Building a Narrative / Missional Budget

Stewardship Task Team
NACCC Growth Ministry Council
What is a narrative budget? Why use it?
A narrative or missional budget is a representation of the line item budget in simple, easy-to-read descriptive terms. It transforms a line item of money and expenses into an exciting picture of ministries and missions of the congregation. Research studies indicate churches often fail to communicate the value of the ministries they provide and the changes occurring in personal lives through ministries. Contributors, therefore, have a limited understanding of the use of their gifts or relationship with those receiving ministry benefits. A line item budget is an effective tool for the committee on finance to manage financial resources. It is not an effective means for interpreting those ministries or their impact. On the other hand, the narrative budget helps members of the congregation understand what the church is doing in ministry, evangelism, discipleship training, and missions. It is a connecting link between the contributor and the church’s ministries. A well-composed narrative budget will educate and inspire everyone. And remember, a picture is worth 1,000 words!

Where do we start?
Form a small, special committee of representatives from the finance, budget development, and/or stewardship committees, the church staff, and a skilled writer and graphic artist.
1. Review the line item budget and group budget items by ministry areas, such as worship, education, youth, missions, etc. Five or six categories is sufficient. Avoid “Building Maintenance” and “Salaries” as categories.
2. Review the congregation’s mission statement. Creatively describe the various ministries of the congregation as they fulfill the mission statement.
3. Consider pro-rating all salaries, building operational costs and overhead as well as program funds into specific ministry areas. If 45% of the pastor’s time is related to worship, pro-rate 45% of the salary and benefits to worship.
4. Write one or two descriptive paragraphs for each ministry area. Use examples that paint a picture of the ministry. Enable readers to understand the impact the ministries have in changing lives. Use stories to illustrate the ministries’ effectiveness during the previous year. Picture new or expanded ministry needs as the rationale for increased funding.

5. Provide a positive, clear explanation of significant funding changes, whether they are proposed increases or decreases.

6. Expand the reader’s horizons by identifying several relevant and exciting additional or future ministries that could be undertaken with funding beyond the budgetary financial projections.

7. Consider a pie chart that uses ministry areas to depict the budget visually. Other pictures of ministry in action are helpful.

8. Prepare the narrative budget in an attractive, inviting, readable brochure format. Colored paper, if nothing else.

9. Determine ways to use the narrative budget most effectively to communicate the exciting message of ministry throughout the congregation.

**Example**

**Introduction:**
In looking at the mission and ministries of the church, we identify that we are called by God and commissioned by Christ to serve and work in five significant areas of ministerial importance: meaningful and spirit-filled worship; care and strengthening of our church family; missional service beyond church; spiritual development and Christian education for both the children of our church and the adults; and fellowship and collaborative work within our associations and our community as a whole. These areas of mission and ministry have always been important to the life of First Congregational Church and after 180 years, continue to be where our time, tithes and talents go.
Meaningful and spirit-filled worship
The gathering of the church family into times of prayer, praise and worship is one of the first things that comes to mind when we think “church”. Over the course of the year, we have gathered for 107 Sunday worship and special services (seasonal worship, Rejoicing Spirits). Each service has included spiritual expression and scripture teaching. Our traditional service includes the musical gifts of our remarkable musicians. Sermons have included lectionary texts as well as our favorite Jesus stories and our favorite Old Testament stories. We have gathered in both the Parlor and our historical sanctuary, recently restored to its glory. Together, we have done what is intended for worship – praised God for His many gifts, learned more about our Savior and planned ways to carry out what God has called us to do. Over the course of the year, our attendance has grown. We have added our monthly Rejoicing Spirits ministry and worship service, gathering children and adults with disabilities, their family members and caregivers. This time has been a spirit-filled hour of worshipful joy.

In the coming year, we would like to increase the opportunities for Rejoicing Spirits worship and activities as well as small group study. We also hope to share the wonderful story of First Congregational Church and the church family we enjoy, bringing more people into our time of worship.

Cost for this area of ministry: $41,943
(This total includes a percentage of the pastor’s salary and benefits, our musical staff, housekeeping, office supplies, maintenance supplies, facility costs and utilities.)

The budget then includes similar examples for each area of the church’s missions and ministries. The last line of the narrative or missional budget reads: A detailed line-item budget is available in the church office should anyone wish to review it.

June, 2015