

FINANCIAL FOUNDATIONS



IT'S AUDIT SEASON FOR CHURCHES!

The church audit can feel like testing the ice to see if it's thick enough to hold your weight. "You want me to test the church finances to see if they're sound? Not me. Find someone else." It's just a scary thing to take on... especially when there seems like a lot of downsides if things go wrong. Guess what, avoiding the audit is what should really make you scared. An audit helps your donors and members build trust in your church. The audit is also a great tool for helping the church improve in how they manage finances.



You don't have to be a CPA to do a church audit. You don't have to have a balanced check book to do a church audit. The main thing is that you love your church, you're willing to ask good questions, and you have the curiosity to be able to verify the answers.

The main questions to ask the treasurer, financial secretary, and/or bookkeeper are:

- **How does money get into the church?** You want to know how the offering is cared for, counted, and eventually deposited into the bank.
- **How does money get out of the church?** You want to know how bills are approved to be paid, who signs checks, and if the bank statement is reconciled.

After you get answers to those questions, the next step is to look through a sample of deposits and expenses to see if it's happening like they said.

We did put together a video that gives a good overview of the audit process which can be found here: <https://youtu.be/maKDnigtM8Y> There is also an audit checklist that is linked in the video description that breaks it down step by step. If it's been a few years since your church has had an audit, feel free to reach out to Jeff Pospisil at jeff.pospisil@dakotasumc.org or 605-630-2897.

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INVESTING IN A BENEVOLENCE FUND

Investing in our pastors and their well-being is the catalyst to a healthy ministry. Finding ways for pastors to care for their flock becomes the responsibility of everyone in the Church.

Over the last couple of years, anxiety and mental health issues have accelerated due to the pandemic's impact of a loss of employment. COVID-19 has left many individuals in financial constraints, and not everyone has access to emergency funds. The Church is the natural place for hurting individuals to turn for hope. Does your Church have a benevolence fund to help financially struggling members? Have you considered reaching out to generous individuals of your Church to consider investing in a fund that would be available to meet members' needs when they turn to the Church for assistance during these difficult times?

A benevolence fund to meet these needs would help alleviate the stress of the unemployed and the stressors of the pastors trying to find ways to help their members during these difficult times.

FIRST AID FOR MENTAL HEALTH TRAINING

If you or someone you know has struggled with mental health challenges such as depression, anxiety, or substance abuse, you know the signs can often be subtle. Recognizing this—and the need to create a more empathic community and environment within the United Methodist Church for those struggling with their mental and emotional health—Wespath is offering first aid for mental health training. The training teaches how to:

- Identify when you or someone you know may be struggling with mental health
- Start a conversation with someone who is struggling
- Respond with empathy
- Help those who are struggling get the help they need
- Take action to manage your own mental health challenges

First Aid for Mental Health is for EVERYONE. Clergy and their spouses, Church leaders, staff and congregation members are all invited to attend—at no cost. The skills acquired can be applied to many situations, including home, social and professional environments. For more information and to register, visit the First Aid for Mental Health event page at www.wespath.org/r/firstaidmh

FORGIVEN: WORKSHOP ON LOAN FORGIVENESS

Get your student loan ducks in a row NOW! If you missed the workshop on the Public Service Loan Forgiveness (PSLF) program, you can review the recorded workshop here: <https://vimeo.com/672504339/ff24ce42d9>. If you or someone you know have Federal Direct Loans (subsidized or unsubsidized), Direct Grad Plus Loans, and Direct Parent Plus Loan, you need to watch this one-hour workshop! As a pastor and/or employee of a church (and most nonprofits), your educational debt could be forgiven after 10 years. You may already qualify now. We are in the middle of a waiver period that widens the options for what counts as a qualifying payment under the PSLF guidelines. The waiver ends 10/31/2022. To understand more, watch the recorded workshop or schedule an appointment with a student loan repayment counselor. We have contracted for six free sessions for our clergy, church staff, and their families through Lutheran Social Service. **Call 1-800.528.2926 and ask to set a Student Loan Repayment Counseling (SLRC) appointment with Dan Park or April Sanderson.**

FINANCIAL FOUNDATIONS WEBINAR

February 21, 2022 at 7:00pm (Central)
This Quarter's Topic: ***Investigating your Balance Sheet***

Pastors, treasurers, finance committee members, and anyone interested in stewardship and generosity in the church are welcome to join. You can find the registration on our website: www.dakotasumf.org.

