

Church Life


Coronavirus



5 Ways to Talk to Your Church about Online Giving

By Marla Rotman

Many churches depend on gifts collected through in-person offerings during worship to keep the doors open. But because of the COVID-19 outbreak, thousands of churches find themselves unable to gather for worship in person. There is a lot of anxiety among us about financial security when we are no longer able to pass the plate down the rows, but must instead meet online to worship. Here are some tips for talking to your church about online giving during the COVID-19 outbreak to help you maintain or even grow your church's generosity.



1. Clarify your purpose as a church and communicate it broadly.



The church we once knew has completely changed. Chances are you have had to minimize your ministries down to the bare essentials. What are those essentials? Maybe you are still feeding the hungry. Maybe you are still collecting money or grocery items for your food bank. Maybe you have created small groups to check in with each other. Maybe you are facilitating bible studies and worship services on Facebook or over Zoom. The way you are spending your time and resources today is indicative of your calling and purpose. Clarify these essentials into a simple and concise statement and communicate it broadly. Remind people why the church exists, and invite them to participate in continuing this work through giving.

Once you've established the bare essentials of your ministry, and clarified them into a succinct statement of purpose, let that statement be the measuring stick for everything you do. For example, suppose your statement is "Bringing Jesus to the World through Word and Deed." Make certain that each activity in which you invest your time and resources seeks to do exactly that.

2. Share stories of how you are living into your purpose.

Cultivate stories from your church community about how you are living into your purpose as a church. For example, find someone who is meeting in a small group via the internet and ask them to create a short video of how those connections are bringing them life. Or ask a person from the medical field to share where they have seen God at work in the hospitals and doctor's offices. Find a person who has been supporting the local shelter and ask them to share why they serve. Or reach out to someone who is growing in their faith through bible studies and worship services, and see if they are willing to share with the rest of the community on a short video. Nothing generates generosity like the power of a story – cultivate and gather those stories to share with your church.




Another way you can share stories specifically about generosity is during the offering portion of the service invite your viewers to pause the worship service video and share their answers to the following questions with their families and loved ones: Who taught you about generosity? Why do you give? How do you give? At the end of the service, request the viewers email the church about how those questions impacted them and their family.

3. Remind your church that generosity is about giving and receiving.

Use stories from scripture, like the widow's mite from mark 12 or Luke 21, to remind the church that giving benefits the giver as well as the receiver. The story of the widow's mite reminds us that all are invited and encouraged to participate in the work of God in the world through the church, regardless of wealth. The widow had so little to give, but she gave freely to the temple because she knew the Lord would use her offering to further the kingdom of God on earth. Not only did she trust God to provide when she gave her two small coins, she trusted that God would use even the little bit she had to offer. It was an honor for her to give. God can use our gifts, whatever their size. Invite your church community to discover this for themselves.

4. Make giving simple.

When inviting people to generosity, make sure to provide easy access for them to give. If you provide online giving, put the link in a prominent place that's easy to locate and see. You might also encourage your church community to set up an automatic gift through their bank account. If you invite people to mail their tithes to the church, provide the address and make sure it's in a visible location. The same is true for those who want to drop off their checks. Make giving as simple as you can.

One church I know sent a letter from their deacons asking people to remember to give during this time of crisis, and they included a self-addressed envelope with the : Within a couple days they collected dozens of envelopes from their mailbox!

5. Don't be afraid to lean on your more generous givers.



Remember, generosity is a spiritual gift. Some have to work harder than others, but some come by it naturally. Personally connect with benevolent members and invite them to step up their giving to assist the church through a time like this. But be sure you are ready to tell them why. It's not to keep the lights on, or the building heated. It's not to make payroll or pay the mortgage. Although these are necessary and relevant expenses, they don't communicate the purpose of the church. Henry Nouwen said, "Fundraising is precisely the opposite of begging. Rather, we are declaring, 'We have a vision that is amazing and exciting.'" Be ready to share that amazing and exciting vision when you invite people to step-up their giving.

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