

Our church library needs a mission statement? You must be joking.

by Vernita Kennen

It's no joke! Much like the old wisdom says, "If you don't know where you are going, how will you know when you have arrived?" Every church library needs a reason for existing and a plan for the future.

Writing a mission or purpose statement is not an easy task but it is one that makes all operations of the library much easier.

With such a statement, everything that is done in the library can be easily evaluated in terms of that statement.

Is the library fulfilling the mission? Does the library know its purpose and serve that purpose?

Gather the members of the library committee and the library's liaison person(s) on the church staff (clergy and laity). Work together to list those reasons why your congregation should have a church library. Consider questions like: What is the mission or purpose statement of the congregation itself? How does the library serve that mission or purpose? Does the library exist to serve the spiritual needs of the congregation? How about educational needs? Recreational needs? Does the church library serve only the members of the congregation?

Draft some wording; the simpler and more direct the better. And remember that you want a mission/purpose statement, not several sentences or paragraphs about the library. Ask the rest of the staff (clergy and laity) to preview it. Ask some of the most faithful users of the library to preview and critique the statement. Refine as needed. Then have the statement adopted by the Library Committee. Ask the

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Church Council to affirm the adoption of the statement.

Communicate the statement to the congregation in a variety of ways. Post copies in the library. Always include the statement in any newsletter, booklist or publication of the library. Read it at the beginning of each of the Library Committee meetings. Pray about the mission and how the

library might better fulfill that mission or purpose. Don't forget to evaluate the mission/purpose statement periodically;

everything changes over time and the statement will need to be updated eventually, too.

Know why your church is embarking or continuing on the journey of library ministry and how it plans to move forward. Then let everyone in your congregation know, too. ■

Vernita Kennen has been a chapter president in California and has served on the National Board of Directors. She is a retired school librarian and has served several church libraries.

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National Church Library Association
275 South Third Street, Suite 101A
Stillwater MN 55082
www.churchlibraries.org



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