

CHURCHWATCH NEWSLETTER #5 - JANUARY 13, 2003

Sorry the newsletter is late this week. We've decided to postpone the discussion of the new Mass Edit Wizard in ChurchWatch Version 3 until next week. We are getting a lot of support questions concerning tax receipts so it seems timely to do a review on tax receipt generation. This discussion works for all versions of ChurchWatch and works for both USA and Canadian customers...

First of all we have one housecleaning item on a touchy subject. We are currently being swamped with support questions, calls and emails (its that time of year). Our customer base has grown to the point where it has become impossible to operate with a small company/small customer base attitude. Effective January 14, 2004 a strict policy will be upheld that requires all customers to have an active support contract to receive support. The policy has not been strictly enforced to date. The support contract remains optional, meaning you can buy it when you need it. Cost remains at \$115 USD or \$150 + GST Canadian for an entire year. Note that its \$150 + GST + PST in Saskatchewan. Many software companies charge \$150 per HOUR so \$150 per year is very very reasonable. All our competitors also charge for support. Please keep your support contract up to date.

We are also looking at implementing a support tracking system. Under this system you would be assigned an Incident Number for tracking your problem. This will help us better track problems. Problems and solutions can then be translated into a Knowledgebase on our website. More on this another day...

OK, enough of that. Everyone take a deep breath! Now back to year end tax discussion. We had several questions today from customers that archived their 2003 data before generating tax receipts. Is this OK to do? Actually this is not the intended method but there's nothing wrong with it assuming you have version 2 or version 3. In these latest versions you can always easily go back to an archived giving year, continue to work with it and generate/print receipts etc. In version 2 and 3 ChurchWatch also archives the Membership data for that year and you can edit it (to change addresses etc). This is not possible in Version 1. If you are still running Version 1 please upgrade. We can no longer support version 1 and the giving and tax features in version 3 are well worth the upgrade.

There is a set of recommended steps to take at tax time and here they are:

1. Make sure your software is up to date. For version 1 its 1.0050, for version 2 its 2.0081 and for version 3 its 3.0043.
2. Do a backup in case you want to "roll back" any changes and start again
3. If you are using teller sheets and entered pre-calculated totals (version 2 or 3 only) for each batch, you can do a quick check in the Giving Manager on the YTD Statistics page. Any records in red color indicate a balance problem. If you did not use pre-calculated totals or have version 1, you can use the report "Batch Summary #2" to review and check the totals of all batches.

4. Assuming all is ok we can proceed. Next, I would reindex my tables using SETUP->MAINTENANCE->REINDEX.

5. Next enter and exit the Household or Membership Manager. If you get warnings about data integrity, fix these first before attempting to create receipts or the Substantiation of Contributions report.

6. Now you are ready to generate the receipts and/or Substantiation of Contributions reports. The Tax Receipt Manager is accessed from the Giving Manager. In the Tax Receipt Manager, check off "Generate Receipt Numbers" and "Print Tax Receipts" as a minimum. Make sure the report destination is "To Screen" for now. Finally, select "All People/All Receipts(Year End)" if this is year end. It is a common mistake to miss this last step. You can also select any other reports you want to produce (in the ACTIONS box).

7. Finally click START REPORTS to generate serial numbers and view the receipts.

8. When ready to enter the next year's data you must archive your data by clicking FILE->NEW GIVING YEAR. You can always go back to past years data by choosing a giving year on the toolbar (V2 and V3 only).

9. Once things look good you can re-run the report but send it to the printer this time. It will not hurt to leave "Generate Serial Numbers" checked since it will only generate serial numbers if it needs to (ie there is new giving data with no receipt number).

Resetting the tax receipt number to 0 is usually not recommended since it can create duplicate receipts serial numbers which is obviously not good. The only time it makes sense to reset the serial number to zero is when you are sure there are no receipt numbers generated in the current year.

It is inevitable that you will likely need to go back and make some changes once the tax receipts have been mailed and received. In version 1 this was not easy, in version 2 a lot better and in Version 3 much better. From here on in we'll ignore version 1 because editing past data was not real great.

In Version 2 and 3, you can choose a giving year on the toolbar as previously mentioned. So if you had already entered 2004 data but you needed to go back to fix a 2003 receipt, you would choose 2003 as the giving year in the pull-down list box on the toolbar.

There are several tools available for you for manipulating data after the fact:

1. You can simply edit data and amounts in the Giving Manager. Not recommended once receipts have been issued because you will be changing the amount on an issued receipt. Avoid this! ChurchWatch will warn you if you try to do this but it is permitted. Make sure you understand what you are doing.

2. You can use the Tax Receipt Editor (not the Manager) to view and/or edit receipts. In the editor you can view the receipt(s) and move entries from one receipt to another. However, it will only allow you

to move data between the same person's receipts. Again, make sure you understand what you are doing if you move data because the totals on 2 receipts will be affected and will need to be re-issued.

3. In Version 3 ONLY, you can now move a record to another batch date (in the Giving Manager). This is not really related to tax receipts but a handy feature for modifying giving data.

4. If you need to change an address you can modify archived membership data in Version 2 and Version 3. This was not possible in version 1. Remember, however, that you are editing a COPY of the original membership data. So changing an address will change it in the archived year but NOT in your current data. You would have to go back to current year and change the address again in your current data if this is desired.

So where does your data go when its archived? Under the ChurchWatch folder, there is a folder called "ARCHIVE". In version 2 and version 3 you will find year folders under the archive folder. A "snapshot" of your data is found there. This is where the archived data is. ChurchWatch doesn't do anything special to find these. It simply looks in the archive folder to see what years you have archived and creates a list of years in the pull-down year list. So in theory, if you want to save disk space you could delete some of the older archived years, assuming you don't need the data anymore, without worry of causing any problems in the program. In version 1 the archive folder contains files with a year extension to make it obvious which files go with which year.

For other questions and information concerning the Giving and Tax Managers we'll refer you the User's Manual sections on these items. Have a great week.