

Fiscal Support Team

The elders are proposing a group of regular supporters to help decide budget priorities. This group, composed of those who participate in the voluntary pledge program, and who are willing to donate at least 5% of their income to the general fund, would become part of the regular budgetary process in Xenos for the budget year 1994. We anticipate that by including most of our committed supporters in the decision making for the budget, we will all gain added insight, more corporate understanding of the issues involved in the Xenos budget and greater ownership of our common goals. If the process seems to enhance the quality of decision making, it could be made a permanent part of our decision making process in years to come.

The process would work as follows:

1. First the elders meet with the management team for a three day retreat to go over spiritual goals in each division. The retreat usually happens in late September or early October. It is a strategic planning retreat which determines the direction of the fellowship in principle.
2. Based on the goals agreed to, the division coordinators work out their budget needs with department heads and other staff.
3. Approximately one month later, the elders would meet for the budget retreat, where they study the spending needs, interviewing one coordinator at a time. The coordinators go over the costs of attaining the goals agreed upon at the earlier retreat. The elders determine what is absolutely indispensable in their proposed budget (for instance, rent for our facility, salaries for our current essential staff, utilities, etc.). From this retreat, a maintenance budget and a wish list would be generated. The maintenance budget needs no discussion, because the items in it are all essential. It will be below the previous year's spending levels. The wish list would represent important discretionary spending for existing and proposed ministry.
4. Approximately one month after the budget retreat, the Fiscal Support Team would be convened for a weekend retreat. There, the results of the preparatory work would be covered, and the coordinators would present their wish lists, now coalesced into three to five modules of spending for each division. The modules would be arranged in ascending order, so that the more essential items would have to be funded before the less essential items could be funded. By breaking spending into modules, or groupings, the budgetary process will be simplified enough to deal with in a large group. The rationale for each module would be explained and discussed publicly. Then the group will vote to accept or reject each module. The modules adopted by a majority vote of the Fiscal Support Team will be added to the budget up to the level of overall permissible spending. Although it is not possible at this time to say what percentage of the overall budget would be under consideration at this meeting, the elders hope to bring 10% to 40% of the total Xenos budget into this forum for decision.

5. The Fiscal Support Team will share responsibility with the elders for raising the funds voted, and for explaining the budget to others. Whether an individual is in the majority or the minority on any given issue, it would be essential that we all agree we are bound by what the majority decides, and we will support the overall decision.

Reasons for Initiating This New Procedure

1. The elders feel the need for added input on the preparation of the budget. We are operating with shortfalls in giving at this time, which may indicate inappropriate decision making by the board, or lack of understanding on the part of membership. Whether we decide to seek more income or to cut spending, the elders will feel safer if we pool the wisdom of our most committed givers.
2. The elders want those who pay the majority of the bills in the church to have a voice in the direction of spending, in the growth of spending, or in any needed cuts. Although it has never been possible in the past to identify a group of people who rightfully should compose such a decision making body, today, with the pledge program, it is possible to identify the majority of our main fiscal supporters.
3. The elders want the church at large to have a deeper understanding of the issues involved in creating Xenos' budget. We believe a weekend like this one will create understanding, excitement about what we can accomplish, and increased prayer and motivation as people take ownership of the fellowship's goals.

Questions

1. **Aren't the elders supposed to lead the church in financial matters?** The elders would still be leading the church because they would have to approve the base budget. This would assure that essential ministries are being funded at least to a maintenance level. The elders, along with the management team, would also be determining what items are put forward for approval. This is the power of initiation, which constitutes leadership. Sharing leadership with members has always been an important policy for Xenos elders, but finance has never been included in any systematic way, mainly because the budgets are so complicated. This policy will bring finance into the arena of shared leadership like other areas of ministry.
2. **Who could participate in this Fiscal Support Team?** The Fiscal Support Team will be helping the elders make some very important decisions. These decisions will determine much of the future direction of the church. Responsibility and decision making power should go together. Therefore, it is essential that we avoid turning such important decision making over to any who we aren't sure are responsible in their financial support of the church. To this end, the following rules will govern who may participate in the retreat:
 - a. The participants must have Xenos as their primary church.

- b. Fiscal Support Team members must be authentic participants in the pledge program. They must have registered for the voluntary pledge program by September 15, 1993, and have performed on their pledge thereafter. If the program is continued for the 1995 budget year, an earlier date will be chosen for next year, probably in the early spring.
 - c. Participants must check a box on their pledge indicating that their pledge represents 5% or more of their gross annual income. Some exceptions will be made for the poor. They will have to disclose their financial problems and demonstrate that their inability to give 5% is due to conditions beyond their control. This provision is designed to identify serious, regular and responsible givers.
4. **What about the people who don't, or aren't able to participate in the team?** People who aren't involved in the Fiscal Support Team will be in the same position they always were. They will be notified about the budget in the annual report as in previous years. The Fiscal Support Team is a positive feature for those who qualify. It takes nothing away from other members.
 5. **Why pick the figure of 5%?** We do not consider 5% giving a high or admirable goal for most North Americans. However, many solid givers suffer from shortages, or want to be able to give to other causes. Also, we have a building campaign going on, which has decreased the ability of some to give as much as they would like. This figure is therefore a compromise which should be within the reach of all but the poorest people.

With the implementation of this new addition to our procedure, we will be more in accord with most evangelical churches, which usually vote on the budget annually, but even better. Churches that vote on the budget usually have only a "yes-no" choice, which limits involvement in the process. With this plan, the real issues of priorities will be opened up to public discussion. We are looking forward to an upbeat time of establishing satisfying goals. With the Fiscal Support Team, we will have the confidence that all of us share the same burden and loyalty to the work of God in this church. It should be exciting to spend a weekend with scores of like-minded supporters, discussing the direction of the church. We would like to invite our leaders as well as other members to join the group immediately so as to not miss the opportunity to participate in 1994 planning. To apply, fill out one of the new pledge cards indicating that you qualify. You can pledge the same or a different amount than you did earlier, but we need a record of your 5% involvement by September 15 if you want to participate in team planning this year.