

TALKING TITHING IN TIMES OF SOCIAL DISTANCING



Among the many challenges impacting churches during the current Coronavirus Crisis is how to communicate to church members about tithing when all activities of the church are happening remotely through digital media platforms.

In the past, electronic giving may have been one channel by which church members could give their tithes and offerings, but in the current environment it is the only practical manner.

Because many people may not be accustomed to these options, clear communication about your electronic giving options are critical.

The specific methods for giving will vary from church to church, but the following is presented as a reference tool for helping craft your church's communications plan for tithing electronically.

STEP 1: IDENTIFY POTENTIAL COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Evaluate your existing channels for communication and identify the best means for sharing information.

Because tithing is a matter of obedience for followers of Christ, it is a particular form of giving relevant to church members and not the general public. As such, when communicating on public facing platforms such as a website or public social media page, prominent messages about giving can be counterproductive to the ministry of the church.

In preparing your church's tithing communication plan, consider which communication platforms are best.

EMAIL: Emailing church members is an ideal means of communication because it allows you to direct the message to those for whom it is most relevant. If you don't have an active email list, or it's out of date, or you haven't used it much in the past, ask for help from church members to update your list.

STREAMING VIDEOS: If an offertory is part of your regular weekly worship service, include some instruction for electronic giving during the online service.

WEBSITE: Consider posting giving instruction information

as a page on your website. This provides an easy way to link your church members to helpful tools and information. However, you do not need to feature the "giving" link in your menu bar or main site navigation. Perhaps consider linking to the page in your email communications or putting the link in the footer of your homepage where it can be found by church members, but is not prominent to site visitors.

SOCIAL MEDIA: Like websites, social media pages on platforms like Facebook are virtual front doors for your church. As such, they may not be the ideal way to communicate tithing information.

STEP 2: IDENTIFY THE BEST FORMATS FOR COMMUNICATING

Once you have identified the best channels for communication, identify the best formats for communicating your message. Ideas include:

- A written plan sent in an email or posted on a webpage.
- A text message sent to church members in chat groups
- A verbal and visual message included in streamed worship services
- A short, recorded video that can be linked in an email or posted on a website giving page.

STEP 3: CLARIFY YOUR MESSAGE

WHAT TO SAY...

Talk about the WHY of Electronic Giving...

- "Current circumstances require us to adapt and respond as the body of Christ"
- "We know that you are committed to honoring the Lord through your faithful giving and may have questions about how to do so in this unique time..."

Describe HOW the church will use financial resources during this time.

Focus on the vision that their giving will accomplish. People give to vision, not the "bottom-line"

Emphasize that giving is about serving others, meeting needs, and leading spiritually. Consider highlighting some practical examples.

- *"Pastors/staff are responding to needs and crisis, mobilizing prayer and support ministries to meet the growing needs of our community and city, producing, leading, and preaching for our weekly streaming services"*
- *Share about ways that spiritual and pastoral needs are growing in this unprecedented time.*
- *Talk about critical ministries of the church that are caring for people in this time*
- *Highlight ongoing commitments to support missionaries abroad.*

Voice and speak to any KNOWN QUESTIONS OR OBJECTIONS about electronic giving...

- *Is it secure?*
- *Is it private?*
- *Is it recurring, one-time, or both?*
- *Can I see what I've given?*
- *How will my privacy be maintained?*
- *How will the church communicate financial updates and needs?*

Show HOW to give electronically

Show them how to get to relevant information. Use a screen shot or screen capture. Put it on the screen when you talk about it during your streaming services so people see exactly where they can find the information.

Let them know all the ways they can give electronically.

Let them know if they can setup monthly recurring payments or if you only support one-time gifts.

End your online giving communications with a pastoral reminder, especially during your regular online streaming events. You may something like...

- *We only ask this of our church family. Giving is not an expectation if you're our guest joining us online.*
- *For followers of Jesus, giving is an act of faith, obedient worship and dependence. Giving of our financial resources reflects the Father's generous love for us in Christ*
- *Your sacrificial financial support enables our church to love one another and our city.*

STEP 4: SAY THANK YOU

When you receive electronic gifts be sure to acknowledge the gift and say thank you promptly. The acknowledgement assures the giver that their funds were received and properly recorded.

In sending the thank you message, consider carefully the sender in view of the privacy commitments the church makes to its members.

For example, some churches elect not to share the specific tithing commitments of church members with the pastors. They do this to shield pastors from potential accusations of giving preference or favor to those that give more.

As such, a thank you message with specific references to giving details should only come from a person that should have knowledge of that information.

STEP 5: STAY CONNECTED

If you have additional questions or are learning things in this process that can be of help to other churches, please let us know at cmioffice@churchministries.org.



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