



COVID 19 Giving Action Plan for LCMS District Leaders

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Monday March 30, 2020

Thank you to the entire Generis team, who is coming together in an unprecedented, generous way. We are committed to provide new information, resources, and perspectives digitally, as long as necessary during these challenging times.

"...do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

Philippians 4 6-7

During this season of uncertainty and rapidly changing recommendations, we at Generis are carefully monitoring factors which will impact giving within your ministry. Below are eight action steps to proactively address giving during COVID-19. I invite you to share this document within your respective circle with other pastors.

Every church and is unique. Situations, while similar, are not identical. The Generis team desires to generously resource our clients, friends, and other churches with the utmost care during these challenging times. I will myself available to convene an initial group discussion, via Zoom, for those churches you think could benefit and would appreciate the type of interaction and support outlined in this brief action plan. My email address is larry.ulrich@generis.com. You can also call or text me at 708.204.1510.

Our Generis colleague Dave Travis—former CEO of Leadership Network--has written some initial blog posts as we are all learning to navigate the impact of the corona virus outbreak. His eighth idea of 11, in his first posting, highlighted giving. Many sacramental churches rapidly moved forward with digital presences, as they explore multiple options to continue to provide Ministry of Word & Sacrament, appropriate to their respective contexts, in response to governmental decrees and recommendations.

Unlike a single weekend of missed services due to a winter snowstorm, we are probably going to experience several weeks (or months) of having to forego on campus worship. Based on that, what should we be doing to shore up giving in this season?

Giving will likely decline

First, recognize that giving will most likely go down while in-person services are cancelled. (What was your experience last weekend?) Plan for it. This is especially true if you move through these weeks as if nothing is out of the ordinary when it comes to giving. But you don't have to resolve to that potential reality – take action.



What to do now

1. **Prepare and send a letter** and/or email to address the issue. We have drafted a letter you can revise for your use. To keep the length of this coaching guide from getting too long, just email me and I will be glad to email it to you.
2. **Over communicate.** Consider adding additional emails and videos to your weekly communication rhythms. The more people know the better. We fear the unknown. Provide regular updates, share an encouraging word, and offer scripture appropriate to the day, and link people to online devotional resources.
3. **Share stories** of how you are helping individuals, families, and your community through this time. Say *“Thank you for giving. This story was made possible through your generosity”*. In the last few days I’ve seen a couple of great examples:
 - A church has transformed their multi-purpose building into a community food pantry. Volunteers are staffing the facility, people are dropping off supplies at the curb, and needs are fulfilled as others drive to the church for assistance.
 - Locally a church has started a shopping ministry for the elderly and those with compromised immunity. Those needing assistance reach out to the church via phone or email, provide the shopping list, and volunteers do the shopping for them, delivering to the recipient’s door.
 - A church planter purchased donuts and coffee and took them to the local hospital parking lot. Not only were the health-care professionals appreciative, but a giver stepped forward to resource this intentional outreach on an ongoing basis.
4. **Remind** everyone that expanding ministry during this time is possible only through continued generous giving.
5. **Record** a short video showing how to setup and use your online giving platform. Send that video out multiple times over the next couple of weeks. You could do it this way:
 - Make a gift online.
 - Take a screenshot of the screen showing your gift confirmation, blocking out the actual gift amount.
 - Use the screenshot as an image in your email/blog post with this text:



1. "I just completed an online gift to First Church. Let me encourage you to do the same, as we remain faithful to worship in this way while we are meeting virtually these next few weeks."
2. If you are unsure how to setup and use online giving, I've recorded a short video showing how easy it is. Click this link...
6. **Pre-record offering moments** with giving options mentioned above & have that play a few times during the week at key moments via communication channels. I have a series of suggestions for planning effective offertories in these unusual, digital times. Again, please email or text me to get these documents.
7. **Prepare** your quarterly contribution summary and send it out earlier (or the first time for some churches) than normal, along with self-addressed giving envelopes, so that those who prefer to give by check can respond sooner than later. Let them know envelopes are included to 'help you generously worship our Lord who provides for all our needs' by making giving more accessible.
8. **Recognize new online givers.** You are likely to have guests worshipping with you online. Many will choose to give electronically. While they may not be new to giving, this marks their first time giving digitally. **PAY ATTENTION TO THIS DETAIL.**
 - One church where I am currently engaged, with an established presence and was picked up by a local television station last weekend, has six new text givers last weekend.
 - An impact giver at another church has presented an opportunity for a local church challenge, committing an additional \$500 gift to honor each fellow congregant who signs up for digital giving.
 - One church shared an elderly faithful giver dropped off a \$50,000 'out of pattern' gift responding to a carefully crafted offertory appropriate to what is happening in our world.

Create a response that affirms their giving and encourages them to automate their giving this way. We accelerate what we celebrate. This will also likely stick beyond this season for higher e-giving participation.
9. **Disciple High Impact Givers:** Those with historically, strong high impact generosity to your congregation need intentional discipleship, encouragement, and personal connection as investors in your ministry. It is an ideal opportunity to engage a small group of trusted elders or other leaders to assist, coaching and guiding them in the discipleship of generosity.



Have a contingency plan

It is always wise to have a contingency budget in place. Today it is vital. Take the time to prepare a budget assuming a 10, 20, even 30% drop in revenue. What are the essentials that must be funded? What are those things that we can reduce if needed? Preparing one or more contingency budgets now doesn't mean you're going to have to implement drastic cuts. But if things do get worse before they get better, you will already have your contingency plans in place. Better to do this now before any pressure mounts, rather than waiting and having to try and write that budget in the midst of more turbulent times.

The Generis team continues to develop resources to help you navigate these next few weeks. If you desire access to this portal and other resources, please let me know and I will connect you with these resources.

Some Closing Thoughts from Larry

- Some churches are establishing locked drop boxes on campus for drop off of offerings and prayer request, as they get out to do essential tasks
- Still others are mailing self-addressed stamped envelopes to faithful, weekly check or cash givers, particularly to those who are 'tech adverse'.
- Be sure to track and acknowledge, with a personal note, any new givers in this ministry season, as well as work with your financial secretary to identify any 'out of pattern' generosity to celebrate and affirm with a personal note.
- While the offertory is frequently taken later in worship in a liturgical setting, the emerging digital worship reality may suggest moving it earlier in the service, when participation is likely to be highest.

I want to personally thank three Generis colleagues, Rusty Lewis, David Lopez, and Jim Sheppard. These team members spearheaded the creation of our collective, recommended action steps for churches, drawn from the collective strength of our 40-plus consultants who are engaged in churches and other Christian not-for-profits daily, both nationally and globally. We are here to serve you, my friends. We look forward to talking soon!

Serving our Lord with you,

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