

A BUDGET EMERGES

The preface to the budget is not:

“Our church needs this much money”

It will be more like:

- ⇒ **This is what we believe God is calling us to do in the next one/two years.**
- ⇒ **To do these things we will need this many people.**
- ⇒ **These particular skills will be needed.**
- ⇒ **They will spend this much time every month.**
- ⇒ **It will cost the parish this much money.**

This is a **narrative budget**; as opposed to the traditional budget which consists of a series of line items.

The budget will include the clear statement that this budget has come from extensive consultation with the people of the congregation, and this what they believe God is calling us to do.

It also includes the statement:

If this is what we believe then we also believe that God is calling us to provide the people with the necessary skills and time, and further that God expects us to meet the costs.

It will look something like this:

This is what we believe God is calling us to do _____

The following skills will be necessary _____

To do this will require this number of people _____

They will need to spend this amount of time each month _____

To do this will cost this much in the year _____

At this point we ask the people individually or in groups:

- ⇒ We believe this is what God is calling us to do.
- ⇒ We believe God expects us to supply all that is necessary.
- ⇒ **What part will you play personally?**

We are calling upon people to make their intention known, having already agreed that this is what they being called to do. We ask them to consider their intention on all levels, i.e. their skills, their time as well as their financial resources.

I have avoided using the word “pledge” because many feel this is too binding a word. None of us knows whether our life situation might change through the course of a year. Instead I use the word “intention”, and I find many prefer this word.

Here’s a warning: This process of year-round stewardship will only work if the people feel there has been genuine consultation and that their voices have been heard when discussions were taking place about what God is calling the church to do.

They will see this as their programme; their vision, and they will respond.

The process concludes on Advent Sunday with the offering of the intentions of the people at the Eucharist. This is Celebration Sunday, (or Intention Sunday or whatever you want to call it). It should be a time of celebration, and many parishes have a celebratory meal after the church service. The result of the intentions is announced at the end of the meal.

What has this year-round process achieved?

The people of faith have listened to God’s call to them, and have responded.

It affirms that this is their church

It affirms the validity of their ideas, opinions and visions.

The church is seen in a new light.

An air of excitement comes into the faith community again.