in each of the ministry/mission categories.
- When all items have been identified into the appropriate category, total each column on the worksheet.

### Step 4

- For each ministry/mission category on your worksheet, write down on your flipchart or chalkboard some examples of what happens because of this ministry/mission.  
(note: It may be helpful to contact the resource people involved in particular programs, in order to hear the story first hand and show the benefit of the money being spent)

#### Example:

**Pastoral Care:** \$\$\$ (total of category column)

- 10 visitors; 147 visits
- counselling for marital problems by minister
- support in bereavement by minister and laity
- worship training for elders and worship committee
- flowers for sick/hospitalized
- cassette tape ministry for shut-ins
- hospital visitation program
- having the sanctuary available for personal prayer

throughout the week

- providing a listening ear on the phone
- secretary who can connect people in need to people who can help them

Now, with the help of your writer, compile this work into a brochure or handout which profiles your narrative budget. Include your congregation's name, budget year, category titles, dollar totals, and a description of each ministry/mission area as you see in the example on page 3.

### Step 5

- Develop a communication plan and strategy for sharing your congregation's narrative budget throughout the year.
- Consider the following ways of "telling your congregation's mission story:"
  - a) use posters and bulletin inserts
  - b) highlight one ministry/mission area each week/month
  - c) have people speak in worship, at meetings, etc. about the special ministry in which they are active  
Be sure to include all groups and ages
  - d) request a time slot on your local TV or radio station to "tell the story"
  - e) have every group connected to the faith community take time to share, discuss and reflect on the narrative budget
  - f) plan a special weekend or workshop to interpret your ministry/mission story
  - g) share the story at presbytery
  - h) share it in the community newspaper
  - i) make a video or slide presentation based on the ministry/mission that is happening in your congregation
  - j) plan a presentation breakfast/luncheon/dinner to show the narrative budget to the congregation
  - k) incorporate your narrative budget into your Annual Visitation Program (or other stewardship commitment program) and New Member Classes.
  - l) in whatever ways possible, take time in worship and community gatherings to share and celebrate your participation in your areas of ministry and mission
  - m) above all, be creative...and be enthused...

### Step 6

- Reflect and plan for the future.  
Does your congregation have a Mission Statement?  
If yes, is your narrative budget a true reflection of your Mission Statement?

If no, what might need to happen to begin the process of developing a Mission Statement? What are the short term plans and goals of your congregation? Long term plans and goals?

# Worksheet

## Sample Narrative Budget (One Year) St. James Church

This narrative budget represents the line budget passed by the congregation in December. The amounts have been allocated to categories which describe in narrative fashion the mission and ministry of St. James.

### 1 **Worship** \$24,737

St. James is built on the strength of its worship.

In worship we gather as a community of faith to help us celebrate God's presence and discern God's call to mission and ministry in our world. Our ministry personnel in consultation with the music director and the worship committee prepare most of our worship services. Lay people provide leadership in worship on a regular basis through reading scriptures and **Minutes for Mission**. They often provide leadership for the whole service. A well cared for worship space is important to us.

*This area of ministry includes:*

- Choir and music
- Sunday Bulletins
- Funerals
- Weddings
- Other special services
- Scripture reading, greeters, ushers
- Worship Resources
- Decorating of the sanctuary

### 2 **Wider Church** \$7,836

St. James supports the mission and ministry of the wider church in a variety of ways. Part of that is through our national mission fund which helps support the work of our denomination. We are an active and vital part of our presbytery and our conference. We are represented in the different courts of the church by our ministry personnel and by lay delegates. We have access to many resources provided by our denomination.

*This area of ministry includes:*

- Presbytery and Conference (synod, diocese, etc.)
- Our national mission fund

### 3 **Christian Development** \$15,972

Through Christian nurture each one of us grows in our knowledge of God and what it means to be the people of God in our world. We provide for education of children and youth through the Church School, mid-week groups, and our youth group. Adults have the opportunity to participate in Bible Study groups and groups on issues of special interest. As we have the opportunity to discuss our faith together we are better equipped to live as God's people in our world today. We try to maintain bright, welcoming classrooms and meeting rooms for our children, youth and adults.

*This area of ministry includes:*

- Church School curriculum and program
- Bible Study group
- Explorers
- Sponsorship of Scouts and Cubs
- Discussion groups on issues
- Church library

### 4 **Evangelism, Outreach** \$16,361

As the people of God, we recognize that we are called to mission and ministry in the world around us. We do not live alone in this world. We are called to seek justice and equality for others and to reach out to others offering care and support. We offer space for various groups to meet at St. James.

*This area of ministry includes:*

- Support for our national mission fund
- Our denominational magazine
- Educational work around social issues and justice
- Supporting the local foodbank
- Support for the local shelter for the homeless

# 5

## Pastoral Care \$9,144

We offer ongoing pastoral care to the households in our congregation. We respond to special needs for pastoral care in times of crisis such as illness or bereavement.

Pastoral care is often needed during times of significant change in people's lives such as marriage or the birth of a child. Our ministry personnel and members of our congregation are involved in providing such pastoral care. As we care for each other in these ways, we are able to both share and experience the love of God.

**This area of ministry includes:**

- Visits to hospitals and nursing homes
- Premarital and marital counselling
- New member and baptism visits
- Bereavement counselling
- Tape ministry to shut-ins

### Narrative Budget Worksheet

Column One	Column Two	Ministry Areas				
Line Budget	\$	Worship	Wider Church	Christian Development	Evangelism/ Outreach	Pastoral Care
Salaries & Benefits						
-Ministry Personnel	\$ 27,670.00	\$ 11,528.00	\$ 2,306.00	\$ 4,614.00	\$ 4,611.00	\$ 4,611.00
-Secretary	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 1,050.00		\$ 900.00	\$ 600.00	\$ 450.00
-Caretaker	\$ 5,500.00	\$ 1,834.00		\$ 1,833.00	\$ 900.00	\$ 933.00
-Organist	\$ 3,200.00	\$ 3,200.00				
Housing Allowance	\$ 7,200.00	\$ 3,000.00	\$ 600.00	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,200.00	\$ 1,200.00
Church Assessments	\$ 3,430.00		\$ 3,430.00			
National Mission Fund	\$ 8,000.00		\$ 1,500.00		\$ 6,500.00	
Church School	\$ 1,700.00			\$ 1,700.00		
Youth Group	\$ 200.00			\$ 200.00		
Study Groups	\$ 200.00			\$ 200.00		
Stationery/Supplies	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 800.00		\$ 600.00	\$ 200.00	\$ 400.00
Denominational Magazine	\$ 400.00				\$ 400.00	
Music	\$ 500.00	\$ 500.00				
Flowers	\$ 300.00	\$ 150.00				\$ 150.00
Worship Supplies	\$ 200.00	\$ 200.00				
Office Equipment	\$ 500.00	\$ 250.00		\$ 125.00	\$ 125.00	
Cubs/Scouts	\$ 150.00			\$ 150.00		
Resource Library	\$ 400.00			\$ 400.00		
Outreach Funds	\$ 1,000.00				\$ 1,000.00	
Building						
-Utilities	\$ 6,500.00	\$ 1,625.00		\$ 3,250.00	\$ 625.00	\$ 1,000.00
-Maintenance	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 600.00		\$ 800.00	\$ 200.00	\$ 400.00
<b>Totals</b>	<b>\$ 74,050.00</b>	<b>\$ 24,737.00</b>	<b>\$ 7,836.00</b>	<b>\$ 15,972.00</b>	<b>\$ 16,361.00</b>	<b>\$ 9,144.00</b>



Worship



Wider Church



Christian Development



Evangelism/ Outreach



Pastoral Care

## Your Congregation's Narrative Budget Worksheet

Column One	Column Two	Ministry Areas <i>(please enter these titles as you see fit)</i>				
Line Budget	\$\$\$	Worship	Wider Church	Christian Development	Evangelism/Outreach	Pastoral Care