**A Budget is a Statement of Faith**

What does your church’s annual budget represent?

Is it a proud menu of the hopes, dreams and missionary ministries your congregation wants to accomplish in the year to come?

Or is it a life-support prescription for how the congregation expects to pay the staff, keep the lights burning, the staff paid and property maintained?

In a workshop when she was stewardship officer for the Episcopal Church, the late Terry Parsons gave this “Devil’s Dictionary” definition of a church budget: “It is the means by which we notify the Lord of the limitations we intend to impose on his gifts for the coming year.”

If we view the budget — and present it to our congregations —as an administrative necessity to ensure proper financial management, then we shouldn’t be surprised to wind up with bare-bones measures that are grudgingly funded. If funded at all.

But if we present the budget to our congregations as opportunities to invest in the Reign of God and stretch ourselves to see how much we can do with even the nickels and dimes God has given us, then the possibilities increase.

In the end, a budget is a statement about how a congregation views the future. Do your people trust that ours is the God of abundance who rewards faithful stewards and will stand behind servants who proclaim the Reign of God? If an outsider looked at your budget, what would he or she conclude about your congregation’s faith?

And what would be a “God’s Dictionary” definition of a church budget? How about, “It is the means by which we make the most of the abundance the Lord is giving us.” Hmmm. That will look nice on the cover of the annual report.

--Rob Blezard

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