FINANCIAL GIVING DURING COVID-19

**COVID-19 Pandemic Responses**

**The Diocese of Nova Scotia & Prince Edward Island**

**March 19, 2020**

**How can we gather up offerings when people aren’t able to gather?** With in-person worship services, events and other congregation-related gatherings cancelled, necessary expenses still must be paid. Depending on how long we must work together to flatten the pandemic curve, the budget of our churches is being stretched. Rather than wringing our hands let’s be proactive. Here are some ideas:

**1. Pray**

Always the best foundation for any ministry in the church. Specifically pray for the finances of your parish and for generous hearts. Here is a prayer provided by the Episcopal Diocese of Washington (slightly modified):

**Creator of all we enjoy, we give you thanks for the countless people who have gone before us in the leadership of this church. We know that the Holy Spirit inspired some as they longed for this church, others as they built this church and still others as they lovingly and boldly led this church through times of abundance and times of scarcity. Help us to be bold as we model giving of time and money to this parish. Make our bold and generous financial offering a symbol of both our integrity and our gratitude. Help us to encourage giving, just as you did while physically teaching among your disciples. Amen.**

**2. Clarify *Why* Your Church is Raising Money Right Now**

While regular offering is what’s needed, having a compelling case to encourage people to act *now* is key. (See link to article, WRITING A CASE FOR SUPPORT, by Rev. Michael Erwin.) Write out your parish’s mini case for support. Be clear with a specific call to action at the start and end. Invite people to also consider an additional gift or to double their regular offering. You may want to address one or all the following in your case for support (but keep it to 1 page):

• A gap in this year’s operating budget because of cancelled in-person gatherings or postponed events.

• Additional support for ministries, parishioners and church staff most vulnerable to health and economic impacts due to COVID-19.

• Reserve funds for this year (or next) to cushion the budget due to impact the stock market may have on investments.

**3. Share a Heart-Warming Story and a Virtual Coffee**

It’s easy to get caught up in the deluge of information and news regarding COVID-19. To change it up send out a weekly e-mail or use Facebook live to share a good news story. Perhaps it could be on why you’re grateful for your church or a recent story about love in action that you personally witnessed. You might encourage parishioners to write a short response to why they’re grateful for their faith community. You may even collect some of these gratitude reflections and send some out through the parish e-news (with their permission of course).

Invite your community to virtually come together through Zoom or another platform for a conversation about how people are undertaking ministry and stewardship (in its widest sense, not just related to money). Prepare some questions for folks to respond to so the story sharing can easily get started. One question might be, “How are you giving of your time, talent and treasure during this extraordinary period?”

**4. Electronic, Online Giving and Snail Mail**

Some parishes offer a number of options for giving towards ministry costs. You may wish to revisit your processes or promote them more. You may wish to add additional ways people can financially support the congregation’s work. Remember the easier it is for people to give, the more apt you will receive these offerings. Younger generations tend to use online options, while older generations may still prefer writing cheques, etc.

* **PAR:** Pre-Authorized Remittance is a service available to any parish. These are automatic withdrawals from a bank account or credit card. If you don’t already have this option for your congregation members visit the Diocesan PAR webpage for information. Tammy Cummins, Payroll Administrator (tcummins@nspeidiocese.ca) can offer additional support.
* **EFTs:** Electronic Funds Transfer is a way to transfer money from one bank account to another, either within a single financial institution or across multiple institutions, via computer-based systems, without the direct intervention of bank staff. All major banking institutions offer this option. Check with your parish’s bank to make arrangements.
* **CANADA HELPS:** A popular electronic option that offers fundraising technology for all charities. More than 20,000 charities depend on CanadaHelps’ online fundraising tools. Charities get their donations quickly with weekly bank deposits. www.canadahelps.org
* **SNAIL MAIL:** People are encouraged to mail in their Sunday offering to their parish office. Remind folks to sanitize their hands before writing the cheque and touching the envelope. Ask givers NOT to lick the envelope, rather use a cloth or sponge to dampen it. Be sure your full mailing address is shared clearly and widely. For example, the church office voicemail, Facebook, webpage, e-mail, etc.
* **DROP-OFF/PICK-UP:** This option needs to be well-organized and with SafeR Church financial protocols considered. Provide a secure drop-off place for envelopes and have it monitored regularly. Pick-up arrangements can be offered using a safe place (Examples: a sealed container on a door step, newspaper tube, mailbox) to avoid theft and personal contact. Always be mindful to keep hands, surfaces touched (ex. plastic bags) disinfected, and attend to proper social distancing.

**5. Get Creative**

Overdo it on the warm, fuzzies and connecting with your community. This is one of the main reasons people belong or are associated to a church. For instance, this week a 9-year-old wrote a card, photographed it, and emailed it to an elderly parishioner. You can do the same and more. Get creative.

**6. Saying Thanks**

A critically important and very simple component of fundraising is offering a thank-you to givers. The sooner, the better! (Do not wait to send a thank you at tax receipt time.) A culture of generosity is built on a foundation of gratitude. Just as we thank God for the blessings in our lives, we thank individuals and groups for all their generous support of ministry in their community. One of the most effective ways is through a personal gesture expressing appreciation – a hand-written note, a phone call or a personal e-mail message. Try to include specific details and not just offer a generic thank-you. Remind those who give that, ‘they are making a difference in the world God loves!’

**7. Celebrate**

Plan a celebration! When the date is set for the first church service back together, CELEBRATE! Make it a big deal – have a banner and give extra time for chatting together.

It could be as simple as a special coffee hour with treats galore, a potluck, a spaghetti dinner, or a wine & cheese. Set out a donation basket and advertise that there will be an opportunity to donate to support your parish or perhaps another Anglican ministry such as the PWRDF or the Anglican Foundation of Canada.

Lastly, it is important to remember that people forget or are not aware of the financial needs of a parish, especially with so many things going on around them at this time. **It is a priority to ask and make giving as easy as possible.** (Do NOT make donating to your church difficult.)

Tell them who you are and what you are about (church is not just a building or an institution). Your congregation and leaders contribute in many small and sometimes grand ways. Help them to know that they are making a difference in the lives of people, near and far, through their financial support. Tell the compelling good news stories! And GIVE THANKS!

*(This resource is adapted with permission from* ***Financial Giving During COVID-19****, written by Gillian Doucet Campbell, Director of Stewardship and Development for the Anglican Diocese of Niagara.)*