

The Stewardship JOURNAL

July 26, 2021

**From the Desk of Our
Executive Director**

**The Blessing of the Budget -
Part 2**

**Laying the Foundation for
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**Planning a Come-From-Behind
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Passing the Baton

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From the Desk of Our Executive Director

Welcome to another edition of *The Stewardship Journal*. Last week, we began a two-part series on budget planning written by MBC Pastor Brad Delaughter of FBC DeSoto, entitled, ***The Blessing of the Budget***. In this edition, Brad finishes his thoughts with practical advice about how to position your budget planning. I think these two posts are great reading not only for pastors but for your staff and finance teams. Thanks again, Brad, for sharing these timely thoughts.

Here is a preview of what you can expect in the pages that follow:

Laying the Foundation for Rebuilding Your Finances is the title of Stewardship Coach Mark Brooks' series on how to make up for the summer giving slump. Mark's article gives advice on the message and tools needed to see you rebuild any loss of offering the typical slump in summer giving causes.

In this week's **Bonus Section**, there is a step-by-step plan for how you can hold a come-from-behind offering centered around Labor Day. You might not follow the plan exactly as it is laid out, but it provides some ideas for how you can benefit from a special offering this Labor Day.

Passing the Baton is the **Missions and Ministry** "offering talk" for Sunday, August 1. By focusing on what giving is accomplishing at your church, we believe it is easier to motivate people to give. Feel free to edit and adapt the offering talk to your church culture and context.

Remember, if you know someone who would like to receive the *Journal*, please send them this link for easy signup: <https://mobaptist.org/stewardship/stewardship-journal/>.

Let us hear from you! We are looking for stories of stewardship success from our churches. If you have a story to tell, contact Rob Phillips at rphillips@mobaptist.org. Your story, like Brad Delaughter's, could be exactly what another pastor needs. Together we can make this Journal even better.

Advancing the Gospel!



Dr. John Yeats

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The Blessing of the Budget – Part 2

Pastor Brad Delaughter, FBC DeSoto

Last week, in Part 1, I discussed the blessing the budget can be to the church, even though it may not feel like a blessing going through the budgeting process. The budgeting process can be a blessing to the church because it can help the pastor and staff dream big. The pastor and staff need the freedom to dream for their prospective ministries. The budgeting process is also a blessing as it allows the pastor to cast a vision before the church. By casting a compelling vision, the pastor can help the church envision how this year's budget moves the church toward the vision of the future.

This week, we will move our attention to the nuts and bolts of budget planning. In its simplest form, budget planning is stewardship. A church that encourages healthy biblical stewardship to its members should also practice wise stewardship itself, and this is done through the budget process.

Before examining three approaches to the budget planning process, I want us to understand that no budget planning process is the same because no church is the same. As Southern Baptists, we are autonomous churches, each having the freedom and authority to make our budgets and structures meet our needs. The budget process is different for every church, based on a church's unique structure and needs. With that said, there are three ways to approach the budget planning process.

1. Zero-Balance Approach

The zero-balance approach to budgeting is as simple as it sounds. Each year, every line item is brought to \$0.00, and the budget is developed from there. This allows the staff and finance committee to start fresh each year. This means that there is no carry-over from unused funds from the previous year. Each program is reviewed through a needs-based concept. If a church desires to utilize a zero-balance approach, I would suggest beginning the budget process as early as possible, as this approach is a time-consuming one.

2. Line-Item Approach

A line-item approach to budgeting is vastly different from a zero-balance approach. Many organizations used a line-item approach due to its efficiency. In a line-item approach, individual, line-item budgets are carried over from the previous year after the line has initially been justified to keep. This type of budgeting is beneficial because it causes less work on the staff and finance committee. A disadvantage to this type of approach is that some weak programs, which may need to be discontinued, are simply allowed to endure because they are carried over from the previous year.

3. Ministry Focus Approach

A ministry focus approach allows healthy features of both the zero-balance approach and the line-item approach. In a ministry focus approach, each ministry item is evaluated and adjusted accordingly. This perspective recognizes that ministry fluctuates and allows the flexibility needed to adjust to change year to year. At the same time, a ministry focus approach allows fixed costs like debt, salaries, and utilities to be carried over from the previous year with minor adjustments as needed.

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Each of these three approaches has advantages and disadvantages. Each church must decide which works best for their particular ministry setting.

When discussing the approaches to church budgeting, it is vital to understand several important concepts. Understanding these concepts is critical since no two budget items are created equal. A church may desire to spend money on a new bus, but it does not have the funds to pay the electric bill in the winter. A pastor may want to start a new ministry line to minister to the homeless, but doing so will require taking money from Sunday School literature. It will benefit the pastor and finance committee to evaluate the budget through three lenses to assist in this decision-making process.

A. Fixed-Budget Items

These are items that will need funding regardless of what is taking place in the church. These items include the normal slate of fixed items of any organization, such as salary, insurance, and utilities.

B. Ministry Items

Ministry items are things that the church needs to do and even wants to do, but the necessity of each item varies. A church needs to have quality discipleship literature, and it may also need to pay for a nursery worker. A church may want to conduct a sports ministry each year, but the church also wants to begin a mission outreach. The key to making these decisions is to place each need/desire against the church's mission statement. If a particular ministry helps support the church's mission, try to fund it as much as possible. If a ministry, no matter how favorable it may be, does not support the church's mission, it needs to be cut.

C. Ministry Wish List

This is not a joke point. Each church has a wish list, a list of things it would love to do if it had the money. The church may see a major need coming in the future. In my previous church, we had to replace three air conditioner units in one summer. Because of this, the finance committee began setting aside money for future repairs. A ministry wish list allows the pastor and staff to be creative in long-term planning and slowly move the church to the desired direction as it is able.

I pray that these tips will help you in the budget planning process and view the process as a blessing and not as a burden.

God Bless.

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Current Events and Relevant Thoughts From:

The Stewardship Coach

Mark Brooks

Laying the Foundation for Rebuilding Your Finances



How do you rebuild your finances in the middle of summer? For one thing, you can't merely sit around wringing your hands about the decline in giving. You must act. The longer you wait to act, the deeper the hole you will find yourself in. Any chance of making your budget will become more difficult. That is why every year I start coaching about a come-from-behind strategy and provide a playbook to do so.

<https://acts17generosity.com/shop/recovering-the-lost-offering-of-covid-19/>

If you have ever built a house or a new facility at your church, you know how important the foundation is. The same is true when it comes to a plan for making up a giving gap. So, let's start by laying the right foundation with this edition of *The Coach*, entitled, ***Laying the Foundation for Rebuilding Your Finances***. Let's begin with crafting the message of your appeal.

The Right Message

Your first step is to craft a message that matters. Dollars follow a vision. Your vision is what drives people to give you more money. Thus, every appeal needs a driver for the vision to penetrate and capture the hearts and, ultimately, the wallet of your donors. The more compelling the driver, the more likely you are to get a response.

Every "ask" needs a driver. What's a driver? The driver is the message or story you are communicating about *why* people should give to your appeal. There is no better driver to achieve generosity than a vision *if* it is communicated effectively.

Let's make a case for your vision! When I work with a client for a significant giving initiative, I start by asking the pastor to write out the vision behind whatever we are raising money for. On one page, write a broad overview of what we are raising money for. Focus on the "why" behind the offering. It's not about money but reaching people.

Your message is your vision, and the better you craft that message, the more money you will raise. Take time to think through how to best craft a message for the vision driving this appeal to recover the lost offering of COVID19. See the Bonus Section in Volume 8 Issue 28 sent out on July 12. Pastor, while you work on that have someone work on...

The Right Tools

Your vision is the driver, but the best driver in the world is worthless without **effective vehicles to drive the vision to those you want to impact**. In this section, I will share the essential tools you need to launch your come-from-behind giving strategy effectively.

What tools should you have in place? Here is my standard working list I give to churches of the tools you need.

1. **Dynamic website.** Your website is the first place people will visit. Make it a good one.
2. **Robust online giving platform, including text giving.** I partner with <https://gyve.com/>

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3. **Social Media platform and presence.** Social media is where people spend a great bulk of their time.
4. **Postage paid envelopes.** I know this sounds old school, but this can be a great tool if used properly.
5. **Extensive database of your donors.** A given is to have all your members' email addresses.
6. **A mass email platform.** Find the tool that suits your church database best.
7. **Offering talks.** On-campus or live streaming, it is essential that each offering time has a talk connecting your vision to giving.

Remember the old saying, don't put all your eggs in one basket? When it comes to a 21st century communication plan, you must use all the tools in your toolbox to get your message out.

Look in my Bonus Section for a concise Right Plan for a come-from-behind offering built around Labor Day.

With the right message, the right tools, and the right plan you can close your giving gap and rebuild your finances! I have a plan for that: <https://acts17generosity.com/shop/recovering-the-lost-offering-of-covid-19/>.

Speaking of plans, what is your plan for raising the dollars over and above your operating budget? "Our sanctuary is 14 years old." That was a comment to me in an email from an XP at a leading church in America. His point? Their "new" sanctuary needs massive updates. Where is *that* money going to come from? Everyone reading this has some infrastructure issues that are simply too big for the budget. Others are dusting off those building plans and thinking, is now the time to move forward?

How to Raise Capital Dollars in a COVID World – In my next issue, I am beginning a series of newsletters around this topic. I've been saying for years, capital campaigns are not dead; they are just different. I think this will be a great series for leaders twelve to eighteen months out from a major project. I'm going to give you my best view of how COVID has impacted giving, as well as practical ideas on how to raise the dollars you need.

Get the help you need for a price you are happy with! I'm launching The Digital Capital Campaign; my live, in person training on how to run your own campaign. I teach you the same principles I have used to help raise \$100 million or to raise \$100K. <https://acts17generosity.com/memberships/digital-capital-campaign/>

Let's start rebuilding your finances!



Mark Brooks – The Stewardship Coach
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Bonus Material

Here is a brief plan of action for a Labor Day offering:

- Finalize the three offering messages used for the special offering and who will deliver them. Focus on what the church is accomplishing and, most of all, plans to accomplish in the fall. I have samples for you later in this manual.
 - Prepare any bulletin inserts, newsletter comments, webpage, etc. You want the message of your special offering to be trumpeted across all your platforms.
 - Set up through your online giving pull-down menu a line that designates the special offering you are going to hold. This allows you to track your results better.
 - Monday, August 16, send out a letter to all your giving and ministry leaders. See the sample letter later in this manual. Also, consider inserting a postage-paid self-addressed envelope with every direct USPS appeal you send. See the sample at the end of this manual. One goal for any and every appeal is to make it easy for people to give.
 - Sunday, August 22, two weeks before the special offering for a Labor Day appeal, announce the special offering from the platform of the church right before the time of offering. See the sample provided later in this manual.
 - Monday, August 23, two weeks out for a Labor Day appeal, use social media accounts to highlight the special offering. Show donors what giving to your special offering will accomplish. I recommend at least one to two posts a day. Make sure each post contains a link to give online.
 - Monday, August 30, send out a snail mail appeal about the special offering. See the sample at the end of this manual. Remember to include a self-addressed, postage-paid envelope.
 - Thursday afternoon, September 2, send an email blast for a Labor Day appeal with an embedded link to your giving page, asking people to give right then! See the sample.
 - Sunday, September 5, send a text appeal asking for a gift.
 - Monday morning, September 6, send out one final email blast encouraging participation in the special offering. See the sample that follows.
 - Write notes and emails thanking those that gave with a special focus on first-time givers and send on Tuesday, September 7.
 - Sunday, September 12, from the platform, announce the results of the special offering focusing on what the offering will allow you to accomplish for missions and ministry in the weeks to follow.
 - Monday, September 13, across all platforms, celebrate the results of the special offering for the next few days. Provide a link to your giving portal so that people can still give.
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Missions and Ministry Moment: Setting Up Your Offering

Every week we provide what are called offering talks. We have found that the easiest way to see an increase in giving is to improve how you approach the offering time. Instead of telling people they don't have to give, we like to show them what giving to a church accomplishes. By showing people your mission and ministry focus, you create a desire in your attendees to *want* to give to support that life change. That's why we call them Missions and Ministry Moments.

You can read them exactly how we write them or use them as idea starters for how the message would fit your culture and context. Our goal is to develop lifetime stewards, but we must get the first gift to begin them on the journey. Here is this week's offering talk.

The following Missions and Ministry Moment is the 10th of the 15 offerings of the 2021 Summer.

Passing the Baton

Are you enjoying the Olympics? I am! I love watching all the events, but one event I like is the relays in track. I love it because it is based upon the speed of individual runners working together as a team. You can have the fastest runners, but if you can't navigate the passing of the baton, you will be beaten by a team that might be slower than you. The transition from one runner to the next is crucial to the success of the whole team. One transition can mess up an otherwise great team. No matter how fast you are, if you can't hand off the baton, your team will not win the gold.

Relays remind me of our church. We have what we have because others gave and sacrificed. Look around you. All these facilities were provided for us by members who went before us. We would not be making the impact here in our city were it not for those great saints of God who believed that our town needed a church like ours. They were the first out of the blocks, if you will. They, through their time, talents, and resources, built this church. Without them, some of you would not be in the spiritual place you are. We owe these runners for God a debt of gratitude that only Heaven will be able to tell us about.

Each generation here has a responsibility to keep us in the race God has called us to. We are not built upon one person or one personality. It takes all of us to accomplish what God has for us. The past generations here have passed the baton to us. We are each called to run the race set before us. Yet, it is our responsibility to carry that baton to the next generation. Our race is not for a medal that will perish but to reach people with the love of Christ!

Every time we take up an offering, you help sustain all the work, all the ministry, and all the mission activities we do. Your generous gifts allow our church to run the race God has for us. Your gifts fuel us forward. Your gifts help assure that we faithfully carry out the vision of past generations who passed the baton to us. Your gift helps assure the next generation will have a place to worship and serve God. So, this morning, as we focus on the offering, think about it as a passing of the baton. Let's give so that not only the present can be fully funded but also the future!
