

April 2020



ENCOUNTER!
Meeting Jesus
on Higher Ground.

*Blessed are they who mourn,
for they will be comforted
(Matt. 5:4).*

WISDOM

from ICSC strategic partners

This month's contributions come from
the following ICSC Strategic Partners:

blackbaud[™]
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Each month ICSC sends you practical information, whitepapers, and tips, as well as other insightful information from our Strategic Partners to assist you with your responsibility as stewards of the Church. We are very grateful to our Strategic Partners for their partnership and commitment to ICSC, and their professional wisdom is a wonderful gift to ICSC members.

In this edition ICSC brings you:

- * four ways to utilize technology for virtual engagement courtesy of **Blackbaud**.
- * philanthropy without fear presented by **GP Catholic Services**.
- * ideas to keep everyone in your parish community connected over the next month from **LPi**.
- * the complete guide to creating a digital strategy for your parish provided by **Pushpay**.
- * We invite you to visit the ICSC website and view **LPi's** video:

Everyday Stewardship Way of the Cross

a video devotion of the Stations of the Cross with a stewardship emphasis which offers people a way to pray this Lenten devotion easily without access to a church building or a booklet.

[Click Here](#)

ICSC promotes and supports Catholic teaching on stewardship by providing education and resources for dioceses, parishes, and institutions of the Roman Catholic Church.

4 Ways to Utilize Technology for Virtual Engagement

By Amanda Kepshire

We live in an era where websites and social media pages are a staple for nearly every person and organization, parishes and dioceses included. However, because of the in-person necessity of Mass and the sacraments, the Catholic Church hasn't always been as quick to jump on the virtual engagement train. In light of recent events, we can look at the impact of the COVID-19 virus as an example of the critical need for having quick access to virtual engagement options and tools.

1. Strengthen Your Email List

In your parish database, how many households do you have accurate email addresses for? Engaging parishioners virtually will rely heavily on the accuracy and breadth of your email data. You can certainly share information with parishioners through your website and social media channels (and you should!), but delivering important information directly to your parishioners' inboxes is so much more effective. Capturing emails isn't always easy, especially in a pinch, so keep in mind that there are great tools available to help you!

2. Communicate with Parishioners

Strong and frequent communication is key. Your parish is a vibrant, faith-filled community, so don't forget to keep things interactive! Email and communication campaigns are a great way to keep your parishioners informed and engaged all year long. Segmenting your messaging is a great way to ensure individual parishioners receive the information they care about most. Knowing that what they receive from you is relevant will keep them from hitting the 'unsubscribe' button.

3. Live Stream Mass

Live streaming Mass isn't very common, and understandably so, but there are instances where it's highly beneficial. Facing nation-wide Mass cancellations due to a pandemic is uncommon, but it's still good to have the tools ready to go. There are always members of the parish family who are sick or elderly and unable to attend. General streamings are great, but there is something to be said about participating virtually with the community you personally know and love. There are countless platforms available for streaming, even as simple as YouTube!

4. Encourage Online Financial Giving

Your parish relies on the weekly offertory to keep your mission alive. Parishioners are bound to get sick, travel, or even attend Mass at a neighboring parish. Encouraging parishioners to give online will ensure your offertory remains steady, regardless of attendance. And you don't have to ignore the offertory basket! Many parishes offer reusable cards that indicate online giving. A parishioner can pick one up when they arrive and place it in the basket as it comes around in order to physically participate.

Technology is here to stay and always evolving. While in-person connections will always be important, let these four tips be your starting point to begin virtually engaging your parish community. Whether your parish is small or large, these will help all year long, regardless of circumstances.

About Blackbaud

Leading uniquely at the intersection point of technology and social good, Blackbaud connects and empowers organizations to increase their impact through cloud software, services, expertise, and data intelligence. We serve the entire social good community, which includes nonprofits, foundations, companies, education institutions, healthcare organizations, and the individual change agents who support them.



Philanthropy Without Fear

setting stewardship facts straight during the COVID-19 pandemic

One need only scan headlines or turn on the television to be inundated with news that only seems to breed, rather than quell, uncertainty.

It comes as little surprise that we at GP Catholic Services have received questions regarding feared negative impacts on stewardship. The unknowns are many, and fear is an understandable response to the unknown.

Whatever the cause of concern, stewardship and fundraising professionals must have answers for their leadership when asked how to stave off the loss of giving in the current climate. Lessons learned in the past can help us articulate a plan for the future. Our advice: stay the course. And we have the data and experience to support it.

First, note past experiences of stewardship during market fluctuations.

Historically, while significant downturns do impact charitable giving to some extent, the losses in philanthropic dollars are never as dramatic as the market downturns that drive them. For instance, the 2008 recession resulted in a decrease in giving of 7%, but that is considerably less than the 38% decrease the S&P experienced that same year.

There are three pertinent data points illustrating why giving fluctuations are less dramatic than market fluctuations:

- 1** Giving as a percent of disposable income rarely varied by more than 0.1–0.2% annually in the past 30 years.
- 2** Total giving as a percent of GDP has rarely varied by more than 0.2% per year over the past 20 years.
- 3** From 2005-2010, a period that included the most volatile years of the Great Recession, the net change in philanthropic dollars proved ultimately to be a decrease of less than half a percent.

Second, stewardship is driven by factors outside of policy or financial performance.

Looking back to 2017 and the concerns about how changes to tax policy might impact philanthropic giving, just 7% of high net worth donors planned to decrease their giving based on new tax laws. Stewardship is driven by other very significant and intangible factors, including your community's desire to have an impact even when it stretches them financially.

According to the 2018 US Trust® Study of High Net Worth Philanthropy, the top three drivers of philanthropic giving across sectors were personal values, interest in the issue area, and firsthand or secondhand experience benefiting from the organization in question.

None of that changes, even in times of uncertainty.

What's more, there is a powerful argument to be made that for your community, the value they place on making a difference may in fact be heightened by a perception of need in response to crisis.

Third, past experiences support that while giving does not go down during times of vulnerability, asking for gifts does. And that might be the culprit, not the market.

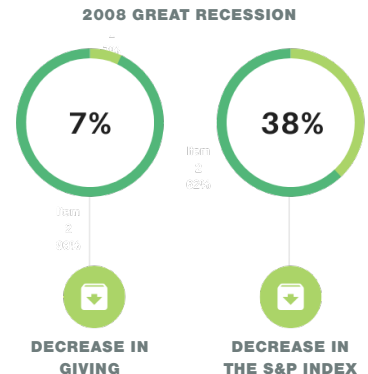
So, should you consider forgoing that planned campaign or departing significantly from an existing appeal timeline? Should you hold off on the planned solicitation of an important prospect because your perception is that she or he is heavily invested and will therefore eschew giving in response to volatility? The short answer is no.

Doing any of these things will, at the very least, lead to a departure from an existing plan and delay giving – possibly not forever, but certainly for now.

If you alter course, your community may put off giving or not give at all. Worst of all, they may never even be asked by you. And rest assured, they *are* being asked by other worthy causes.

Instead of departing from your plan in the face of uncertainty, the better answer is to double down. Intensify your focus. Dig into your research. Unflinchingly engage your community. Explain to them why their commitments are more important now than ever.

As the Church, our clients, and each of us alongside them ride out this particular storm – not the first, and certainly not the last – remember that if you have a well-thought-out and achievable plan in place, your transformational moment is still within your reach. A win of this caliber far outweighs the relatively small risk you accept in going for it.





LET US PRAY FOR ONE ANOTHER DURING THESE CHALLENGING TIMES

We stand with you, with our country, and the world as together we face this global pandemic. During these unprecedented times, LPI stands ready to help.

Here are some ideas to keep everyone in your parish community connected over the next month.

1. Publish a Church Bulletin Weekly.

The church bulletin is still the number one way of communicating information to your parishioners. Even if Masses are cancelled, we encourage you to still send out your bulletin and publish it online, for your parishioners and advertisers. We are creating special weekly bulletin content that is available for any parish to use during this crisis. Click [here](#) to download.

2. Encourage Parishioners to Subscribe to Your Bulletin Online.

Most bulletin publishers offer to send your parishioners an easy way to receive your bulletins via email each week. Now is a good time to remind parishioners how to sign up for this service!

3. Encourage Recurring Online Giving.

Without people in pews and the passing of the basket, the funds you need for your Church will dwindle rapidly. Continue to inform your members that their support is important even if they are unable to attend Mass. If you don't have an online giving provider, you need one today!!! Download these social media images and encourage your parishioners to share online. Download images [here](#).
Note: LPI is waiving the first 6 months of monthly subscription fees for all new and existing WeShare customers that sign up for our Engagement Campaign. We can commit to getting your parish onboarded in 48 hours.

4. Update Your Website Daily.

Hopefully, you have a website and app that are easy to update as electronic communication will become even more critical as people stay home and stay away from Church services and events. Be sure to keep your website updated with the status of your parish and how you're coping through this crisis. Let your parishioners know what you need and how they can pray for you.

5. Shop and Support Your Bulletin Sponsors.

Small and medium sized businesses, your sponsors that advertise on the bulletin, will have a difficult time enduring any kind of prolonged public health issue that keeps their customers away. Please encourage and remind your parishioners to support and pray for them over the next few months.

These are unprecedented times, but adversity often brings out the best in humanity. Let us pray for one another during this challenging time.

Christ be with you all,

Tracy Earl Welliver

Tracy Welliver and all of us at LPI!

The Complete Guide to Creating a Digital Strategy For Your Parish

Reach your Parishioners Anytime, Anywhere

In the past month, COVID-19 has spread to all 50 states, and every diocese in the United States has suspended public Masses until further notice.

“That is more than 70,412,000 Americans (or 22% of the US population) who cannot worship in person—and most of their parishes are not set up to handle the technological challenge. And some have no one to help them figure it out,” said Stephen Lenahan, Director of Communications at St. Anthony of Padua in Texas. “Even at St. Anthony’s we have seen our giving decline the past few weekends because those that prefer to give by check or cash in the basket are unable to do so and some are losing their income.”

Digital tools and channels that were once considered optional are rapidly becoming essential and being able to pivot to a digital strategy is more crucial than ever. Here are some tips and tools to help you connect with your Parishioners—anytime, anywhere:

Live Stream Mass

It’s never been easier to go live to your parishioners. And better yet—you do not need a huge budget to create a memorable and meaningful experience. If you want to quickly pivot to meeting your parishioners online, you can simply use a smartphone!

- If you have an active Facebook or Google account, you’re all set. Simply login to Facebook or YouTube and follow these directions ([click here](#) for Facebook and [click here](#) for YouTube).
- If possible, consider a more robust platform like [Stream Monkey](#). And as a Pushpay customer, you can receive 30 percent off your monthly subscription.

For a front-to-back guide on how to livestream your Mass, [click here](#).

Get Creative With Digital Giving

The decline in in-person attendance does not have to lead to a decline in giving. You can still help your church remain faithful in their giving by offering a digital solution. Pushpay offers an [online and mobile giving solution](#) that makes it easy to give in a few clicks of a button.

Additionally, one of the best ways to enable people to give through their mobile devices is [Text Engagement](#). Having everyone pull out their phone and text your giving keyword to 77977 (if you’re a Pushpay customer) is the fastest and easiest way to enable your community to give online during service. Additionally, to make it easy for your live-streamers, be sure to add your giving link to your livestream page.

Communicate Updates Digitally

Whether that’s updating your website, sending an email, or posting a message in your church app—your parishioners want to hear from you. [Push notifications](#) are often one of the most underutilized yet most effective. They allow you to send messages to anyone who has your app. For tips on creating effective push notifications, [click here](#).

If you want to learn more about growing your digital strategy,
including how to communicate using best practices,
[download our free checklist.](#)



[Pushpay.com](#)