

Subject: Church Growth & Management

Church Database Usage

George Dashiell

We use Membership Plus (a Church Database software system fro Parsons Technology) and have been most satisfied with for the past seven years.

Tucker

We are currently using Membership Plus which tracks all groups, attendance at meetings, etc. as well as providing tracking of contributions, pledges and budget information. I have used this program in three churches successfully.

John Pons

There are many church based programs on the market. They are all unique and require specialized training to use. With just a small amount of effort you could incorporate Microsoft Access as your data base.

We use it and it covers all of our requirements. The advantage is that many people are already familiar with it, and you can customize it to meet your exact needs. The database also contains "wizards that guide you through set-up and reporting.

For those with more complex needs, Access is a relational data base and you can choose which components of the database you desire to give out to someone. Thus, a volunteer might have the need to access the names, address, phone numbers, birth dates, etc. but you can restrict their ability to see confidential information regarding pledges or contributions.

Since Access is a relational database, you have one place to keep all of your information referenced back by a "key" field such as the person's name. This feature permits you to track information in a relational portion of the file such as what functions a person has volunteered for, what classes they took, what core positions they have held, etc. etc. This ability keeps each component of the database file specific, and small enough to work with easily.

Petra Weldes

We use PowerChurch and are pretty happy with it. It doesn't quite do the contribution database the way we'd like, but it's pretty workable.

Rev. Kathryn McDowell

I heartily second Jon's recommendation of Microsoft Access for your church database. It is a "build as you go" project and so you can include the fields that are truly applicable to your church: Pledge or no pledge; baptism or not; class records - by class! ; individual's volunteer record, etc. Access is usually a component of the Microsoft Office SUITE that includes MS Word, Excel, and sometimes Front Page and/or Publisher. Many of you may already have it. Or you can purchase Access as a stand-alone. If your church is VERY large, Microsoft Sequel is the next stage of Access for larger volume databases.

With just about an hour's instruction from an Access maven, I was able to create from scratch a small database (less than 100) for a new nonprofit foundation which included basic info (name, address, etc.), referral source, particulars that included even their hobbies, favorite TV shows, pets' names and their religious affiliations, a comments section, etc. I also created the FORM for the initial interview data (like a membership application), and was creating queries (who has birthdays in March, who was referred from what agency, etc.) in no time at all. Since it is similar in commands to MS Word, the learning curve is very slight, and it is a perfect match for mail merge on envelopes or labels. Additionally, there are many local sources for a one-day class and excellent self-teaching a/v tutorials at computer stores.

After you have created your church's congregational database, you can still use Access for any other kind of database you need - your church's library, community agencies and their services, your personal research quotes . . . and so much more.

Rev. Trish Hall

We are currently using a slightly customized version of Quick Books Pro (because I already had it, it's easy to use, support is easily available, etc.). It's easy to track contributions and print statements, etc., because it is a financial package with some ancillary functions. It is capable of doing much more than how we currently use it. I/we don't know (yet) how to integrate things like team/committee activities as Mark Anthony had included in his initial question. Before we go in that direction, I am wondering what else is out there that might be designed specifically to do all these church things easily thus avoiding recreating the wheel and adapting our QB program.

Rev. Patricia Noble

We use Servant Keeper, and I like it. It is easy to use and is not expensive. It tracks contributions and prints contribution statements, as well as member databases of all kinds.