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PowerChurch Software Newsletter - Fall 2011

It is nearing that time again, where we remind you of all the work that is waiting for you at year-end. We won't go through it all again in detail, since we had an entire newsletter dedicated to that topic last year and various other Knowledge Base articles and forum posts about it. Instead, we will just provide a link to the year end 2010 newsletter: PowerChurch Software Newsletter - Year End 2010.

There! Now we can move on to other new business.

Announcing PowerChurch Plus Version 11.5

You may have already heard that we have recently released Version 11.5 of PowerChurch Plus, continuing the work that Version 11 started, making your data more accessible and easier to interpret with fewer steps required to get it entered in. Below is a short list of some of the new features and updates in Version 11.5:

- Automated backups
- Save/Load e-mail templates
- Redesigned Budget Entry screen
- Import photos from both Olan Mills and LifeTouch

For a full list of features in PowerChurch Plus Version 11.5 (and prior versions as well) visit www.powerchurch.com/update/

Weekly Pledge Calculations in 2012

In 2012, there are 53 Sundays between January 1 and December 31. If you enter weekly pledges for this date range, they will be calculated against 53 Sundays. This is something that last occurred in 2006 and will come up again in 2017. Just like in Payroll, in months where there is an extra pay week, PowerChurch Plus will calculate the total pledge against the total number of pledge occurrences in the specified date range.

There is a setting under File > Preferences > Contributions Setup, on the Pledges/Statements tab, to specify which day of the week pledges are calculated against. This setting can be changed to Tuesday for 2012 to get around the 53 Sundays problem. However, that would require you to go back and change that setting to Sunday for 2013. This is the quickest method of working around the problem. Unfortunately, changing the setting back for 2013 will then have the side effect of taking the 2012 pledges back to 53 Sundays, making everyone's pledge have a balance owed.

The alternative to this is more work, but doesn't have the residual effects on future reporting. Instead of using the full January 1 to December 31 date range on your weekly pledges in 2012, use December 29 as the ending date. Doing so cuts off the 53rd Sunday and the total pledge amount will be calculated accordingly.

There isn't a single end-all-be-all solution to this. Each method has its down-side. Set up the pledges in PowerChurch Plus on these years in a way that best suits your specific needs.

Changing the Working Month vs. Closing the Month

Since the Fund Accounting system was redesigned back in Version 9, you have been able to have multiple accounting months open, allowing you to make absolutely sure that you are finished with a month's business before closing (and therefore finalizing) the month. Once a month is closed, no new transactions can be posted into it.

Prior to Version 9, you were forced to close each month as you finished it, but you were allowed to choose whether you would like to post to the current or prior (last closed) accounting month. Since we are now well beyond that two month window (you can have up to 18 months open in the latest versions) the thought is that there is no reason to close a month so quickly.

In newer versions, once you are ready to enter transactions into a new month, simply choose Change Working Month from the Fund Accounting menu. This allows you to move one month forward and start working in the next month. What actually happens, though, when you change the working month? Not much! Your working month simply sets the default accounting month on new transactions as you enter them.

On the Enter Transactions screen in Fund Accounting, before you make any changes, take a look at the Posting Month/Year fields. This will automatically be set to your current working month. Need to enter something for last month? No problem. Just click into the Posting Month field and change it. What if you need to enter a transaction from six months ago? As long as that month is still open, it's no problem at all. Just change the Posting Month field.

Let's state that a different way, just to be clear. **You don't need to change the working month every time you create transactions for a different month. Just change the month directly on the transaction you are entering.**

The same principle applies to posting into Fund Accounting from Contributions, Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable, and Payroll. Just change the accounting month on the screen as you are posting. However, this has caused confusion for some users over the years, leaving many transactions accidentally posted to the wrong month.

Version 11.5 now calculates the accounting month/year based on the transaction date when posting from Contributions, Accounts Payable, Accounts Receivable, and Payroll. If your working month is November and you enter contributions dated 03/17/2011, when you post them using the Update Fund Accounting method, the accounting month can default to March 2011, based on the transaction date, rather than the working month.

In another example, you may have unposted items in Accounts Payable from both October and November. Previously, you would have to select and post each month's transactions separately, so that the month would be assigned properly. No more! Post them all at once and the posting months can be assigned in Fund Accounting according to the check dates.

This behavior can of course be overridden. There is a check box above the posting month. Uncheck it to manually assign a different month.

Year End Tips from Dynamic Systems

It is time to start thinking about end-of-year tax forms and Dynamic Systems is here to help. They are your source not only for high-security checks, but for all W2 and 1099 tax forms. No matter what your tax form need is, they have the compatible form for you. To help you make your way through end-of-year they would like to share with you this list of helpful hints for a stress-free tax form season:

- **Order enough forms**. Don't forget to include employees who worked only part of the year such as temps or project help when determining how many forms you require. Also, consider the number of forms you may need for reprints due to employee loss or damage.
- **Update your software**. W2 and 1099 formats have changed from last year. Therefore, it is necessary to update your software with the correct layouts *before* printing your 2011 forms.
- **Order early**. Although it is not always possible to place your order before the end of the year, try to order your forms as soon as you can. W2s and 1099s are dated forms that are produced in limited quantities. Waiting until the end of January to order your forms may cause unwanted delay.
- **Confirm your shipment upon arrival**. When your tax forms arrive take the time to carefully review what you have received. Finding problems early will allow you the time to get them corrected. Did you receive only half of what you ordered? Consider that with 2 to-a-page formats 50 sheets will yield 100 forms. If you still have questions, contact your forms provider.
- **Give yourself sufficient time**. Printing your employees' tax forms is only part of the overall process. Depending on the format used, you may also have to detach the forms from one another, collate them, stuff them into envelopes and then put postage on the envelopes. Consider the whole process when determining the amount of time you need to complete the task.

At Dynamic Systems they want to make the task of ordering your end-of-year tax forms as easy as possible. Visit their web site to order your guaranteed compatible forms at competitive prices.

Making a Difference:

Sha-Ron Worthen - Empowering a Community in Michigan

Name: Sha-Ron Worthen
Title: Trustee and Treasurer, Empowering Disciples ministry
Passion: Working behind the scenes so that plans can come to fruition
Why PowerChurch: Our ability to manage all the church business with a single software

Lao Tzu said famously: "The journey of a thousand miles begins with one step." Sha-Ron Worthen knows this well. Just over three years ago, their church ministry had no structure to call their own. "We held our services in rented spaces, hotels or conference centers." Sha-Ron said inaugurating their new building felt like they "had finally come out of the wilderness and into the Promised Land!"

With that first hurdle accomplished, they continue to dream big and power forward. As trustee, member of the finance ministry and treasurer of record, Sha-Ron describes herself as a seasoned and contented "behind the scenes person," doing all of the work necessary to see goals accomplished and dreams fulfilled. PowerChurch Online is a big part of that background work.

"Prior to PowerChurch Online, we used a combination of QuickBooks, Membership Plus, and Excel spreadsheets to manage all church financial and membership information and transactions. We then attended a seminar on using PowerChurch and the benefits of managing all church business within one software application, and the advantages were significant.

"It was the work that we did preparing to secure the mortgage for our new church that led us to PowerChurch Online as a better option for church management than what we were using previously. The ability to have an online tool alone was enough to sell us on the product. As a church that operated with no "home base" for three years, it was often challenging having to store information on one computer that was not accessible to all the members of the finance ministry and relying on email to communicate info back and forth and update manual spreadsheets."

With church management tasks centralized and simplified, Empowering Disciples can focus on the work they feel driven to do: creating disciples and leading them - through "raw and real" preaching - to live the lives they've been made for. This work extends to individuals and families, and to the entire community as well. The next step is to reach out to their suburban community with a childhood education center. "Our pastor's teaching style really appeals to the younger generations, and we initially considered a daycare center for members. The more we discussed it however, the more we realized that we wanted to aspire to a higher standard of education than the public schools do." They are currently in the exploratory phase of the project, but fully intend to create a purpose-built place for those seeking a Christian education.

Since moving into their new building, the membership of Empowering Disciples has quadrupled. Clearly, their journey is in the right direction.

You make a difference all over the world. PowerChurch makes it easier. Read previous installments of Making a Difference at www.powerchurch.com/stories/.

Forum Q&A

The Support Forum on our web site is a very active online community of our users and Tech Support staff members. There you can browse through thousands of questions and answers, or post your own. Below are some recent examples:

From Membership:
Q. If a member of a family has a different address, how will it be handled?
A. Currently, they would need to have a separate Family Mailing List record, with their Personal Profile under that record. You could have a Personal Profile record under the family, but if they are living by themselves they are considered a separate household, with their own envelope numbers assigned.

Q. We need to update all our congregation information. What is the best way to do this?
A. We recommend giving each family a printout of the Family Update Form that can be found under the Family Mailing List reports. They can then update that information, and turn it back into the church for entry.

Q. Is there a way to incorporate drop down boxes for input fields, such as city and state/province?
A. PowerChurch Plus Versions 10 and higher have auto-complete on the city, state, and zip fields.

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