

Ideas to help finance your church newspaper

Advertising

A sound advertising program can help pay for your church's newspaper edition. UMR suggests churches limit advertising to **24 column inches** of advertising space per issue. ***Your church determines the amount charged.***

(Please note: Postal regulations exclude paid political advertising. UMR prohibits ad content in conflict with the Social Principles of the United Methodist Church.)

To sell advertising you must first understand and believe in what you are selling. Your newspaper can help your congregation develop a new awareness and concern for what is happening both inside your church and throughout the world community of believers. Your readers have needs for products and services that can be provided by other church members or businesses that supply your church needs.

- Set up a task force of volunteers to sell advertising to prospective advertisers both within the church and in the community.
- Consider how much advertising income you need, how much space you can make available for ads, and how much you think local businesses will contribute.
- Determine size, price and guidelines for ads before you start selling.
- Create separate line items or accounts for newspaper ad income.
- Give your members FIRST opportunity to purchase ad space, avoiding members seeing their competitor's ads before they have been invited to advertise. Don't forget church school classes, choir or other groups that meet at your church.
- Expand your list of potential advertisers beyond your congregation. List businesses and individuals your church and/or its members pay to provide services and products. Examples include florists, banks, office supply stores, heating/air conditioner repair, and funeral homes. Also, include businesses and restaurants located near your church.
- Train your sales volunteers and provide written contracts and sample newspapers.
- Stop by at non-peak business hours; be prepared to leave information and a sample newspaper. You may want to call or send an e-mail or letter to your prospects before making a personal visit. Follow-up within one week after the initial contact.
- Be prepared to help the advertiser plan an attractive ad. Logos, business cards and photos may be scanned and placed by your editor.
- Collect the entire yearly advertising contract fee up-front whenever possible, but be prepared and willing to bill the advertiser on a six-month or quarterly basis if requested.
- Send or deliver a newspaper to each advertiser after the first insertion to verify the ad is correct.
- Send a letter of thanks from the salesperson or pastor to each advertiser.
- Make at least one contact prior to renewal time to make sure your advertisers are happy.
- Always invite your advertisers to renew their contracts and provide assistance in updating their ad.

Volunteer subscriptions

Many churches use a voluntary subscription plan to help pay for their church edition. (We estimate that 20-30% of your families will pay for their subscriptions, based on reports from churches.)

Newspapers are mailed to the homes of every church member family. Everyone is invited to pay the cost of their subscription, provide for mailings to shut-ins, etc., or to make a donation to the communication budget.

- Determine the cost per family per year for the newspaper.
- Set a suggested price for paid subscriptions.
- Provide an opportunity during the annual stewardship campaign for every family to support better church communications by paying for one or more subscriptions or by making a designated donation. You can also designate a portion of each church member's pledge for their newspaper subscription.
- Put subscription information in new member packets.
- At least quarterly, invite donations or paid subscriptions through notices in the newspaper, Sunday bulletin and information displays.

Out-of-town or former members, who want to keep in touch with your church, will usually pay for their newspaper subscription if you write to them and ask for a donation/subscription.

Fund-raisers and other ideas

Use your imagination to plan a special event and use the proceeds to subsidize your newspaper budget.

- Anything with food usually works well
 - Sunday breakfast
 - After-church lunch
 - Chili cook-off
 - Bake sale
- Garage sale
- Craft fair, bake sale: sell crafts or rent booths to artisans
- City-wide church communications event:
 - Invite local TV, newspaper or radio "celebs" or computer experts to teach participants the how-to's of using print and electronic media; charge for registration and lunch. (*Be sure to invite UMR to attend!!*)
- "Silent" auction, featuring services and products donated by church members and local merchants, collectibles, sports memorabilia, etc

Invite individuals and church groups, Sunday school classes, etc. to "sponsor" the newspaper for an issue, a month, or a quarter.

Ask for sponsors for the extra cost of using color in your edition. This could be either on a weekly or monthly basis or for special issues.