
Growing Your Online Giving During a Crisis: A Step-by-Step Guide

Tips for effectively, yet sensitively, engaging your givers



Reaching Your Giving Potential During a Crisis

1

Gather Your Past Giving Data

2

Plan Your Communications

3

Review Your Giving Experiences

During a crisis, the local Church has always been a beacon of hope for its members and the surrounding community. Whether it was a flood, hurricane, tornado, earthquake, or now, a global pandemic, the Church has always risen to the occasion.

We're already seeing amazing stories of local churches helping their community by distributing much-needed supplies and meals, offering online learning, mentoring, and counseling to the newly unemployed, and of course, online church services to maintain their connection to each other and their faith. However, the Church needs **financial resources** to **maximize their impact**.

In the midst of this current crisis, with the physical doors to most churches closed and individuals instructed to stay home, many churches are seeing a dramatic drop in donations.

While some decline is to be expected, especially with the rapid rise in unemployment, there are other reasons for the decrease in giving. Thankfully, many issues can be (fairly) easily addressed through effective communication and implementation of best practices for online giving.

This step-by-step guide will show you how to engage your givers effectively, yet sensitively, through online giving campaigns that should bring an immediate, and lasting boost, to your donations.



Baby Boomers hold 70% of disposable income in the US. Whether they are givers or not, consider this group as a potential source of new or greater generosity.

1

GATHER YOUR PAST GIVING DATA

The first thing you need to do is gather historical data on your givers from your church management system and/or church giving platform. This data will allow you to identify groups based on giving patterns and then you can tailor your communications based on the needs of these various groups.

Begin with a simple list containing the name and contact information for those who donated to your church over the past 12-18 months, how often they donated, what method they used to donate, and if they donated to any special causes.



CONTACT INFORMATION

You will want to send multiple forms of communication to each person. So be sure you collect the following:

- **First and Last Name for Head of Household** to personalize your communications.
- **Primary and secondary email address** for the quickest and most efficient form of communication.
- **Home address** so you can send a physical mailer to those without an email address.
- **Phone number** for individuals who may prefer this method of communication.

1

GATHER YOUR PAST GIVING DATA



GIVING FREQUENCY

While all your messages will have the same end goal, you should try to communicate to givers in a way that makes them feel known. This means writing separate messages for specific groups, such as:

- **“Holiday” givers** are those who have given 3 or fewer times in the past year. With Easter coming up, this group will require their own email, specifically referencing the holiday and directing them to an Easter ministry opportunity on your online giving page.
- **First-time givers** are new givers, typically in the last 3-6 months. When communicating with this group, include a welcome message and additional information about the church's activities during the crisis.
- **Irregular givers** donated between 4-12 times in the past year. This group may need some tips on how to set up a recurring gift within your online giving system.
- **Consistent givers** donated consistently throughout the past 3-12 months. You will want to thank them for their consistent generosity and make them aware of any new ministry opportunities.
- **Major donors** are your largest givers, who may be looking for ways to increase their contribution to the church's community impact during the crisis. Show them how their gifts will be used to help those who need it the most.

1 GATHER YOUR PAST GIVING DATA

□ GIVING MODE

Lastly, it's very important to determine "how" your givers made their donations. You will need to proactively reach out to those who are not familiar with using Online Giving with details on how to get started.

- **Cash or check givers** - This group needs specific instructions, and encouragement, on how to donate to your church online, this may include your website, church app, or text-to-give options.
- **Online givers** - This group is familiar with your church's online giving options but they may need a reminder or nudge to set up recurring giving or to donate to a special ministry opportunity.

Note: The Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act will let taxpayers deduct up to \$300 in charitable donations from their taxable income. The rule will apply only to charitable contributions made in 2020. Taxpayers will be able to claim the deductions on their tax forms next year. The CARES Act also lifts the 60% of AGI limit for cash donations made in 2020 although there's still a 100% of AGI limit on all charitable contributions. (Source)

Vision2 helps churches connect with their congregation in the same engaging way they would in person



2

PLAN YOUR COMMUNICATIONS

Bayside Community Church's most recent online giving email was simply "A Message from the Pastor".

It was opened by an astounding 80% of recipients.

In times of crisis, hearing directly from the Senior Pastor is comforting.

Email is a fast and convenient way to reach the majority of your members, but your email will have a lot of competition from countless other emails people receive daily. To ensure your email stands out, make sure you follow these tips.



EMAIL SUBJECT LINE

The subject line of your email is almost more important than the content. The email is worthless if the person never opens it in the first place. Some basic tips are:

- Keep it short and sweet
- Make people feel special
- Create a sense of importance or urgency
- Pose a compelling question
- Start with action-oriented verbs
- DON'T USE ALL CAPS or overuse exclamation points!!!
- Send the email from a familiar name and email address
- Use a different subject line for each of your giving groups

The subject line of Bayside Community Church's most recent online giving email was simply "A Message from the Pastor". It was opened by an astounding 80.4% of recipients. In times of crisis, hearing directly from the Senior Pastor is comforting.

2

PLAN YOUR COMMUNICATIONS



TEXT-ONLY EMAILS

Studies show that text-only emails actually perform better than HTML emails with many images. A plain text message feels more personal, feels less like a marketing/sales message, and will not be flagged as spam.

CONTENT IDEAS

KEEP IT SIMPLE

A favorite quote is "if i had more time i would have written a shorter letter." The best form of communication is simple, quick, and direct. Do your best to avoid a long, overly wordy email.

BE EMPATHETIC AND SPECIFIC

Be empathetic about the current crisis and then give specific examples of how their donations will be used. Donors of all ages, especially millennials, like to see and understand how their donation will have a positive impact on the community.

INSTRUCTION ON HOW TO GIVE ONLINE

For your cash and check givers, provide links and guidance to making a donation, such as a simple 3-Step Guide (with screenshots) to Giving to the Church Online.

2

PLAN YOUR COMMUNICATIONS



CONTENT IDEAS

CLEAR CALL TO ACTION

Every email should include a clear "call to action" link or button to click, something you want them to do before they get distracted by other things. Examples include: Give Now, Set up an account, Set up a recurring gift, Bookmark the church's giving page, or Browse giving opportunities.

LANDING PAGE

A "landing page" is a dedicated page on your church website built solely for the purpose of inspiring the person to take action. An effective landing page is simple, clear, and has only one call to action.

You might include a short video from your pastor, instructions for getting started with Online Giving, and/or a list of ministry opportunities (be sure to include images and descriptions!)

And, of course, always included a large GIVE NOW button.

*If a picture is worth
a thousand words...
could it also be worth
more dollars? more
givers? more impact in
your community?*

2

PLAN YOUR COMMUNICATIONS



ADDITIONAL CAMPAIGN TYPES

For members for whom you don't have an email address, consider:

DIRECT MAIL

The same basic principles apply to developing a physical mailer as they do for email. Be sure to include a bold, clear "call to action" directing them to an easy-to-remember location on your church website.

PHONE CALLS

There are a number of pay-as-you-go auto-dialer solutions that will allow you to create a recorded message for potential givers. Or, for major donors, have the pastoral staff call on them directly.

SOCIAL MEDIA

Lastly, be sure you post to your social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc) with details about how your church is helping during the crisis and how your members can get involved. Include images and videos as those posts will often get the most engagement. Don't be afraid to include a link to your online giving page.

DON'T FORGET TO FOLLOW-UP

The worst mistake you can make is to simply send one email, flyer, or voicemail and then assume it worked. The first message may get overlooked inadvertently. For example, many email tools will show you who opened the email or clicked on your call-to-action, and, more importantly, who did not. You can then send an additional email (or more) to those who did not open or click on it, using different subject lines and content to see what worked best.



Studies show that 83% of the charitable gifts people begin on your website are never completed.

You might be surprised to learn that your website has many of the most common obstacles to online giving that **LIMIT** your givers' generosity.

3

REVIEW YOUR GIVING EXPERIENCE

In times of crisis, it's more important than ever that your giving experience be compelling and seamless. Before you launch your campaigns, double-check these elements.



MAKE IT EASY TO FIND YOUR GIVING PAGE

Simplify your website menu and home page. Make it very easy to find your giving form wherever they are on your website or church app.



INCLUDE GIVING ON WORSHIP EXPERIENCES

In order to comply with stay-at-home orders in many locations, churches are now offering live worship experiences in lieu of meeting in person. So don't forget to direct people to your online giving options before, during and after the live stream.



ENRICH YOUR GIVING OPPORTUNITIES

Use imagery, embedded links and video to educate and encourage givers about the why behind the ministry. Remember, a picture is worth a thousand words!



3

REVIEW YOUR GIVING EXPERIENCE

□ TAILOR ALL GIFT ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Ensure that givers are addressed by name in your "thank you for giving emails". Consider embedding a short thank you video from the pastor. And include links to additional ministry opportunities they may be unaware of.

□ REFRESH CONTENT REGULARLY

Don't let givers get the impression that you've put this important act of worship on autopilot. Keep both your giving page and your gift acknowledgments fresh and updated regularly. Give them something to look forward to, instead of same old/same old, week in and week out.

□ ASK FOR RECURRING GIFTS

Whenever you thank someone for a gift, ask if they'd like to simplify their future giving with recurring gift schedules. If someone completes a pledge, ask them if they'd like to transfer their pledge amount to another ministry.

***Vision2 giving
software was built
for generosity from
the ground up.***



How Vision2 Can Help

Vision2's online giving platform contains exclusive features that can be particularly useful during a crisis. Our specialty is helping churches connect with their congregation online in the same engaging, welcoming way they would in person.

FULLY INTEGRATED GIVING PAGE

Our patented technology allows your giving page to be indistinguishable from your website. Vision2 operates invisibly to help build givers' trust in your giving experience.

VISUAL MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

Givers want to know the impact of their gift, something a text-only drop-down list of giving designations simply can't give them. Vision2 giving pages can include an unlimited number of giving designations you can populate with images, video, and description.

CASH AND CHECK GIVERS DATA

Most online giving platforms are unable to accurately report on cash and check gifts. Vision2's reporting capability can help you tailor your campaigns to check and cash givers and see how many are transitioning to online giving options.

For your church's intentions to be seen as authentic and build trust, your giving software must **CONNECT** with your givers in the same engaging way you greet them in person.

Vision2 does.

Does yours?



HOW VISION2 CAN HELP

Vision2's online giving platform contains exclusive features that can be particularly useful during a crisis. Our specialty is helping churches connect with their congregation online in the same engaging, welcoming way they would in person.

GIVING WITHOUT LIMITS

Only Vision2 offers Giving Without Limits ...

No contract; No monthly fees; No limit on support;
No limit on number of users; No limit on transactions; No limit on the donation amount; No delays in receiving your money.

And , **NO LIMITS** to the **GROWTH** of your ...

Number of givers; Total amount of Gifts; Church Outreach; Church Missions; Church Impact; and much, much more!

FREE GIVING EXPERIENCE AUDIT

Please contact us if you would like to learn how we can help your church reach its full giving potential. We can do a quick audit of your current giving experience and offer some guidance on how to boost your bottom line.

Vision2 Systems

Giving Without Limits

www.vision2systems.com

855.272.0863

VISION•2