

Church Giving in Changing Times

CBF churches have found a myriad of innovative and creative ways to come together for worship and community during the days of the coronavirus. These times call for new ways of doing things, and taking the church offering is no exception.

Following are tips and resources on ways congregational leaders can make the transition to a virtual offering easier to navigate for church members:

■ Make Giving Easy

Now's the time to make the link to your church online giving form as easy to find as possible. Create a prominent "give button" directly on your home page with clear, large text, such as GIVE ONLINE HERE or GIVE TO THE OFFERING HERE.

This may seem obvious, but "Where do I mail my check?" is a frequent question people want answered, especially if they're used to dropping their offering in the plate or do not have giving envelopes. Make sure your church mailing address is prominent on the home page of your website in a large, clear font: "Please mail your tithes and offerings to. . ."

Many church members will still want to write a check. If your church doesn't already have giving envelopes, mail pre-addressed envelopes out to members.

■ Start Online Giving Now

If your church doesn't offer online giving, now's the time to get started. Here are a few online giving platforms used by CBF churches that are cost effective and easy to set up:

For churches only:

www.tithely.com
www.onrealm.org
www.pushpay.com

Merchant/online giving/point of service:

www.clover.com
www.squareup.com

■ Continue to Make Giving an Intentional Part of Worship

Giving IS worship. Whether live streaming your services or through other formats, continue to make giving and generosity a part of the worship experience.

- Remember to ASK for gifts. Pass the virtual plate. Share with the congregation the specific needs of your community at this time. Is your church setting up a special fund or encouraging gifts to the benevolence fund for members who have lost employment or are affected by the coronavirus in some way? Now's the time to make the needs of the community clear. People are generous and will want to help.
- Offer giving instructions during worship. If offering online services, include on a screen or in the electronic Order of Worship explicit guidance on how to give, including where to find the online giving form and where to mail checks.

■ Communicate Often about Specific Church Needs and How to Give

- Include congregational needs and how to give in church emails, social media, newsletters and other communications. All communications should a direct link to your church's online giving form and where to mail checks.
- Encourage recurring gifts either through your church's online giving platform or through the member's bank.
- Schedule regular giving reminders via email on Saturday or Sunday morning. We all need reminders, especially now that our regular schedules have been disrupted.
- Encourage members to use BillPay options through their local bank. They can set up recurring gifts to the church and there are no fees to either the church or to the church member.

■ Reach Out to Older Members of the Congregation for Extra Care

Pastoral care for the elderly who are most isolated and vulnerable to the virus is especially important in these times. Senior members are generally very concerned that their tithes reach the church. Staff, deacons and other lay leaders can lead outreach to seniors and shut-ins to make individual arrangements concerning their gifts along with helping to meet their other unique needs at this time.

With many members losing employment and widespread concern about retirement and other savings, sensitivity to the financial hardships of the community is paramount. But times of crisis can also bring out the best of the human spirit and appeal to Christian generosity and love. Not everyone will be adversely affected, and they will want to help. They will want to support their brothers and sisters in the church who are suffering and ensure the sustainability of their local congregation that nurtures them and gives them strength through all seasons.

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