Taking Inventory of Your Church

Preparing an inventory of church contents is clearly one of the best ways to obtain better value from your insurance coverage. The contents of your property have great accumulated value as personal property. In the event that your inventory is lost, stolen or destroyed, an inventory helps to validate the existence of items and the cost to replace them.

There is a sample of one church inventory form at the end of this handout. You may want to use a different form. That’s okay. Just be sure it includes all the information you will need. It’s easier to get all the info at the same time than to go back and look for it. These instructions will help you get started.

What inventory includes:
Church inventory is a list of moveable property. A lectern that can be carried from room to room is included but not the pulpit fixed to the floor. Loose rugs are included, but not wall-to-wall carpeting. Fixed property, such as the pulpit, pipe organ, pews, baptismal founts, stained glass windows, etc., should be cataloged and documented in church records, but there is no need to inventory them on a regular basis.

Each item in the list requires certain kinds of information:
- ✓ All items on the inventory should have a brief description, i.e.; 45 heavy-duty folding chairs with cushioned seats.
- ✓ If known, the approximate date each item was purchased or given to the church.
- ✓ Include brand name and model number if known.
- ✓ Estimate value of what each item would cost to replace new.
- ✓ Include the serial number of high-priced items in case they are stolen.

One approach is to use a school or church supply catalog – find a picture and price and paste it into the inventory itself.

Special Values:
A desk is not always just a desk. If it is 100 years old and made from solid oak, it has special value. Antiques in general, one-of-a-kind items, and rare artifacts all need an expert appraisal measuring their financial value if they are to be replaced with like kind and quantity when lost. The same expert evaluation should be made of paintings, sculpture and other art objects.

How to take inventory:
Taking inventory is an assignment best suited for several people. Only allow one organized person to be in charge of the written inventory to prevent any confusion or double entry. One or two persons can research catalogs, count chairs, open and close cupboards and pay attention to being comprehensive. With a team, the task can go quickly.

It is a good idea to keep a separate list for each closet or room or building. Even if you move things around, separate lists will provide a starting point for your next inventory. If you often have trouble finding things after a reshuffling, it may be time to adjust the inventory.

Photographs of each view of each room, open cabinet and contents, can be a valuable addition to the written inventory. The same is true for videotape, narrated as you go, by someone who can “show and tell” what is being recorded.
**Where to keep inventory:**
At least one copy of the church inventory should be kept away from the church, ideally in a safe deposit box. An inventory of church property is useless if it is lost along with the property.

A working copy of the inventory should be kept in the church office and updated when any major purchases are made or gifts are given. As new items are added, their cost can serve as their replacement value.

Transferring your physical inventory sheet data into a database or digital spreadsheet provides a third point of safekeeping. Photographs and videos can be embedded in or linked to the inventory. Make sure a copy of the computerized version of the inventory is kept outside the church, just as with the paper versions.

**How often should the inventory be updated?**
Both copies of your inventory should be updated at least once a year. If you use the previous year’s inventory as a guide, take your time. Items may have been moved to other locations or their number may have changed. Don’t just check them off on a list.
### CHURCH

### Physical Inventory Sheet

Sheet # ____________   Location ________________________________________________________________

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Serial Number</th>
<th>Item/Description</th>
<th>We Need It (✓)</th>
<th>Owned (mo. / yr. acquired)</th>
<th>Quantity</th>
<th>Value When Obtained</th>
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Counted by ________________________________________________________ Date ___________________