



Moving ministries forward, *together.*

Financial Transparency Tips

- 1. Analyze giving trends first.** Review the last three years of offering income and see if there's a giving pattern. Does most of the congregation give during the last six weeks of the year? Or are the majority giving each week, once a month, etc.?
This is important as sharing weekly giving in a bulletin is a misrepresentation if most of the church isn't giving on a weekly basis. A church which receives a large percent of its offering income during Q4 isn't in as much financial trouble as it implies in the month of April, say, if it shares giving in terms of what's needed each week/what was given last week and there's a deficit at that point in the year.
If weekly reporting is needed to keep people informed, consider sharing a comparison of income and expenses ("last Sunday" and "same Sunday last year").
- 2. Agree on a message.** Congregations that hear talk of money only as "We need more money to pay the bills" are often not motivated to give more. Be clear on your message:
"We have so much to do in our community and in the world, God is calling us to be a part of His work, we can't let a shortfall keep our congregation from answering."
Be sure every communication about money is tied to mission and ministry.
- 3. Make numbers meaningful.** What kind of financial information illustrates that the church is making a difference in the lives of its members and neighbors? Do your members see that their financial support is having a positive impact?
Give dollars meaning by telling the story of your budget. For example, share the church's electric bill for a certain month and then list all the ministry that happened that month when the lights were on.
Include a "Did you know?" in the bulletin that speaks to the money/ministry connection. "Last week our tithes and offerings traveled the world as we made a gift to support the Board of World Mission's clinic in Ahaus, Honduras." Or "Did you know we're saving money by _____ which means we have more money for _____ (ministry)."



Moving ministries forward, *together.*

- 4. Share the whole stewardship picture.** If the church chooses to include weekly details on income and expenses in its bulletin, consider creating a "Steward's Corner" insert which also provides details on time and talent alongside financial (treasure) details.
Share activities taking place (or that took place the prior week; ex. "We celebrate and give thanks for everyone who pitched in to make meals for our community supper" or "This week we celebrate all the musical gifts that make worship meaningful", etc.), outreach opportunities, quotes that convey the impact of people's service on those served, scripture verses that speak to stewardship....the goal is to share a complete stewardship picture of the church and its ministries, not just the finances.
- 5. Consider the pockets.** In his book *Shift 2.0*, Phil Maynard presents five motivations for giving: bills, missions, education, benevolence, and the building. As church leaders consider what financial information to share, be sure it touches on all five of these areas. If \$X came in last week, how were those dollars spent on bills, mission, education, benevolence, and the building? If the church needs \$X in income a month, how are those dollars going toward the five areas?

Final Thoughts:

Again, seeing shortfalls in church communications does not usually motivate people to give more; instead, it conveys a message that the church is in trouble and reinforces a scarcity/"we don't have enough" mindset that does not help mission and ministry grow.

As the Rev. Charles Lane wrote, "In the public life of your congregation, talk about money should focus on the mission and ministry of the congregation, not on the financial life of the congregation."

Never talk about the church's money apart from its mission.