

THE CHURCH LIBRARY: AN AID TO LEADERSHIP

By

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The Library at St. John's Baptist Church was started in 1948, and the initial thrust came through the gift of a number of books from the library of the former pastor of the church, the late Dr. Chauncey W. Durden. Many of these books are still in use, and the nucleus has grown through constant additions to the present total of 5,344 volumes. Books in the library represent many different categories, and enjoy a wide circulation among all ages in the church family.

The particular purpose of this article is to point out the value of a church library to the church staff and the active lay leadership of the church.

Staff members regularly make recommendations to the Library Committee concerning the purchase of new books which fall in the field of their particular interests — education, music, theology, youth work, child care, family life, church organization, church renewal, etc. In many instances, these books are given to the staff members to study before they are processed and placed upon library shelves for general circulation. This is a very helpful service, in that it relieves some of the financial strain upon staff members who would otherwise find it very expensive to secure and study the constant stream of books relative to specialized interests and concerns.

Through funds which are given to the church library as memorial gifts, it is possible for the church library to acquire a considerable number of outstanding and, sometimes, expensive books which would be beyond the reach of staff members' pocketbooks. Such books find their way to the reference shelves of the library and are frequently used by staff members in preparation for their particular responsibilities.

The church library is a valuable aid to the staff members' counseling responsibilities. Many times, at the end of a counseling session, the staff member and the counselee will go into the library to find a suitable book which the counselee will read before coming to the next session. In this connection, we have carefully stocked our shelves with books dealing with marriage and the home, emotional and psychological problems, teenage conflicts and relationships, theological doubts and anxieties, and the like. It is helpful to place a well-chosen book in the hands of someone, saying, "Take this along and read it before you come back to talk again; make notes of things you think are important, or questions which arise in your mind—then we can talk about those things when you come in next time."

Finally, the library is a valuable adjunct to the staff in their responsibilities for training leadership. We are constantly setting up special reference shelves on different topics — church renewal, denominational history, current trends in theology, church and community responsibility. In working with Sunday School teachers, we regularly provide a large number of books which offer supplementary material for lesson preparation and background study. These books are kept in use, and we provide multiple copies of those which are likely to be most in demand.

Adding a good church library is like adding another staff member — you multiply the effectiveness of the total ministry of the church.

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