

Offering Online Giving – The Time is Now

Online Giving is not trendy; it is a modern tool that man is using to pay for his commitments. Ever since mankind moved from bartering and started using a monetary system he has is constantly moving toward the most convenient method to pay for his obligations. He started by using currency, then checks, then credit cards and then online bank transactions. Today he makes payments by scanning using an app with his smart phone. Churches have always been practical when considering new methods for giving, for good reason, as nobody expects to see credit card swipers or ATM machines in the vestibule of their church. The time, however, for parishes to offer an Online Giving program for their parishioners has arrived.

Online Giving is a convenient way for parishioners to tithe to their parish. Most people no longer wish to write checks, let alone weekly checks, to authorize money to be taken from their checking accounts. It provides better cash flow to the parish, allowing them to pay their bills, because the funds from Online Giving do not stop when someone is out of town on vacation. Money deposited through Online Giving is more secure and for each online donation there is no need for a Sunday collection counter nor a person to drive to the bank to make the deposit.

I worked for 2 small parishes. Though we first thought that Online Giving was not viable for our smaller parishes, we were able to work with our provider so that overall costs to run the program were very small. When we launched the Online Giving program, the resulting donation increases from those households who participated was a pleasant surprise and confirmed we had made the correct decision. There are several suppliers who offer Online Giving services. I would recommend that parishes considering a program consult with other parishes that already use a provider. There are a few leaders out there such as Our Sunday Visitor and ParishSoft but the field of providers is growing. Another recommendation is to ask the provider to work with you to hold down costs. Working for smaller parishes I was able to reduce the setup fee, the annual fee, and the provider also agreed to pay for the printed matter to launch the program.

Listed below are some other thoughts related to Online Giving

- Launch Your Campaign late in Lent or Advent

Churches are more successful when launching their Online Giving campaigns during a season when giving is traditionally higher.

- Online Giving and Stewardship Go Hand-In-Hand

Both Online Giving and year-round parish Stewardship education have parishioners think about their commitment to tithing. Stewardship parishes who offer Online Giving integrate this alternative giving tool into their stewardship renewal commitment process asking parishioners to review their tithing amount annually.

- Online Giving – It's The Difference Between "Tipping and Tithing"

Parishioners who participate on a parish Online Giving program and move away from dropping money into the weekly collection plate make a significant leap toward tithing. With Online Giving they consciously make a commitment to God and their parish versus taking some money from their pocket on a Sunday; as one pastor put it, "it's the difference between tipping and tithing."

- Should You Offer Credit Card Giving?

Though using credit cards to tithe does provide another option to giving it is a decision best left up to each parish. Credit card tithing fits a smaller niche of parishioners or sometimes a year-end opportunity to give when cash flow is poor. One pastor mentioned that he has only one person using a credit card option but he did receive a large year-end large donation from a parishioner using a credit card. The parishioner who made the donation later told the pastor that he wanted to make a large donation to his parish that also fit his situation for tax purposes for that reporting year.