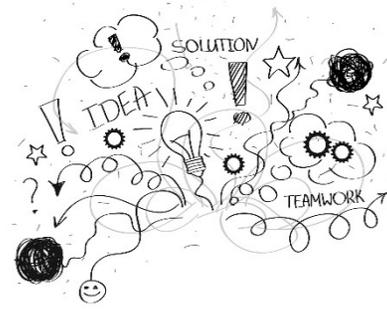




The Stewardship Coach Volume 7 / Issue 18



OK, genius, what is your brilliant idea? That is a quote from my last newsletter where I started talking about the future of giving. As promised, in this edition of *The Stewardship Coach*, entitled ***The Future of Giving Post COVID-19 Part 2***, I want to share with you some of my ideas for moving forward.

First, you need to get this firmly established in your thinking ...

The “new normal” is that there is no normal!

Who even knows what normal is? COVID-19 has forced us to admit that things will never be the same. We must embrace the realities of the day we live in. Welcome to the 21st century. Here is another thought:

COVID-19 revealed our weaknesses; it did not, in and of itself, create them.

For instance, consider:

- Church attendance was already in steep decline well before COVID-19 forced closures.
- Giving has been in decline since the late 1960's.
- Few churches have the necessary cash reserves to meet any crisis, let alone one that lasts for months.
- Younger generations were already questioning the value of church facilities. We have shown them that church can go on without physical facilities. You can expect that they will hammer that point to you the next time you announce a capital campaign.

I could go on, but then, I promised ideas. Fair enough. Here goes.

First, survive. Keep doing what you are doing now in the immediate to assure you are viable in the unknown future ahead. Make the tough decisions **now!**

Next, start thinking beyond this Sunday. We had to be focused upon the immediate. Now, you should be thinking beyond, into the future.

Ask hard questions. Do you need the amount of staffing you had before COVID-19? Is your campus suddenly irrelevant? What does this mean for future building plans?

You need to ask the hard questions because your donors are going to be asking those same questions to you when you come with your hand out wanting another gift. You want to communicate to them that nothing is sacred, and everything is being assessed. Here is my advice,

Work to establish a short term “Opportunity Budget.” I have to give credit that this idea came through *The Chronicle of Philanthropy* from Laurence Pagnoni. The link is at the end of my post. While he is approaching this from a non-profit view, his advice is good.

Your “Opportunity Budget” should be on one page, front and back. I am going to refer to this as a “one pager.” While it is a tool primarily for your key donors, it should be communicated churchwide. Here are some thoughts:



- Think summer and fall budgets or essentially the last six months of the year. What amount do you need to survive and what amount do you need to thrive? This is your opportunity budget.
- Establish a summer giving goal. What dollar amount will you need to seize your opportunities from Memorial Day through Labor Day? Divide that number by 16 and that is your weekly goal. Keep this goal in front of your people all summer long.
- Back to the one pager. Before you lay out your opportunity budget, show what you have done and are doing as a result of COVID-19. Share how you cut spending and cut the budget. Also, show what you have done in terms of compassionate outreach to your church members and community to provide aide. Telling the story of what you have done, and are doing, sets the stage for your appeal. You are making the case for why giving to your church is worth their investment.
- Consider three targets, X, Y and Z, for your opportunity budget. Communicate:
 - X. We need to raise X to hit our revised and reduced minimum budget needs.
 - Y. If we raise Y, we can re-institute our pre-COVID-19 budget.
 - Z. X is our target, Y is our dream, but we also need to raise Z to position us for continued ministry post COVID-19. We view this as seed money toward our future. Then, list small capital needs that are a stretch but attainable. For instance:
 - Raising an additional \$_____, will allow us to_____.
 - Raising an additional \$_____, will allow us to _____.
 - Raising an additional \$_____, will allow us to _____.
- Take the message to the right target. I would make sure that every ministry leader, as well as your giving leaders, receive this one pager. How far down the donor chain you go is up to you. However, remember that, on average, 15% of your donors give 50% of what is given. At the same time, don't forget that many of your Seniors, who tithe off of a fixed income, may have the ability to give more if challenged.
- Have your one pager ready and in place by the end of May and find the best way to communicate it to your ministry and giving leaders.
- Get through the summer. Evaluate every 30 days. If your giving has stabilized to meet your budget needs, I would then move to make your Z opportunity budget your end-of-year appeal. The larger the needs on your Z list, the longer you will need to meet those needs. My current recommendation is to run this from September to December 31st.

What about capital campaigns? Push that into 2021! Your goal *now* is to keep existing missions and ministries viable and to not lose momentum for the future.



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Monday Mornings With Mark The Stewardship Coach will be live this Monday, April 27th at 11 AM EST. **Here is the link** <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/7081778876232214541>. **Next Step Giving is my topic for the 27th.**

Here is the link to the Laurence Pagnoni post: <https://www.philanthropy.com/article/Now-Is-the-Time-to-Invest-in/248451>

Missions and Ministry Moment

This week's Missions and Ministry Moment (aka offering talk) – “We won't be passing an offering plate for the rest of 2020.” That was what a pastor told me last week as we were talking about the steps they were taking to open back fully. My guess is you are in the same boat. I am currently working on a new paper that I am thinking of titling *The Offering Isn't Dead - It is Different*. One reason why is that the offering is an integral part of our worship. COVID-19 has simply forced us to be creative.

One thing I am contemplating is calling the offering talk the Missions and Ministry Moment. I would love your thoughts. Oh, and here is your Mission and Ministry Moment.

We Are Not Closed!

“Closed until further notice.” That was posted on a sign outside a church. We all know what they meant but I am not sure it was the message they wanted to send. Here is our message:

We Are Always Open!

A church is not a building. A church is a local body of believers coming together for the advancement of the Kingdom. Our church's vision statement sums it up well by saying,

State your Vision or Mission Statement.

Notice, nothing was said about meeting at 11 AM on Sunday morning at (list your church address). Our buildings are not the church, **you** are the church! And we are very much alive and active, even if we are not all under the same roof. We are in the “business” of connecting people to Jesus Christ and until He comes, we will stay open! That is our mission!

COVID-19 might have closed our physical doors but, amazingly, we are engaged with more people than ever. You watching this right now is proof we are still open!

Every time you give to YOUR CHURCH NAME, you are helping us stay open. I can't thank you enough for your generosity. We have worked to make giving easy for you. (List all the ways people can give) We are not closed! **We will remain “open” until Jesus comes back!**

Bonus Section

My guess is that your finance team is suddenly open to encouraging people to sign up for recurring giving. I always encourage you to put a focus on recurring giving in January and in May. Here are some things that I have seen clients do to push online giving.

The following pictures and screenshots are from clients and from searches. They are intended as idea starters for you.



A simple text that says,

“Tired of worrying *if* you gave or not? Set your giving up to be automatic! It’s quick and easy. Follow the easy set up steps at <http://YourLink.org>”

