CONTROL CLUTTER
BY ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES

THE PASTORAL ADMINISTRATION OF A CONGREGATION

It is a pastor's God-given responsibility to be an effective steward of the affairs of his congregation. The New Testament Greek word, **"episkopos",** defines the administrative role of a pastor. Translated as, "overseer, presiding officer, bishop, superintendent, minister", it calls for effective management. Congregational administration can be a bane or blessing depending on whether a pastor is in or out of control of things. Being a good manager of his desk and office will do much to enhance his congregational administrative responsibilities. Setting priorities is essential.

CLUTTER

Clutter is a detriment to the efficient execution of one's duties. It can even be dangerous. A person could trip over it. Piles of paper clutter might produce unfavorable odors and become a breeding place for unwanted creatures, allergies or even disease. A "Beetle Bailey" cartoon by Mort Walker has General Halftrack looking over an untidy desk and saying to his secretary, "Uh - A messy desk is the sign of a busy man." In the next frame, out of earshot of the general, she says to a co-worker, "Or - a messy desk is the sign of a man busy at something other than work." An untidy desk and office tends to give parishioners the impression that their pastor is incompetent, out of control, irresponsible, or just plain lazy. A neat, orderly, well managed office enables a more efficient execution of duties and certainly leaves a good impression.

ATTACK CLUTTER VIA PRIORITY SETTING

Establishing priorities will help produce a tidy desk and organized office. Disorganization, which hinders effective administration, will be diminished With priorities properly established, important matters will not get lost in the shuffle of clutter and end up overlooked. In addition, walking into an orderly office with a clean desk in the morning produces a positive feeling about going to work. Stress is diminished. Work becomes more approachable and enjoyable.

> **A THREE FILE FOLDER SYSTEM**
> **FOR ESTABLISHING PRIORITIES**

Designate three file folders with the following titles: "Current - Future - Follow Up"

CURRENT FILE FOLDER - The "Current File Folder" should contain items such as letters, notices, phone calls, notes, appointments, meetings, visitations, etc., to be handled during the current week, Monday thru Sunday.

FUTURE FILE FOLDER - The "Future File Folder" should contain items to be handled sometime in the future beyond the current week.

FOLLOW UP FOLDER - The "Follow Up Folder" should contain matters which have already been addressed but need to be checked for completion, ie., a letter requesting a reply; a task assigned to someone; an uncompleted personal task; a district budget goal form to be completed and mailed, etc.

MONDAY MORNING REVIEW

On Monday morning, seated before an uncluttered desk, the first task should be:

1. Review ALL items in ALL three designated file folders.
2. Place items to be addressed during the current week (Monday thru Sunday) into the "Current File Folder".
3. Items, which could be delayed, should be placed in either the "Future" or "Follow Up" files and need not be consulted for the rest of the week.

ESTABLISHING DAILY PRIORITIES

The "Current File Folder" should be consulted first thing in the morning each day.   Priorities for the day should be set to be accomplished within a reasonable time frame.   All three folders may receive new items which develop during the week.   The office or personal file cabinets should receive items (articles, reports, etc.) not needed for action but important for future reference.

HANDLING MAIL

1. Daily open every piece of mail for examination.
2. Immediately discard useless, unimportant mail.
3. Handle an important piece of mail immediately with a needed response or action.
4. File less urgent items into either the "current file" or "future file".
5. Immediately file important future reference items, properly designated, into either an office or personal filing cabinet.

What applies to handling mail applies to phone calls, office visits, pastoral visitations, meeting notes, e-mails, etc.   Get a few critical things done before you check your e-mail, which could be so distracting it could derail your whole day.   At the end of each day nothing in the way of paper clutter should be visible.   Every item of importance should be filed in its proper place for efficient access.

> **A POSITIVE PURSUIT OF PRIORITIES PRODUCES A PLEASURABLE, EFFICIENT AND EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF THE LORD'S WORK WITHOUT THE HINDERING STUMBLING BLOCKS OF CLUTTER**

GETTING RID OF EXISTING CLUTTER

What about the ghastly eyesore of mountainous clutter on the desk and floor? An effort should be made to begin a process of clutter elimination. But there's no rush. For now, just put the clutter in a box, date it and hide it in a findable place. Prioritize a chunk of time later at regular intervals to go through the items. Give yourself a deadline to make sure it gets done.   Be vicious about throwing out items!   Julie Mahan, owner of Indianapolis based, "Simply Organizing", writes, "Remember the 80/20 principle.   80% of the stuff you get you are never going to need again.   20% you do need, and you need to prioritize its importance."

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

The National Association of Professional Organizers (512-206-0151)
e = mc2 Professional Organizing Service (216-831-5949)

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