

# Beyond *the* Offering

Energizing Congregational Giving



Alexander Haas  
TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONS THAT TRANSFORM LIVES



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[www.fundraisingcounsel.com](http://www.fundraisingcounsel.com)



from the Carolina office of  
**Jerry W. Henry** | Partner

"Another e-newsletter?" you may ask?

*Our hope at Alexander Haas is that this brief information piece will be practical and useful. Our goal through its periodic appearance in your inbox, is to provide insights to help you raise the funds your congregation needs to accomplish greater ministry and mission goals. We invite you to interact with us so that we can be even more useful to you and your faith congregation.*

Send comments, topic requests, or other thoughts to me [here](#).

## Can We Buck the National Trends in Faith-Based Giving?

Earlier this summer, just about the time that many of our congregations were making plans for their fall stewardship / giving programs, Giving USA released its report on what had occurred in 2018. And the findings should give us pause and make us assess what is actually occurring in our own congregations.

**Giving USA**, the longest running report on giving to charities, found that giving to religious organizations in 2018 was down 1.5% to just 29% of all charitable giving in the United States. (Remember, giving to religion 30 years ago was over 50%!) Giving to religion has been on a fairly consistent downward slope for several decades although the amount of dollars given to religion is still the largest segment within the nonprofit sector. While total giving to all charities rose to \$427.71 billion, much of the growth came from foundations and corporations and not from individuals. The statistics from 2018 show that giving by individuals actually fell. This should be of concern to congregations since they receive their primary financial support from individuals - not corporations or foundations.

A number of factors are being cited as reasons for the decline in giving last year ranging from the tax law changes that greatly reduced the number of itemizers to the thought that charitable giving experienced a slight "correction" in 2018 after a very robust up-tick in giving in 2017. In my work with congregations and faith-based organizations of varying background, shapes and sizes, I find that many are not experiencing the decline. While some congregations have experienced a plateau in pledging units, others are experiencing a slight increase. Some are seeing larger gifts being given in the offering plate, yet few individuals are willing to make a written pledge commitment.

What does this mean for your congregation? I recommend congregations consider four steps to help you understand whether or not the decline in giving to religion is impacting your congregation.

1. **Conduct your own internal research** on your giving for the past three years or more. Most congregations review year-to-year statistics, but tracking more years will help identify specific trends

which you can address strategically.

2. Explore opportunities for reassigning resources in order to **engage a staff member whose sole focus is raising the funds**. For too long, many congregations have avoided investing the time, energy and resources in doing true development work similar to other nonprofit organizations. Only the largest of congregations has a staff member focused on "developing" donors with a focus on increased giving.
3. **Invest in wealth-screening research** to help focus the all-important development work in which you should be involved. Congregations are not exempt from the reality of charitable giving that shows a majority of the financial support will come from a small number of individuals.
4. **Engage a consulting firm** to conduct a development / stewardship assessment for your congregation. An objective and experienced consultant can help congregations develop strategies to be even more successful in achieving their financial goals. These goals will, in the end, translate in to greater ministry and mission.

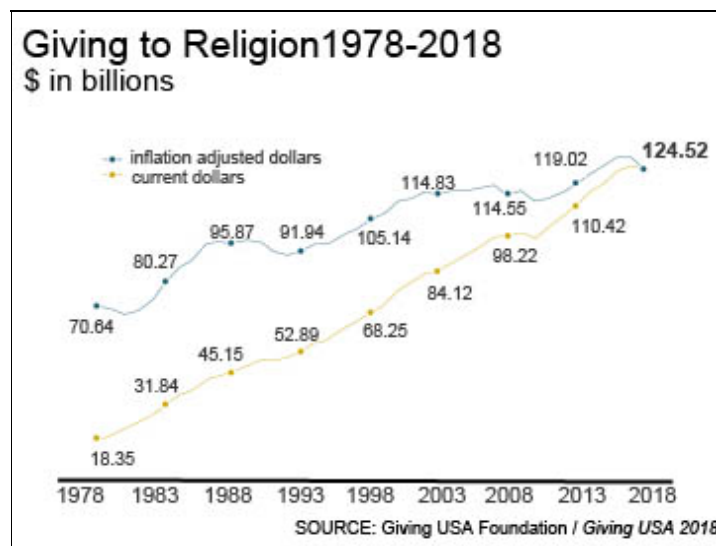
You may not be able to slow the national trend of giving to religion, but you can look internally at your own congregation and determine your best course of action to "buck the trend." Many are doing just that!

## Giving to Religion: The Numbers

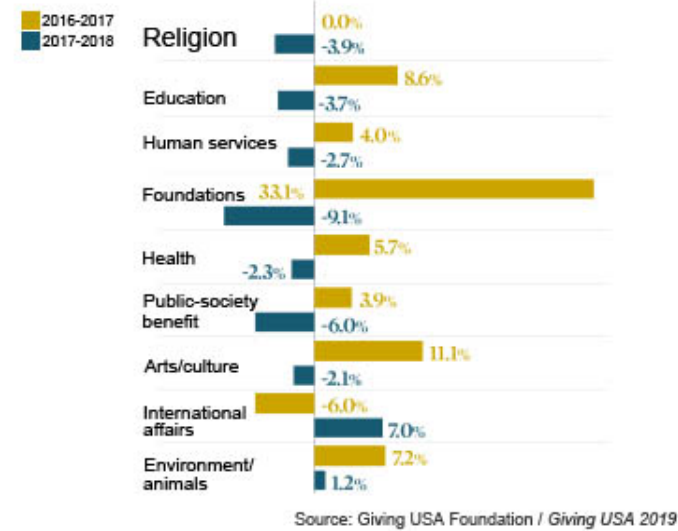
*Giving USA 2019: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2018*, was released in June, and amid a complex climate for charitable giving, individuals, bequests, foundations and corporations gave an estimated \$427.71 billion to charities in 2018.

Giving to **religious** organizations declined 1.5% from 2017 (in current dollars) to \$124.52 billion.

- Religious organizations received the largest share of charitable dollars in 2018, with 29% of total giving. This is the first time that giving to religion has fallen below 30% of overall giving.
- Giving to religious organizations has been declining as a share of total giving since the five-year period beginning in 1984, when it reached 57%. During the last five-year period (2014-2018), contributions to the religion subsector comprised 31% of total giving.
- In 2017, donations to the religion subsector totaled the highest inflation-adjusted amount recorded to date. The 2017 total remained the highest in 2018.
- Adjusted for inflation, giving to religion remained stagnant between 2016 and 2017, and declined 3.9% between 2017 and 2018. Cumulatively, giving to religion declined 3.9% in inflation-adjusted dollars between 2016 and 2018.

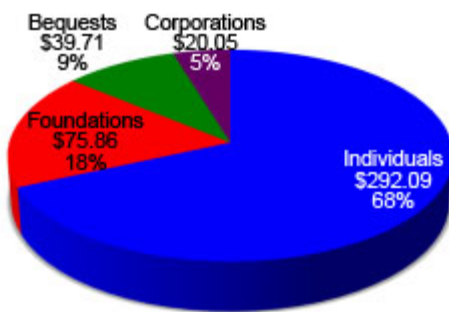


## Changes in Giving by Type of Organization

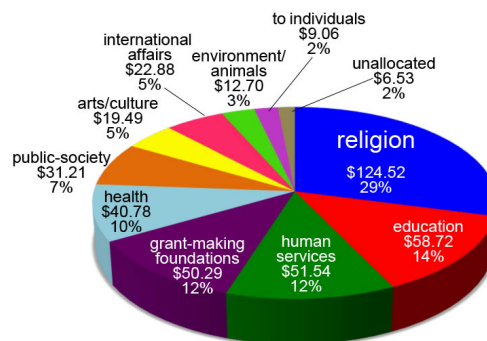


## Giving by Source

\$427.71 billion



## Giving by Recipient



More information from the *Giving USA 2019* report can be found [here](#).

"...With the steady hand and generous spirit of Alexander Haas counsel, our campaign was a true success. I thank God that Alexander Haas accepted the call to assist organizations such as ours raise funds for ministry."



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EPISCOPAL  
CHURCH

REV. MICHAEL R. SULLIVAN  
RECTOR (FORMER), HOLY  
INNOCENT'S EPISCOPAL  
CHURCH

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The Culture of Philanthropy



Former Senior Pastor of First Presbyterian Church of Atlanta, **George Wirth** joins Alexander Haas President & CEO David King on this edition of *Futures in Fundraising*.

Wirth and King discuss the culture of philanthropy within faith-based organizations and the pastors' role for casting the vision for fundraising.

[click on picture for podcast](#)



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## ***Transforming Institutions***

### **Welcome Returning Client Partners**



**Amigos for Christ** is a returning Client Partner.



**Grace Church Cathedral** in Charleston, SC is a returning Client Partner.



**St. John's Episcopal Cathedral** in Jacksonville, FL is a returning Client Partner.



**Saint Pauls United Church of Christ** in Chicago, IL is a returning Client Partner.

For more than 30 years, Alexander Haas has been a fixture in the nonprofit community. We are honored to have worked with both large and small faith-based organizations, helping sew the seeds of compassion, hope and charity to mankind.

See a list of our faith-based client *partners*...

## Our *Transformational* Services

Raising the funds to meet the mission and ministry needs of churches is becoming increasingly challenging. At Alexander Haas, we understand the challenges that congregations face in raising the funds to support their mission. More importantly, we understand how to overcome those challenges. We offer a variety of stewardship services for the unique needs of faith-based organizations.

[What can we help you with?](#)



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