



## The Stewardship Coach Volume 7 / Issue 26



**Now what?** Do you ever find yourself asking that question? For the last few months, you have had to redesign everything. Just when you think you have it all figured out; another crisis slams you in the face. Think about it.

First, you had to redesign how you held worship without meeting onsite. Now you are working towards re-opening for on-campus worship which is like sinking a free throw while standing on a moving train. Then came the George Floyd murder and now you are faced with dealing with the tense racial climate in America. Say or post or even wear the wrong thing and you are instantly a threat to humanity. Who of us is not fearful of the cancel culture? None of us like it, but it is what it is.

What's the result? **Exhaustion.** Emotionally, physically, mentally, and spiritually church leaders are overwhelmed and exhausted. From denominational leaders to pastors running 100 we are all working harder than ever. Just when you think you have all your ducks lined up, wham, along comes the next crisis.

Before I start into the main thrust of this newsletter, can I give you some advice? **Take care of you.** In over 40 years of ministry, I have learned that the tyranny of the urgent is always pressing in upon us. It will wear you out. If you are worn out, you are no good to anyone, including yourself. My advice? Get some much needed, R&R. Rest and reading God's Word is a sure way to keep you fresh amidst the craziness going on around us. Let your joy be Jesus, not this world.

Two reasons I am recommending this to you now:

1. **Exhausted leaders become ineffective leaders.** The issues you face need you at your best!
2. **There is more "stuff" coming, so rest up.** I believe we are living in End Times, so be ready!

This is the 26<sup>th</sup> issue this year of The Stewardship Coach. Normally, I would be writing about being halfway through the calendar year. With all that is going on, do any of us remember what day it is? I want to take a bit different path with the rest of my post as this edition of The Stewardship Coach is entitled **COVID-19 Engagement and the Impact on Giving.**

### Attendance Versus Engagement – The New Normal?

Let's start by briefly talking about what appears to be a new way of tracking for most of us. We have moved from tracking physical attendance to engagement. This is actually not a new concept. In 2018, my friend, Jim Sheppard, wrote a paper called *The Big Shift: Ways to Engage a Less Engaged Church Goer*. The paper's assessment was that in the last ten to fifteen years, **those we consider faithful now attend two times a month or less.** Sheppard wrote, "We need a scorecard, which has typically been just about attendance and giving. But now it needs to be more about engagement, which might be some combination of attendance and giving, but more importantly, participation in small groups, serving in ministries of the church, volunteering at church." Remember, this was written in 2018!

**That was then, this is now. Now what?** How do we come up with a scorecard in the midst of COVID-19?

**One problem is how do you determine what is the true number attending your online services?** "We're connecting with more people now than before COVID-19!" Have you heard that one? Have you said that? My question is, how do you know? My suspicion is that, like giving out your Easter attendance, what the typical pastor reports as online engagement is far from an actual engagement.

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The best source I have found on this topic came through a May 5<sup>th</sup> Baptist Press article written by Chris Martin, a social media manager for LifeWay Christian Resources. Here is a quote from him, "If Christians and church leaders are going to be people of integrity, as we are called to be, we must avoid the temptation to celebrate masses of people "hearing the Gospel" who aren't doing anything but scrolling past a video of a church service." Ouch!

Martin has a formula for true evaluation of engagement. I'm wordy enough so here is the link,

<http://www.bpnews.net/54756/firstperson-how-do-we-calculate-church-attendance-on-social-media>

Here is another question ...

**What percentage of members will attend *on-campus* services when you start back?** Less than you think is what my experience and research have found. Why? Americans are terrified. I must confess that with a death rate of 0.05% *if* you get the virus, I don't understand what drives that but, again, it is what it is.

One of my retainer clients asked me to lead his team for their relaunch on June 14<sup>th</sup>. (That's the kind of thing you get from me.) Weeks before, we surveyed the congregation. Here is a sample of many similar fears expressed by a member:

"...if, when returning back to the house of God, the personal choice to wear PPE is left up to the individual, then will we all be involving ourselves in the mentally deadly encounter of Russian roulette?"

**25%** of this church's normal pre-COVID-19 attendance showed up on June 14<sup>th</sup>.

"About 30-40% of regulars come back." Greg Atkinson, Weekend Worship and Guest Services founder, gave this stat when this question came up on his group Facebook page. Join his group to find more on this at <https://www.facebook.com/groups/worshipandguestservices/>

**Engagement moving forward will need to combine both physical and digital to comprise "church."** I don't see we will ever go back to the way things were. Then finally, as always, here is my question:

**How will both of these numbers impact giving?** Despite most churches now moving to an online giving strategy, attendance, even engagement, is still crucial toward increasing giving. Why? I asked Tom Holloway, our Director of Giving Analysis, to do a quick study of a comparative group of churches on how much giving comes in through what we call loose plate offerings. **He found an average of 1.48%.** The amount ranged from a low of 0.2% to 3.3%. You might not think that is much, but can you afford to lose another 2%?

**5% to 10% of all giving comes from first time donors!** This is what I have found in my over 22 years of looking at church giving analytics. If they are not in our building and they are simply scrolling through our feed, how much of this number will we lose? So, what do we do?

**We must adapt a 24/7/365 day offering strategy!** A huge part of this is establishing a Digital Giving Strategy. Check out my posts on this at Gyve <https://gyve.com/gyve-generosity-articles/>.



Mark Brooks – The Stewardship Coach

[mark@acts17generosity.com](mailto:mark@acts17generosity.com)

Join me for another group teaching time Monday, June 22 at 11 AM EST

<https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/7081778876232214541>

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# Missions and Ministry Moment

## (aka offering talk)

#6 of The 16 Offerings of Summer! Let's make every one count. Here is mine.

### Every Thread is Important

**This week we celebrate the birth of our nation with 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebrations.** There will be fireworks, barbeques, and lots of flag waving; all while observing social distancing! We are far from perfect, yet all of us are blessed to live where we do. I love seeing the flag because it reminds me of the freedoms we have in this country.

I have often wondered how many threads go into a flag. I suppose it depends upon the size of a flag, but there are probably hundreds, if not thousands, of threads, each making up the entire flag. Which thread is most important? That's impossible to know, but I suspect each one is important. Pull one out, and you still have a flag. But, one by one, each thread contributes to the strength and beauty of the flag. So, each one of them is essential.

As we take this offering up, I want to remind you that every gift is essential. We give as God has blessed us. Some give what seems like a small gift, and others give what might seem like a large gift. Yet, it isn't the size of the gift that matters, but the heart behind the gift. Each gift given here helps us weave the fabric of our church flag if you will.

Your gift matters because what all of us can do together is greater than what a few of us can do. Your gift is one thread of many that comprise the "flag" of our church. Every gift becomes a thread in that flag, and every thread is important. We exist, **State your mission statement.** Your gift is crucial in helping us achieve that goal.

Let's celebrate our freedom today with a generous gift toward God's work!

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# Bonus Section

Believe it or not, we are halfway through the calendar year. What a year! We are also at the end of the second quarter and soon you should be sending out quarterly giving statements. Churches are required to send out giving statements, but the reason I like them is it gives you another subtle reminder to your congregation about giving. Here is a sample I wrote up for you that could be either a letter or email.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

**Now more than ever our world, nation and community need to hear The Good News of Jesus!** At YOUR CHURCH NAME, we are working every day to proclaim that message and *YOU* help make this happen through your faithful generosity. Thank you!

Attached/Included with this note is the quarterly statement of your giving. Your giving is joined by countless others in our church family, helping YOUR CHURCH NAME accomplish our vision. Because of people like you, we can share the life-changing message of Jesus.

As you look over your giving statement, if you have any questions please contact Jane Smith, our Financial Secretary, at [jsmith@ourchurchrocks.com](mailto:jsmith@ourchurchrocks.com) or call her at 555-5555 ext. 5. She'll be more than happy to help you.

**The faithful generosity of our members has allowed us to keep doing ministry through the COVID-19 crisis!**

You may have seen news about churches struggling. While we have had to tighten our belts, your faithfulness has allowed us to keep marching forward. I wanted to write this note to express my heartfelt appreciation for the difference your generosity has made.

Thank you from the bottom of my heart!

Your Pastor,

Mark

**P.S. Don't forget that we have multiple ways to give to YOUR CHURCH. One of the best ways is to set up your giving to be recurring. Sign up now at <http://OURCHURCHROCKS.COM/RECURRINGGIVING>**

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