

Financial Officer or Treasurer

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Financial officers are responsible for proper receipt of all church money, keeping the church's financial records and disbursing the money in accordance with the wishes of the congregation usually expressed in a budget which the congregation adopts.

History and Background

Acts 6:1-6 records the selection of the seven who were of good reputation and full of the Spirit. One of their tasks was to handle the collection and distribution of the offerings. These were the forerunners of today's treasurers and financial secretaries. They held an important place in the early church.

At the time the church came to the American colonies, it was supported by taxation and government subsidy. When people came to the new land who were not part of the church, they didn't want to pay to support it. Then the church had to find new ways of support and new financial structures. In some cases the sexton (caretaker and gravedigger) collected pew rents and kept the records. In other cases the deacons were given financial responsibilities.

Common Practices

In some churches there is one person responsible for taking in the money and disbursing it. Other churches have one person for taking in the money and

keeping records and another for disbursing the money. Most churches have some kind of budget which indicates how the money is to be spent.

It's good to have one person taking in money (financial secretary, recording secretary, etc.) and a treasurer who pays bills and sends out money according to the payment schedule. At the end of each year as an additional safeguard for these people, an audit by an outsider should take place.

Responsibilities

Your responsibilities will depend upon whether your duties are shared. Your responsibilities will include some or all of these:

- Managing the process of budget development, adoption and control.
 - Receiving and counting money.
 - Maintaining contributor records and making regular reports to members about their contributions.
 - Depositing money in the bank.
 - Letting the proper person know how much money has been deposited when there is a division of responsibility.
 - Disbursing, on proper authority, all funds. This includes salaries, utilities, Our Church's Wider Mission and other benevolences. Sometimes committees can make expenditures
- within budget limits without further authorization. In other cases, bills must be approved. These policies need to be understood. Payments to Our Church's Wider Mission should be made monthly to the conference office so that payment schedules can be met all across the church.
- Managing cash to assure its availability to meet obligations and to maximize income and accomplish the program goals. Sometimes there is a cash flow problem. If at all possible, this should be anticipated and brought to the attention of the governing board and pastor in time to do something about it. If pledge payments traditionally taper off in the summer, you can attack the problem before the summer and begin reminding people to pay their pledges before vacation. Whatever the cause, it is unfair for the disbursing agent to be forced to make decisions for which he or she has no authority.
 - Maintaining accounting records adequate for budget control and for making reports to the governing board and the congregation. This probably will mean monthly and annual reports.
 - Monitoring compliance with all local, state and federal laws related to finances, including taxability and liability.
 - Providing information to the stewardship committee about contributions.

- Investing church funds or making recommendations about investments.
- Auditing the records to assure that the system designed is being followed and is adequate.
- Bonding all people handling church funds. This can be done through the United Church Board for Homeland Ministries. Contact the office of the Executive Vice President, 700 Prospect Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44115.

Treasurer of an Organization

If you are the treasurer of a church organization, such as a youth group, women's organization, or couples' club, you'll be helped if you:

- Read this entire card. Much of the general information also applies to you.
- Make all payments by check.
- Record the checks both in your checkbook and in a separate ledger.
- In the ledger, list the number, date, and amount of each check, to whom the check is paid, and for what purpose.
- File a written request for each payment, such as a note from David Jones asking for reimbursement for last month's coffee and donuts for coffee hour.
- Reconcile your account each month. List your opening balance, income

and payments and reconcile that with your bank statement.

- Request that another person be responsible for receiving the income and depositing it.
- If you are responsible for receiving and depositing the income, enter that in your ledger, noting the date, amount, source and reason for the income.
- Give an up-to-date report on your organization's finances at each meeting.

Skills and Attributes Needed

- Basic understanding of accounting procedures.
- Trustworthiness.
- Honesty.
- Confidentiality.
- Attention to detail.
- Commitment to the church and its mission.
- Personal record of good stewardship and concern for the church's use of money.
- Ability to make clear written reports related to the goals and objectives of the church.
- Willingness to expand knowledge.
- A positive image of the task.

Ways to Increase Skills, Knowledge and Effectiveness

- Review the church constitution and bylaws to see that the authority is clear for what you are expected to do.
- Ask for a position description outlining responsibilities, expectations and accountability.
- Attend seminars and workshops or courses sponsored by the association or conference or local colleges or technical schools on accounting principles and practices.
- Explain your interest and ask to see the books of a civic organization you belong to, to compare how that's done with the church records.

Issues Facing the Church

- What is the relationship of the need for confidentiality about contributions and the need of the stewardship committee to know about donors?
- People use their money to indicate their likes and dislikes. You may be confronted with people who are upset about something. What is your responsibility?
- Increasingly we are told to bond people handling church money. How does that make you feel?

- As computers come into the church, recordkeeping is changing. How can you make the best use of computers so that people can be free to minister in other ways?
- Often the person disbursing money for the church struggles with how to pay all the bills without quite enough cash to do it easily. What is her or his responsibility at that point?

Questions

- Who are the financial officers in your church?
- What are the policies about payment in your church?
- Are there any responsibilities which you don't think are carried out well? If so, what might you do?

See: A-25 Ministry, A-26 Mission of Your Church, A-28 Nature of the Church, A-29 OCWM: Basic Support, A-46 UCC National Bodies, A-47 UCC Polity, A-48 UCC Special Appeals, B-11 Deacon, B-18 Mission Committee Member, B-28 Stewardship Committee Member, B-29 Trustee, C-3 Annual Meeting Planning, C-5 Budgeting, C-10 Communicating within the Church, C-13 Conflict Management, C-14 Decision-Making, C-17 Evaluating a Meeting or Program, C-18 Group Building, C-20 Groups, C-24 Investment Management, C-26 Listening Actively, C-28 Memorial Gifts, C-34 Planning in the Local Church, C-37 Problem Solving, C-38 Program Coordination, C-43 Report

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