A Comprehensive Approach to Online Giving

Online giving has the potential for enormous good. E-giving allows churches to more efficiently communicate their needs, makes it easy for parishioners to donate on a regular basis and potentially saves dollars on fundraising costs. Parishes that offer online giving as a way to make offertory gifts, as well as giving to other ministries and collections, have access to one-time gifts and the option for parishioners to set up a recurring gift over time. Parishioners who choose to make recurring gifts provide sustaining gifts to your ministry.

While there are many different companies that offer online giving services, the diocesan stewardship office has gathered basic information on a few companies and their products for your review. This information is not an endorsement, but rather, a starting place to begin gathering information. At the back of this manual, you will find a review of several online giving options.

The pastor is most familiar with the size and scope of his church. With the involvement of parish staff, finance council, parish council, or other volunteers, the pastor is in the best position to research and decide which online giving company is the best fit for their communities.

For additional information about online giving, please contact the diocesan Stewardship Office at (865) 584-3307 or by email at stewardship@dioknox.org
The Case for Online Giving

**Increases overall parish contributions:** consistent offertory gifts, minimizes the seasonal contribution slump and increases offertory because online givers tend to make larger gifts.

**Quick response in times of crisis:** parishioners can immediately respond to a natural disaster or crisis from anywhere.

**Convenience for parishioners:** easy to manage & track contributions, available 24/7, and they do not need to remember to write a check.

**Frees up time for parish staff:** reduces the time spent tallying contributions, preparing deposits and updating and reconciling donor records & bank statements.

**Reduces risk:** moves sensitive parishioner data out of the parish office, encrypts sensitive parishioner data (credit card / bank account #’s).
Adding Online Giving to My Parish Website

There are two important questions to ask when adding online giving to a parish website: Is it easy to use? and Does it provide a safe and secure experience?

**Easy to Use:** The purpose of a website is to find the information you need quickly and easily.

- Can a visitor to the parish website locate the donation button easily? The donate button should be prominent on every page of your parish website. Research suggests the donate button should be in the upper portion of the website and that it should look different from the other text and images on the page.

- Does the online giving page look and feel like my parish? People give 38% more when donation pages are branded with an organization’s name, logo, signature colors, photos and information that helps to reinforce the intention of the gift (i.e., what will the donation be used for?).

- Can someone set up a recurring gift? People who set up recurring gifts donate more money annually when compared to one-time donors. Include recurring gift instructions on all donation pages.

- Can I easily view the parish website on a smart phone or tablet? A mobile-friendly, responsive donation form can yield 34% more gifts than non-responsive pages. A mobile-friendly site makes donating easy regardless of the device a parishioner uses. The parish website should be easily viewed on a smartphone, a tablet, an iPad, as well as on a laptop or desktop computer.

**Security:** Donors should be taken directly to a secure giving page by clicking the donate button. Avoid security risks by linking to a secure page directly from your parish website. Ensure the site uses encryption technology. Check the address bar on the page requiring sensitive information to be posted. The URL should begin with "https." The "s" stands for "secure" and indicates that sensitive information will be encrypted and transmitted securely.
How Can I Tell Parishioners About Online Giving?

The most important way to promote online giving is through the pastor’s visible support. To do this, the pastor can look for opportunities to reinforce the positive impact of online giving within homilies over a number of weeks around the kick-off of the program as well as throughout the year.

Organizing online giving sign-up days can also be effective in gaining buy-in and participation from parishioners. Prepare for sign-up days with computer stations and trained volunteers who can walk parishioners through the process and answer their questions.

In addition to visible pastor support, the following are also effective ways to communicate with parishioners about online giving:

**By Email:**
- Over half of all emails are now read on a mobile device.
- Online giving can be linked directly within an email.
- Test your email campaign. Try testing subject lines, sending times, calls to action, and images.

**Through Social Media:**
- 78% of all potential donors have at least one social media profile.
- Embed online giving on the parish Facebook page.
- Parishes that post daily see a 44% increase in giving.

**Text Message:**
- Over 92% of Americans own a mobile phone.
- Encourage followers to text-to-donate while broadcasting on Facebook Live.
- Text-to-donate keywords make it easy for supporters to give at home or on the go.

**Direct Mail:**
- 35% of donors prefer to respond to direct mail by giving online.
- Empower donors to give by sending a text, on the website, or scanning a QR code.
- Collect cell phone numbers and emails.
But the offertory is a visible sign of our faithful self-sacrifice during the Mass. Doesn’t online giving take away from this?

While online giving can provide many benefits to a parish, some may have concerns related to how parishioners can continue to participate in Mass during the offertory.

First and foremost, by giving online, the parishioner should be made aware that they are helping the church to have a steady flow of support for the ministries that are critical to the parish community throughout the year.

Additionally, many online giving companies make offertory cards available. These cards can be used during the collection and put into the offertory plate or basket instead of an envelope, cash or check. Depending on the online giving provider, personalized cards may be printed or even mailed to a parishioner’s home in advance. The cards offer a visible sign of the parishioner’s electronic donations during the Mass.
Choosing an Online Giving Provider: Important Questions to Ask

1. **Fees:** How much does it cost? What are the company’s transaction fees when processing credit cards, debit cards and ACH (money coming from a donor’s bank account)? Are there monthly fees, PCI compliance fees or other costs associated with signing up?

2. **Contracts:** Can I cancel the service at any time? Are there long-term commitments/contracts?

3. **Customer Support:** Will my parish be given a dedicated representative to walk us through set-up, ongoing maintenance, and compliance issues? Who is responsible for the program kick-off? Will customized materials be available throughout the year?

4. **Data:** Will data easily transfer or import into my current church management system? Can I pull reports to study trends or reconcile bank records? Does the parish send an annual tax statement for online gifts or does the online giving company take care of this?

5. **Parishioner Experience:** Is the process simple for the donor? Can they set up a recurring gift easily (i.e. set it and forget it)? Can they cancel or change their giving at any time? Can donors opt to cover the processing fees? Can a parishioner view their giving history online?

6. **Security:** How is personal information kept secure? Is the online giving company PCI Compliant (meaning they adhere to the standards and regulations outlined for the payment card industry)? Do they use 256 bit SSL when transmitting data over the Internet? Who is liable in cases of fraud?

7. **Branding:** Can the website be branded with my parish logo, photos, videos, colors or other unique features that makes the site feel like our church?
**WeShare offered by LPi (Liturgical Publications)**

Website: [https://www.4lpi.com/solutions/church-online-giving/](https://www.4lpi.com/solutions/church-online-giving/)

Contact:
Lucas Brunmeier, Business Development Manager  
Phone: 262.207.2639, Cell: 414.412.3759, Email: lbrunmeier@4lpi.com

**Pros:**
- Mobile-friendly site makes viewing on a desktop or phone easy
- Clear focus on stewardship with support materials to reinforce giving
- Allows for online giving as well as event-based registration
- Marketing materials available to get the word out and drive adoption
- Acts as Merchant of Record

**Con:**
- May provide more services than a small parish needs

Snapshot of what their giving website looks like:

![Snapshot of WeShare website](image-url)
Abundant offered by ACS Technologies (for parishes who are PDS customers)

Website: [https://www.acstechnologies.com/acs/church-giving-solutions/online-giving/](https://www.acstechnologies.com/acs/church-giving-solutions/online-giving/)

Contact:
Ashley Perry, Solutions Consultant, ACS Technologies
Phone: 800-736-7425 x8270  Email: ashley@acst.com

Pros:
- Simple platform, very easy to use
- Good pricing options
- Fully integrates with PDS at no additional fee

Cons:
- While Abundant offers kickoff materials, parish staff responsible for roll-out

Snapshot of what their giving website looks like:
GivePlus+ offered by Vanco

Website: https://www.vancopayments.com/egiving

Contact:
Peter Johnson, Giving Sales Advisor
Phone: 952-352-8136, Email: Peter.Johnson@vancopayments.com

Pros:
- Basic platform, easy to use
- Good pricing options
- Quick turnaround for parish to receive funds

Cons:
- While Vanco offers kickoff materials, parish staff responsible for roll-out

Snapshot of what their giving website looks like:
eCatholic Payments offered by eCatholic

Website: https://ecatholic.com/dioknox

Contact:
Karen Lackey
Phone: 877-932-1776 ext. 710, Email: DioKnox@eCatholic.com

Pros:
- Very user-friendly
- “Drag and drop” features makes setup easy
- Good customer support and simple how-to videos

Cons:
- While eCatholic offers kickoff materials, parish staff responsible for roll-out
- Additional charge for debit transactions (*gifts by debit card represent 65% of all online giving transactions).

Snapshot of what their giving website looks like:
**Faith Direct offered by Ministry Brands**

Website: [www.faithdirect.net](http://www.faithdirect.net)

Contact:
Leslie Stanion, Account Executive – Southern Region  
Cell: 916.705.1559 | Phone: 866.507.8757  
Email: leslie@faithdirect.net

**Pros:**
- Designed to be an extension of the parish office
- Reduced burden for parish staff to manage
- Fully coordinates all aspects of the program including mailings

**Cons:**
- Monthly program fee fits best with parishes of 500+ registered households

Snapshot of what their giving website looks like