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Slump strains church finances as need grows

by Tom Gallagher

NCR Today

Houses of worship and faith communities across the country are cutting budgets and staff and at the same time are being pulled to do more, according to this *Wall Street Journal* story:

Across the country, congregations of all sizes and denominations are struggling with issues of faith and finance as the recession grinds on. Churches are scouring their budgets for wasteful spending. And many, like Bent Tree, have taken the unusual step of reducing staff.

While the collection plate no longer overflows, churches are seeing an increase in requests for support -- be it for spiritual guidance, monetary help or career advice. And religious leaders have the added task of explaining job losses and pay cuts in spiritual terms.

Churches, synagogues and mosques have historically fared reasonably well during recessions, even as other institutions struggled. But the magnitude of the current downturn has caught up with places of worship, too.

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