

Beyond *the* Offering

Energizing Congregational Giving



Alexander-Haas
TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONS THAT TRANSFORM LIVES

First Things *First*



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www.fundraisingcounsel.com



from the Carolina office of
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It's Back to the Three Rs

Here we are in the final weeks of what has been an *annus horribilis* (Latin for "horrible year") in so many ways! This past July, the **Lake Institute on Faith & Giving conducted a survey** to determine how congregations were impacted in the first five months of the pandemic.

The report, published in September, found that while a majority (52%) of congregations reported an increase in participation by members and others, 41% of the groups responding experienced a decrease in giving. Overall, congregational giving declined by 4.4% on average from February through June 2020 compared to the same period in 2019, the survey found. While 41% of the congregations reported a decrease in giving, more than a quarter (28%) said giving increased.

We know that religious giving follows specific trends in participation. This means numerous studies will be eagerly awaiting information to determine the impact of having moved services online or developing hybrid opportunities for gathering online or in social-distanced seating in worship spaces.

Early in the pandemic period, we encouraged organizations to focus on maintaining regular and personal communication with their constituents – albeit now by telephone or video conference calls. These touchpoints for checking in on constituents' well-being was important and helped to ease some anxiety as communities of faith moved into the world of live-streamed or recorded services.

As we move into the final weeks of 2020 and as we continue to weather anxious moments as the winter months approach, let me encourage you to focus on three Rs: Relationships, Resources, and Reassessment.

- **Relationships:** Check in again with your members especially as the holidays approach. I just heard of one group of church leaders reaching out by telephone to contact every member household in their congregation. While they're sincerely checking in to make sure members are well, they are also

listening for comments of concern: when will the church reopen its doors? When will the music programs and choirs begin again? While you and your volunteers likely made similar calls in April and May, now is a good time to check in again. This is good stewardship of your donors. I'm heartened by many stories I've heard of members commenting, "Oh, I'm doing fine. How are you folks at the church doing? And what can I do to support you more right now?"

- **Resources:** Conduct an evaluation of not just how much your members are giving, but **how** they are giving. Are they giving through direct mail? Have you noticed a shift to online or electronic giving? Are people only using credit cards or do you detect an openness to direct bank withdrawals? Having gone online for services, many churches have experienced their greatest loss in "plate offerings" – and for some churches, that is significant. What are you doing to make the act of giving meaningful as well as easy?
- **Reassessment:** Having evaluated your resources, and while doing the best you can in forecasting a 2021 budget, begin making your plans for the first quarter of 2021. Is it time for a true stewardship/giving assessment of your faith community in light of all the changes you've experienced? The Lake Institute survey found that none of the congregations surveyed expected to increase their budgets during the next year. A majority (52%) plan to maintain their current budgets, while 48% anticipate budget reductions. An objective analysis will help you determine what is best for your congregation.

With a focus on these three Rs as we navigate these ever-turbulent waters in the remaining weeks of 2020, perhaps we can position 2021 to be an *annus mirabilis* (an amazing year)!

Tithing & Giving Updates

Tech-Savvy Faith-Based Groups Thrive in Pandemic

New research by *Givelify*, an online giving portal used by tens of thousands of places of worship, found that more than 55% of faith leaders reported, have reported that contributions have either stayed the same or increased since the onset of the health crisis. Of those, 26% reported moderate increases and another 5% said they had experienced a significant increase in donations during the health crisis.

The best fundraising returns occurred among faith-based groups with robust online giving and communication options including Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube, which allows for live streaming of services and other communications for congregants and members still meeting virtually. During the pandemic, the advantage of digitally savvy organizations has swelled; they received more than five times the amount raised by organizations without online tools.

The groups that pivoted quickly to new digital strategies, smoothly transition their fundraising to online platforms and seemed to thrive during the crisis. Ultimately, Givelify's research indicates the older and/or smaller institutions with less online capabilities may certainly struggle to keep up. *Inside Philanthropy*, Oct.

Lilly Endowment Awards \$93M to Congregations

The **Lilly Endowment** awarded 92 grants totaling nearly \$93 million through the *Thriving Congregations Initiative* to help congregations across the United States strengthen their ministries. The grants will support, over the next three to five years, the work of individual congregations as well as colleges and universities, theological schools, denominational agencies, and other faith-based organizations working with thousands of congregations across the country.

Recipients include, among others: **Convencion Bautista Hispana de Texas** (San Antonio, TX), the **Dakota Annual Conference of the United Methodist Church** (Mitchell, SD), and the **Mere Christianity Forum** (Travelers Rest, SC). The entire list can be found [here](#). *PND, 10-2*

It starts with an email....
and ends with 30 minutes of
fundraising counsel*
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*free time

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TODAY**

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We Think You Should Know

Giving Was Up 7.5% in the First Half of 2020

According to a new survey, charitable giving in the first half of 2020 increased by almost 7.5% over the first half of 2019. That marks a big shift from the first quarter of this year, when giving was 6% less in the same period in 2019. The second quarter also marked a five-year high in the number of donors and contributions.

- Donors who gave less than \$250 were a major driver of growth, increasing 19.2% over the first six months of last year.
- The number of midlevel donors, who made gifts of \$250 to \$999, and major donors, who made gifts of \$1,000 or more, increased year-over-year by 8.1% and 6.4%, respectively.
- The overall number of donors increased by 7.2% over 2019, with new donors increasing by 12.6%.
- Donor retention increased 1.8% overall. Despite a sharp decline in the number of new 2019 donors retained in 2020, the number of repeat donors retained or recaptured from previous years increased sharply in the second quarter.

The results are from the *Fundraising Effectiveness Project*, which is managed by the **Association of Fundraising Professionals** in collaboration with **GivingTuesday** and analyzes donation data from the *Growth in Giving Database*. *COP, 10-6*

In-Depth Look at Those Gifts

By mid-May, nearly a third of U.S. households had made a charitable donation in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. A report from the **Women's Philanthropy Institute at the Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy** found that:

- 32% of respondents said they had given directly in support of a charitable organization, individual, or business.
- 48.3% said they had provided indirect support — for example, by ordering takeout to support a

local restaurant and its employees or continuing to pay individuals and businesses for services they could not render — including 58.4% of those between the ages of 18 and 29 and 52.6% of those between the ages of 30 and 44.

- 6.7% gave more to faith-based charities, while 21% gave less.
- 18.1% of respondents said they gave more to charities working to respond to pandemic-related health and basic needs, while 19.4% gave less.

Asked how various impacts of COVID-19 have affected their giving:

- 32.8% said they gave less because of uncertainty about the future economic impacts of the pandemic.
- 28.1% said they gave less because of uncertainty about the further spread of the virus.
- 27.7% said they gave less because their income had fallen as a result of lockdowns.

PND, 9-2

We Want You to *Know*....

Transforming Institutions



St. Mark's Episcopal Church in New Canaan, CT is a new 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 sow the seeds of compassion, hope and charity.

[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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