

Church Office Management

The person in charge of the church office coordinates, consolidates, communicates and supports the ministries of the church.

Common Practices

The manager of the church office may be the pastor or a paid or volunteer secretary. A few churches have an administrator who manages the office. Most secretaries or other office managers are accountable to the pastor unless other procedures have been established.

There are all kinds of activities in the church office. Official papers, church school children, announcements of upcoming events, requests for marriages, people in grief and pledge payments can swirl around the manager in one morning.

It is important to find people to work in the church office who can represent the church well. These people need to be compensated adequately for their work. Pastors may have no training in office skills but should know something about administration. It is a poor use of the pastor's seminary training to have him or her type bulletins and may result in hasty work.

People who manage the office need to receive fair compensation and fringe benefits. Ask if your conference or association staff have guidelines.

Responsibilities

As you manage the church office you will be responsible for:

- **Coordinating** program schedules.

This involves scheduling meetings and room use; making sure the custodian, organist, choir director, church school teachers and pupils know what's scheduled; and having equipment in the right place at the right time.

- **Consolidating** information. The office is the nerve center where people find out "who, what, where and when" about the church.
- **Communicating** information. You may send meeting notices; prepare worship bulletins, newsletters and news releases; telephone people about their responsibilities; and talk with members and staff.
- **Supporting** ministries by keeping records, preserving documents, ordering supplies and linking the staff and church organizations.

Equipping the Church Office

Your church's program and the size of its budget will determine the kind of equipment you need. It may be better to rent equipment used infrequently or to send the work out so equipment won't need to be purchased. Church members familiar with determining cost effectiveness of equipment can help you assess the office equipment. Often there will be a church committee or board which is involved in equipping and maintaining the church office. Take into account the skills of the other office staff or volunteers and the amount of time they have available.

Consider the advisability of maintenance contracts.

Regardless of the size of the church and its budget, the church needs an office that is attractive, easy to work in safely, and big enough to be comfortable for its routine purposes.

Skills and Attributes Needed

- Ability to represent the church well under all conditions.
- Ability to handle details.
- Ability to deal with a variety of tasks at once.
- Ability to set priorities.
- Ability to maintain professional interpersonal boundaries and refer congregants to the pastor when appropriate.
- Ability to delegate.
- Ability to maintain confidentiality.

Ways to Increase Skills, Knowledge and Effectiveness

- Ask for a position description outlining responsibilities, expectations and accountability.
- Work with others for whom you provide services to determine what level of decisions require consultation or approval.
- Attend a workshop or course sponsored by your conference or association, a local college, or a technical school on time

management, decision-making, supervision, etc.

- Keep a record of how you spend your time and work on eliminating time-wasting habits or ways of doing things.
- Meet regularly with the pastor and other staff or volunteers to discuss problems and potential ones, to clear up questions and to keep informed.
- Ask the church to establish policies on equipment use, building use, keys, weddings, etc., so that you don't have to make decisions on your own every time someone makes a request.
- Ask to attend a Boundary workshop in the association or conference to help you understand appropriate boundaries in ministerial relationships.
- List the routine activities carried out in the church office. Is the space adequate for safety, confidentiality, and comfort? Consult with the appropriate person or church body to suggest improvements to increase effective functioning.