

BUDGETING TO FAIL BUDGETING?

The typical budgeting plan is to set a financial goal and then to ask members to support it. It is a given that in any congregation of any size, there will be some member who does not make a pledge. This means that you have 2 basic options:

1. If you budget the perfect amount, you budget will be undersubscribed. You have therefore failed to get your budget subscribed.
2. If you budget the amount which will be subscribed, you have failed to budget the amount which will be contributed.

Consider as an alternative that you don't ask your members to pledge an amount, but rather to pledge a change in amount.

Presume you make a budget presentation and announce that the new year's program represents a weekly increase of \$200. Ask your members to put on the back of their attendance card their **change in contribution**. Could be more, no change, or sometimes less.

If in your budgeting process you presume the amount which was actually given (which includes the contributions of the non-pledger), and then add to that the net contribution commitments.

By doing that you have a real pass/fail budget. The non-pledger's contribution is naturally included in the amount actually given last year.

If the extra \$200 is not pledged, you know you have to trim the budget. If more than \$200 is pledged, you suddenly have some actual budget flexibility.

Some benefits of this method are:

1. Provides a clearly quantifiable goal for the budget. It is the same number as you had anyhow, it is just a clearer identity of what you are doing.
2. Will be appealing to those members who are uncomfortable with announcing budget amounts to anyone.
3. You will actually have a chance of announcing that the elders/deacons/leaders have made a budget and the congregation has subscribed it.
4. If the budget is not fully subscribed, the amount it misses will likely be minimal and will be a clear amount. You can go back to the congregation and say how much you are missing and ask for the rest. You can't do that by the conventional method.

There is one substantial disadvantage of this method. It isn't what you did last year. If you can get over that you will have a better budgeting process.

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IMPOSSIBLE FOR EVOLUTION: PROBABILITIES, PAGE 1

In a January 2005 article in "DOES GOD EXIST?" magazine titled "How Did the Universe Begin?" the author Ralph Epperson discussed the remote probabilities of various events occurring. Some of the statements he quoted and gave credence to are:

1. "Mathematicians can accurately measure the probability of anything occurring once they know the nature of the things that chance will be acting upon. (Uses flipping coins as a probability case in which the variables are known – heads or tails. Implies that scientists can know the nature of anything, which is simply not true)
2. "Any event which has a probability of less than one chance in 10^{110} cannot occur by chance. Its probability becomes zero, at least in our known universe."
3. "Some scientists have measured the chance of a replicating molecule occurring by chance at 10^{450} ."
4. "Frank Salisbury has calculated the probability of a typical DNA chain arising by chance to be 10^{600} ."
5. "Mike Stubbs has calculated the chance of insulin, an important protein hormone secreted by the pancreas, developing by chance at 3×10^{158} ."
6. "Sir Fred Hoyle, one of the leading scientists of this age, has computed the number of chances necessary for even the simplest life imaginable to have evolved by chance to be one chance in $10^{40,000}$."
7. "Dr. Harold Morowitz, professor of Molecular Chemistry at Yale University, has concluded that the odds of life creating itself by chance are one in 10 followed by one billion zeros!"

Mr. Epperson intended to demonstrate the remote probability of the various events, the unintended consequence of his article was to confirm that all the events are in fact possible.

Consider that you walk into a Las Vegas Casino and recognize that the chance of hitting their \$1,000,000 jackpot is in fact 1 in 1,000,000. Do you start counting and wait until 999,999 others have placed a bet \$1.00 and then place your bet for a sure thing? You do not. You know that the probability of winning is the same on the first \$1.00 bet as it is on the one millionth bet. A million to one odds against you, and you can win on the first bet.

Consider that you have accepted that life can form under the odds of one chance in $10^{40,000}$. The odds are very remote, but they in fact can happen on the first chance. When the atheists get you to agree that the event can happen even if the odds are remote, they have won the argument.

This is why atheists are predisposed to believe in anything which tends to demonstrate long periods of time. If they can convince Mr. Epperson and everyone else that an event is in fact possible even if under remote odds, and they convince you that there is an extremely long time, anything becomes possible.

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IMPOSSIBLE FOR EVOLUTION: PROBABILITIES, PAGE 2

Scientists can go through great probability studies to determine the remote prospects when all the molecules might actually be in the same place to make up a DNA chain. The problem with this is that just because the molecules land in the correct order, does not make it the DNA of a living thing. This point can be easily demonstrated. We can readily provide a set of all the molecules in the correct order. Every dead cell has this. When a dead cell has the DNA in the right order and is not "alive", what does it say for the scientist's calculation of remote possibilities.

They are calculating the remote possibility of molecules landing in the right place, at which time they encounter an impossible task – bring it to life. You do not have to wait a billion years for a chance molecular arrangement. Just bring a dead skin cell back to life. We do not know what the essence of life is, but it is not simply a convenient arrangement of molecules.

This means, Mr. Epperson, that when you challenge the probability of molecules landing in a proper order, you are mistakenly giving credence to the erroneous theories that life is simply an arrangement of molecules. You would do better to challenge the scientists that they neither know nor control the factors which make life, much less have the ability to calculate the odds of their occurrence. The calculations are not remote, they are impossible!

You are invited to

“Growth in our Generation”

At the 5th Annual Churches of Christ

Area Wide Men's Retreat

Feb. 27-28, 2009

At Camp Holy Wild

New Caney, Texas

Cost \$45.00 Per Person

(Note: All ministers at no charge)



Event starts with supper at 6:00 Friday evening and continues thru lunch at noon on Saturday.

Primary topic for this year:

INNER CITY EVANGELISM

Charlie Middlebrook (Impact), Les Rose (Impact), and Paul Woodward (Impact) will be speaking.

Wade Price (Memorial) and Harvey Davis (Impact) will be coordinating the singing program.

Jim Culpepper will present an update on the new work for the Spanish brethren in Spring Branch

For reservations or additional information: bbaugh@radoil.com

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CHURCH GROWTH: SWELLING / SHRINKING

Have you ever noticed how easy it is for a church in a new neighborhood to “grow” and how difficult it is for a church in an old neighborhood? The simple fact that a lot of members of the church are moving into your growing neighborhood becomes a significant factor on church size.

First, presume your congregation has 100 members and your service area is 10,000 people. Now, presume that 10 years later your congregation has 200 members and your service area has swollen to 20,000 people. In each case, 1 of 100 people in your service area are a part of the congregation. It is reasonable to state that the percentage of the new neighbors are members of the church as the old neighbors. One hundred members of the church have moved into your service area and placed membership in your congregation.

Functionally, your numbers simply swell as the neighborhood swells. Rather than achieving personal evangelism and spreading the Word, you have been a docking station for transferring members.

Alternately, if your service area were to shrink by 50% (for reasons such as losing a major industry) and your congregation only shrank by 45% you would effectively be growing. It might not feel good, but you would be increasing your market share of you service area.

Actual church growth is a change in the size of your congregation relative to the size of the service area.

The US population grew by 10.56% from 1990 to 2000. This growth rate comes from children of residents being born and from immigrants coming to the USA. In either case the children and new residents will be members of the church in approximately the same percentages as the existing residents. What this means is that if your church attendance increases by 10.56% (1% per year), your congregation is not growing, it is just swelling. Fulfilling the great commission is making the church grow something beyond 1% per year for the average congregation.

If your church is the same size it was ten years ago, it is likely shrinking.

CHURCH GROWTH IN SAN ANTONIO INNER CITY

There is an article by Joy McMillon about Alamo City Church of Christ in the inner city of San Antonio and its beginnings in the home of John and Earlene Massie on the Christian Chronicle's web site.

If you know of others who might be interested in knowing about our work and whereabouts please forward this to them. There is a place to make a comment if you wish and we will certainly enjoy reading it.

<http://www.christianchronicle.org/article2158627~SharingJesusWithSanAntonio>

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NEW SPANISH WORK IN SPRING BRANCH IN WEST HOUSTON

As of the first of the year, Jim Culpepper began a new work in the Spring Branch area which is focused on the Spanish speaking brethren (and future brethren and sisters). If you might be interested in helping in this work, contact Jim at Jim L. Culpepper & Associates, P. C., 9821 Katy Freeway, Suite 110, Houston, Texas 77024-1208, Telephone: 713-463-6300, Fax: 713-463-6301, or jim@culpepperlaw.com. Jim has been a leader in this work for many years and should be commended and supported in his new challenge. He will provide an update for this work at the Area Wide Men's Retreat on February 27-28.

FILL-IN PREACHERS

We are starting a pilot program to coordinate fill-in preachers for various congregations in the greater Houston Area. The presumption is that there are some larger congregations who have more men willing to present an occasional sermon than opportunities exist, and there are some smaller congregations where more opportunities exist than speakers.

Visit thearray.org and click on **FILL-IN PREACHERS** to see if any of the speakers / topics are interesting to you, or if you would like to add a topic to the list.

If you want to add a topic, you need to indicate your name, home congregation, phone number, and 1 to 4 topics. Each title and description of a topic should be 15-30 words. Send the list to info@thearray.org.

ARTICLES NEEDED

Whereas we are interested in articles which support the themes of this newsletter and articles of general interest, we want to request articles which oppose these viewpoints. It is educational to be exposed to and understand various points of view.

We would like to specifically invite an article which justifies the non-growth of a congregation from anyone who does not believe that church growth is God's plan.

SUSTAINED SCRIPTURAL CHURCH GROWTH CONFERENCE

We are considering sponsoring a conference on sustained scriptural church growth in the greater Houston area. If you would like to speak at such a conference, would attend, or be involved in any other way, let us know at info@thearray.com.

The conference would not address doing the same things to continue to not grow. It would be focused on what we can do to remain scriptural and grow.



MONEY PAGE

GUARANTEED CHURCH GROWTH

If your congregation does the following, BCE Publications guarantees that it will grow.

Poll your congregation three times at 6 months intervals with the following results:

- 50% of the members know who their elder is
- 50% of the members will say that a minister is their friend
- 50% of the members will say that they are uplifted by the song services
- 50% of the men will say that their input is considered before physical decisions are made
- 50% of the members will say they are an important part of the work
- 50% of the members will say they are aware of the goals of the congregation
- 50% of the members will say that they know what their part is in achieving your goals

GUARANTEE: For the first congregation which does this and does not grow by at least 10%, we will send \$1000 to the church related children's home of your choice in your name.

I have never met a person who said that if they did this their church would not grow. If your congregation is not growing, what have you got to lose? (Offer made since 2001)

IMPOSSIBLE FOR EVOLUTION?

We will offer \$100 to the first person who can explain how we could have violated the first law of thermodynamics and have come into existence without God.

We will offer \$100 to the first person who can explain how we could have violated the second law of thermodynamics and have existed forever without God.

(Offer first posted 8/08)

IMPOSSIBLE FOR EVOLUTION!

This publication continues (since 1991) to make a standing offer of \$100 to the first person who can give any reason (1 or more) as to why atheistic evolution is a better explanation for the universe and/or life than creation by God, The Father of Adam, Abraham, and Jesus; as revealed in the Bible.

We will also give you \$100 if we cannot give you 12 reasons why atheistic evolution is impossible as an explanation for our existence.

We will discuss this any place, any time, and in any forum.

(This offer has been made repeatedly since June of 1991 with no takers)

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AREA WIDE ACTIVITIES

Feb 7, 2009 Sun Valley Rescheduled Reunion, 2:00 0 5:00 at Clear Lake Church of Christ, 938 El Dorado Blvd., Houston, TX 77062. Donation of \$5 per person Or \$20 per family is suggested. Call 281-486-9350 for questions.

Feb 27-28, 2009 Area Wide Men's Retreat, Camp Holy Wilde, New Caney, Texas

HoustonCofC is a Yahoo group hosted by Steve Sandifer [steve.sandifer@sbcglobal.net] for the purpose of communicating Houston area news among the brethren. It is open to any member of the church at no cost.

The Christian Array Newsletter

This newsletter will be sent to members of the church on a monthly basis as an attempt to promote area wide activities and church growth. If you do not want to receive this newsletter, send an e-mail to info@thearray.org and it will be stopped.

If you know of anyone who would like to receive this newsletter, send their e-mail addresses to info@thearray.org. All past copies of the newsletter can be found on the website "thearray.org".

E-MAIL ADDRESSES

A goal of this newsletter is to develop a mailing list of as many members of the church as possible and to communicate church related information to as many members as possible. In that light, we would appreciate:

1. Your forwarding the church member e-mail addresses which you have.
2. Sending the directory of the congregation you attend or any other directories which you might have.
3. Give us an idea of how to collect church member e-mail addresses.

The Christian Array is dedicated to support the sustained scriptural growth of the churches of Christ. It is published by BCE Publications, a 501(c)(3) organization with Benton F. Baugh, Ph.D., P.E. as editor BCE is solely responsible for the content. Any announcements, requests for publication, or comments should be e-mailed to info@thearray.org.