

CHURCH LIBRARY HAS MANY PURPOSES

By

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Webster defines "library" as follows: "A collection of books for reading or reference;" but a church library needs to be more than this. A church library should be founded to help the members of a definite religious body and the people of the community.

The primary purpose of a church library is to strengthen and enrich the education ministry of a said denomination or religious group. Its goal is to support the work of those who teach and to undergird the learning process of children, youth, and adults in their search for religious faith and life.

Let there be no misunderstanding. The church library must exist for all people; not for just those who teach, or for those students who find time in their busy schedules to study the lesson materials. We have failed to understand the nature of a church library, its intended purpose, and its resource strength for the local church. A church library should be provided, regardless of the size of the congregation, as a part of the essential equipment for teachers and other workers.

Today we are called upon to use many teaching methods. For this reason, the church library must contain many different resources. It cannot be filled with the cast-offs from mission studies, or from individuals who wish to clear their book cases. A church library must be kept up-to-date with volumes and other materials concerning current thinking in theology, biblical reference materials, and studies in the social and economic problems of our time. The church library, because it is interested in serving all, must keep abreast of current thoughts and needs. It is of no value to have a number of out-dated resources, when new situations are being sought and the current study must be supplemented. The person who can be of greatest assistance is the librarian. She will need to be informed of the church program and the needs listed in the curriculum. If she is willing to spend time investigating these areas, rewards will be in store for those who visit the church library.

To fulfill the purpose of the church library, more than books must be included. If adequate training of people in the church and community is to be achieved, the church library should provide films, filmstrips, pictures, maps, records, tapes, and periodicals. Since the church library exists to strengthen the education ministry, it must become a materials center. Additional resources should be available to supplement curriculum and programs. The church library should be more than a book depository. It should represent a "learning resources" environment.

When the necessary materials are provided you will find that many groups within the church visit the library. Their purposes will be varied. In our church the following groups make use of the library:

- (a) Members of *The Woman's Society of Christian Service*, the *Wesleyan Service Guilds*, and *Circle Chairmen*. They are able to secure resource ma-

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materials for programs, interpretation of Biblical passages, and sources for devotions.

- (b) *Children in the Elementary Department* find help in completing assignments given them in their classes.
- (c) *Methodist Youth Fellowships* discover background materials for programs dealing with all facets of society and church. They find it of great value in a study of their particular denomination and the history of the church. Some use it in writing themes for school. New means of recreation and themes for parties are investigated.
- (d) *Chairmen of different Commissions* check periodically on new church trends and policies. This enables them to develop new and vital programs for their commission and the congregation.
- (e) *Members of the Altar Committee* use the library in reference to correct liturgical colors, placing of altar ware, and flower arrangements.
- (f) *Choir members* frequently find help in understanding words with Biblical background and terminology used in their anthems.
- (g) *Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts* use it as they work on God and Country Awards and Curved Bar awards. Books which supply information necessary in earning merit badges are available.
- (h) *Leaders of Cubs and Brownies* secure useful ideas for projects and crafts.

Not only do the laymen, women, youth, and children find the library of great assistance, but the church hostess has consulted references seeking new menus that will fit a certain theme given her by organizations which hold dinners at the church.

The church library must not be for teachers or laymen alone. It must also be used by the professional staff of the church. The minister in charge seeks help in references for illustrations, Biblical interpretation, and sermon materials. The minister of education, by using library resources, keeps informed of the current curriculum materials and newest methods of teaching. The secretarial staff finds assistance as they seek the correct terminology in bulletin copy, correspondence, and ordering materials.

The library is an integral part of the work of the church. Recognizing the importance of pictures, projected visuals, tapes, records, and programmed instructional tools, church leaders still realize that a reading program is one of the easiest and potentially most effective forms of Christian education to organize, guide, and promote.

A church library can provide endless enrichment of the curriculum for children, youth, and adults who have the curiosity and wide-ranging interest to make use of it. Notwithstanding efforts of the church staff, in the final analysis the success of a church library depends on members of the church.

"No worse thief than a bad book."

—George Herbert
Jacula Prudentum