

# The 2 Minute Drill

**A WINNING PLAN OF ACTION  
FOR END OF YEAR GIVING.**



**Does your church have a plan  
for the last two months of the year?**

**TIME**  
**2:00**

by

**Mark Brooks**

The Stewardship Coach

**The Two Minute Drill for Giving:  
How to Build an Effective End-of-Year Strategy**

By

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# Table of Contents

## Introduction

**Are You Prepared for the Two-Minute Warning?** Page 3

**The Right Target for Your Message** Page 4

## Part One: Laying the Foundation for the Appeal

**The Right Message** Page 5

**The Right Tools** Page 6

**The Right Plan of Action** Page 7

## Part Two: Your Toolbox for Implementing Your Plan

**Crafting Your Vision for the “Ask”** Page 8

**Vision Worksheet** Page 9

**Overview of Plan of Action for your Two Minute Drill** Page 10

**Basic Steps for Effective Appeals** Page 11

**Direct USPS Mail Appeal Sample** Page 12

**Email Samples** Page 14

**Offering Talks** Page 19

**Offering Envelope Sample** Page 25

**How to Get More Coaching from The Stewardship Coach** Page 26

## Are You Prepared for the Two-Minute Warning?

**Are you prepared for the two-minute warning when it comes to increasing your giving?** If you are a football fan, you know what the two-minute warning is. In professional football, it is when the official stops play to tell the coach there are two minutes left in the game. The difference between winning and losing often comes down to which team performs the best in those last two minutes. Winning teams have set two-minute drills they run, which they repeatedly practice throughout the year. **The two-minute warning for a church is the start of end-of-year giving.** Consider this for nonprofits,

- 30% of annual giving occurs in December.
- 12% of annual giving occurs on the last 3 days of the year.

Churches are no different, seeing a huge upswing in giving in the last quarter of the year. Whether your fiscal year ends in the fourth quarter or not, the statistics show that end-of-year giving can make a huge difference. That means...

**Your 4<sup>th</sup> quarter might be the difference between making budget or not.**

Since the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter is so important, NOW is the time to prepare for your best 4<sup>th</sup> quarter.

It starts by understanding that:

- ✓ **Preparation is the key to a successful 4<sup>th</sup> quarter of giving.**
- ✓ **The lack of preparation is one of the biggest reasons churches underperform in their end-of-year giving.** Now is the time to finalize our plans for end-of-year giving. Let's get started.

**The basics of an end-of-year appeal** – Here are some basic thoughts for you to think through.

- **Deciding what your "ask" will be.** Determine where you need the money the most, which is what the appeal needs to focus on. **See the Vision Worksheet on page 9.**
- **Craft the story behind the "ask."** Every "ask" or appeal must have what I call a driver behind it. In other words, what will drive or motivate me to give you more money?
- **Be positive!** You might be way behind on giving, but you want your donors to *want* to give, not feel like they *must* give.
- **Make the appeal not about reaching some number but advancing the Kingdom.**
- **Make it personal.**
- **Focus on one thing, not multiple things.**
- **Make it easy for them to contribute.**
- **Get your tools ready to support your end-of-year appeal.**

**My goal for you is to raise at least one week's worth of offering for your church!**

**December 31 will be here before you know it.** The time to plan for end-of-year giving is now. The sooner you start your planning, the more effective your end-of-year giving results will be. Let's get started!

## The Right Target for Your Message

Here is a reality in every church in America. **On average, 15% of your donors give 50% of all that is given!** Even more shocking is that the average church sees 90% of their giving coming from 20% to 25% of their donors! My team has analyzed more giving than any other stewardship firm in America. Our analysis has confirmed what we have always known; the few always give the majority of what is given.

You must take your message to this crucial group for your end-of-year strategy to work. This group has the spiritual maturity to hear your message, and they typically are the ones in a financial position to give more. If you are going to be successful with end-of-year giving, you must have the right target. My old boss, John Maxwell, says, "Everything rises and falls on leadership." Your leaders are the key to your come-from-behind giving strategy. I always start my giving initiatives by focusing on **Leaders First**.

**Don't take this key segment for granted!** Let me share two important points. First, your leaders, especially your giving leaders, will always be the most responsive to requests for additional funds. It is essential to take your message to the right target group if you are to have success. Yet, you never want to take them for granted, assuming they will always float the boat for you. The second important point is that your top donors will appreciate a giving campaign that includes *everyone* doing their part.

I always advise that you get your leaders on board early by informing them ahead of time about the special end-of-year offering you will be launching. **My tool section will show you how to do this.**

**A subset goal of this end-of-year offering is to motivate new donors to give to support your vision.** Stressing this will help your current giving leaders know that you are not taking them for granted and that your plan will encourage others to do their part.

Every year you lose donors from death, transfer, or other reasons. We call this The Churn Rate. Like attendance, your church has a front door and a back door. Since you are losing donors yearly out the back door, you must continue to replace them with donors coming in the front door. Special offerings allow you to attract new donors because of your compelling vision and message.

While our primary objective is to help raise at least one week's offering, your strategy can and will help you accomplish much more. If all we accomplish is raising one week's offering, you might very well be back in the same place in a few months. However, your path to financial stability is much brighter if you have a strategy that attracts new donors.

In reality, your leaders, both giving and ministry leaders, will comprise the bulk of what you receive in this special offering. This is why I advise you get your leaders on board early in the process. I have found that when you treat leaders like leaders, they act like leaders!

**With this in mind, let's start ending your giving year strong!**

## Part One: Laying the Foundation for the Appeal

**How do you end the giving year well?** For one thing, you can't merely sit around wringing your hands about the decline in giving. You must act. The longer you wait to act, the deeper the hole you will find yourself in. Any chance of closing out the year strong will become more difficult. Using my playbook will give you a strategy for recovering any lost giving and set the stage for success in the New Year.

If you have ever built a house or a new facility at your church, you know how important the foundation is. The same is true when it comes to a plan for end-of-year giving. So, let's start by laying the right foundation, and it begins with crafting the message of your appeal.

### The Right Message

**Your first step is to craft a message that matters.** Dollars follow a vision. Your vision is what drives people to give you more money. Thus, every appeal needs a driver for the vision to penetrate and capture the hearts and, ultimately, the wallet of your donors. The more compelling the driver, the more likely you will get a response.

**Every "ask" needs a driver. What's a driver?** The driver is the message or story you are communicating about *why* people should give to your appeal. There is no better driver to achieve generosity than a vision *if* communicated effectively.

**What is vision?** My friend Herb Buwalda came up with what I think is the best definition. He says, "Mission," answers the question, "Why are you here?" "Vision," answers the question, "Where are you going; What is God asking of you now to impact the mission?"

**Let's make a case for your vision!** When I work with a client for a significant giving initiative, I start by asking the Pastor to write out the vision behind whatever we are raising money for. Technically this is called a Vision Case Statement. On one page, front and back, I want a broad overview of what we are raising money for. I advise you to do the same thing for your end-of-year appeal.

**The 3 Cs of Vision Casting** – Your vision must contain these three Cs to be heard. Your vision must be,

1. **Clear** – Remember, Keep It Simple Somehow!
2. **Concise** – Can people repeat back in two to three sentences what you are asking them to give to? If not, then you need to work on the "ask."
3. **Compelling** – Does it touch their heart? If not, then the response will be less than you hope for.

**Your message is your vision; the better you craft that message, the more money you raise.**

Take time to think through how to craft a message for the vision driving this appeal to give to your end-of-year offering.

**Check out my tool section for a worksheet to help craft your vision and message.**

## The Right Tools

Your vision is the driver, but the best driver in the world is worthless without **effective vehicles to drive the vision to those you want to impact**. This section will share the essential tools you need to launch your end-of-year giving strategy effectively.

Back before COVID19, we had a captured audience every weekend. While most churches are back to on-campus worship, attendance is still far below 2019 levels. So, even though we can meet on-campus, the best strategy is a 24/7 approach to the offering. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we must use multiple tools to achieve giving success.

### What systems should you have in place?

1. **Dynamic website.** Your website is the first place most people will visit BEFORE they ever darken your doors. Make yours a good one!
2. **Robust online giving platform, including text giving.** You should be working towards most of your giving coming in some type of digital means.
3. **Social Media platform and presence.** Like it or not, many people spend much of their time on social media. If you are not there, you miss an opportunity to connect with your people and those in your community.
4. **Postage-prepaid envelopes.** I know this sounds old school, but this can be a great tool if used properly.
5. **Extensive database of your donors.** A given is to have all your member's email addresses. Yet you need also to have the ability to break this list down by various subgroups like first-time givers, consistency, etc.
6. **A mass email platform, such as Constant Contact or MailChimp.** There are many platforms to help you send out emails in multiple batches. Some offer free services for a limited number of sends. Most cost only a few dollars a month. Find the tool that suits your church database best.
7. **Offering talks.** On-campus or live streaming, it is essential that each offering time has a talk connecting your vision to giving. I'll share more on this later.

These are the essential tools for implementing the plan I suggest. Having these tools in place will not only help you with your plan to recover a lost offering, but it will also help throughout the year.

**Remember the old saying, don't put all your eggs in one basket?** When it comes to a 21<sup>st</sup>-century communication plan, you must use all the tools in your toolbox to get your message out. In the next section of this playbook, I will give you practical steps to utilize the tools above to communicate the vision of your message.

## **The Right Plan of Action**

**What is your plan?** While essential, the best message and tools are worthless without a plan of action. Let me lay out my overall strategy for plans for special offerings.

### **Understanding the Uniqueness of a Special Offering**

Let's start by breaking out the difference between a large offering, like a capital campaign, and a special offering. Smaller offerings or needs take a somewhat different approach. Your giving goal differs from a special offering, and they do not require as much time and planning as larger appeals. However, please note that special offerings *do* require time and attention. You can't download this playbook on Saturday at 10 p.m. and find it useful!

### **Special offering strategy - Here is an overview of a plan of action for a special offering:**

- As soon as possible, craft the vision.
- Communicate several weeks out with your leadership. Why? Their gifts will drive the success of your offering! I'll show you how in the tool section of this playbook.
- Six weeks from the offering, start showing the ministry's impact on the area of need across all your communication platforms. Show your story!
- One month out, start a more direct appeal through social media. Set it up through your online giving platform. With a 24/7 offering strategy, you can begin the offering at any time, not merely on the weekends.
- Each Sunday in December, announce the end-of-year special offering from the platform.
- Send a series of direct mail appeals the weeks before the special offering.
- Take up the offering with boldness! In two minutes or less, craft an offering talk each Sunday from Thanksgiving weekend through the last Sunday of the year that gives a positive take on the need your offering will meet. The tool section will provide you with a pre-written offering talk for this.
- Thank those who gave to the special offering and update the offering's results and its impact. Thanking your donors paves the way for the next "ask."

**The tool section of this playbook contains samples for your review.**

## **Part Two: Your Toolbox for Implementing Your Plan**

Concepts and principles are helpful, but actionable plans raise dollars to fuel your missions and ministry. In all my playbooks, I give you tons of material and steps to simply insert your name or the church's name and send them out. You can also use the tools listed in this section as idea starters.

### **Crafting Your Vision for the "Ask"**

Let's start with the essential piece of your plan, the vision that will become your message leading people to *want* to give to your church. Remember, your vision needs to be,

1. **Clear** – Remember, Keep It Simple Somehow!
2. **Concise** – Can people repeat back in two to three sentences what you are asking them to give to? If not, then you need to work on the "ask."
3. **Compelling** – Does it touch their heart? If not, then the response will be less than you hope for.

To help achieve the 3 C's, consider these,

#### **Six Key Points on How to Craft the Message of Your Vision**

1. **Don't make it about you. Make it about your donors.**
2. **Be positive, not negative.**
3. **It's not about making your budget; it is about changing lives!**
4. **So, make the appeal about missions and ministry not making a budget!**
5. **Focus on what you have done and have yet to do.**
6. **Make the appeal appealing by personalizing the message.**

I try to tell a story in every appeal I write or make for churches. People love stories. The more appealing and compelling your story, the more effective your "ask" will be. The more specific your appeal, the more effective the "ask." For instance, you might focus on what your Student Ministry will be doing. By telling stories of students, your members know and love, you will generate a more enthusiastic response from your donors.

However, the strategy of this playbook is to help you make up for at least one week of general offering giving. You want undesignated gifts allowing you to funnel the money to the greatest need. So, it is imperative that you understand,

**How to Make An "Ask" That "Feels" Specific** – For instance, you could say,

"We are gearing up for our fall tele-retreat with our students. It costs \$xxx to hold this key learning event geared to disciple the next generations of leaders. Giving to our special offering helps us run programs like training and equipping students to live out their faith in today's complex world."

"You are not asking for restricted gifts. Instead, you are asking for help to "run" the programs. The codeword is "run" the programs. This keeps it in the unrestricted realm.

## Vision Worksheet

The following points will serve as a guide for developing the case statement:

**Step One: List 3 things your church has accomplished in the past year.** You want to point to "wins" that show the impact of giving to your church. You want to *show* them that giving made a difference.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Step Two: List 3 things you want to do in the remaining year or at the start of the New Year.** Focusing on missions and ministries allows donors to make a difference with their gifts. You want to show them that their gift *now* can and will make a difference.

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Why is it important to give to this now?**

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**How can their gift *now* make a difference?**

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**Here is a brief plan of action for an End of Year offering:**

The following is my end-of-year overview. Not all of what I list might work for you. If followed, this basic plan of action will greatly increase your end-of-year giving. I advise...

**Social Media Push** – Starting in early November, you want to focus on your message across all communication platforms, heightening awareness. A picture is worth a thousand words. Let's show the need before we make the "ask!"

**Thank you email in early November** – We always ask, we seldom thank. So, send out an email or letter thanking donors for your giving success thus far. This is not an appeal but the cultivation and serves for what we call warming your list.

**First Direct Appeal Letter, Week of November 15** – I recommend that your direct appeal end-of-year letter be sent out no later than this date. This letter should have a postage-paid, self-addressed envelope for ease of use.

**December Plan of action** – I recommend you ramp up information about the "ask across all communications platforms." Now, we are specifically asking people to give. Before, we were priming the pump with awareness of need. Now, work to bring home donations to meet that need. Here are my ideas.

**Utilize "Giving Tuesday."** The Tuesday after Thanksgiving is being established across the country as a time when charities ask people to give. You should piggyback on top of this with an email strategy asking for a gift that day.

**Special Landing Page on your website** – Consider purchasing a special page with a dedicated address. Titles such as Wells4Africa.com can be bought cheaply and forwarded to your giving pages.

**Social Media** – You want to put a face on the "ask" AND provide direct links to the giving page. I recommend starting with one a day early in the month and increasing the rate as we move closer to the end of the year.

**Offering talks** – Plan out sixty-second offering talks for each Sunday in December. Don't worry. I have samples for you in this playbook!

**Bulletin reminder** – If you still pass out weekly bulletins, then at least twice during the month, we will want to have a reminder that giving to the church is a tax benefit. Please note that this will only impact a few of your donors since the changes in the tax law.

**Screen announcements** – Have announcements about the end-of-year offering that can be utilized before and after services.

**Email campaign** – I recommend at least two emails. I would send one on Monday the 26th and another on New Year's Eve, December 31, at 2 p.m.

That is the bare-bones basics of my plans for the end of the year.

## Basic Steps for Effective Appeals

**The 21st-century offering must be 24/7.** To be effective, your offering plate must never be closed. An effective end-of-year strategy must include direct appeals, snail-mail, and email and text appeals.

The following are the basic steps I use to make my appeals more readable and thus more effective. You will see this in my samples that follow.

**Direct USPS Mail Appeals** – It might surprise you that I would focus on using the USPS for any appeal in this day of online giving. Why would I do this? Easy, **Snail mail still works!** Think about it, how many appeals do you get in the US mail? There is a reason nonprofits still send out snail mail; they work.

**USPS Basics** – Use these basic points to improve your snail mail appeals.

- Personalize the letter. The more personal the message, the more apt someone is to read it.
- Try and keep the letter to one page. The exception might be appeals sent to leaders.
- Use bold and underlined text to highlight key points. People skim, so highlight the important points.
- *Always* use a PS. Studies show people almost always read a PS.
- *Always* give your online giving portal address. Studies show that even Seniors will type in your giving portal if you provide one.
- Include a self-addressed postage-paid envelope with all letters.

**Email Basics** – Many of the same principles above apply to email. One thing that is important to remember is that most emails are now read on a smart device.

- Captivating Subject line! If they don't open it, they can't read your message.
- Short and to the point! Again, most emails are read on a smart device.
- Two to four paragraphs of two to four sentences. Be short and to the point.
- Use bold and underlined text.
- Clickable links to your giving page. You want to make it quick and easy to give.
- Multiple links to the giving page.
- Always have a PS! I almost always have the online giving link as my PS.
- Personalize it! Programs like Mailchimp make this easy.

## Direct USPS Mail Appeal Samples – Send Tuesday, November 1

The following letter will be sent to your leaders, informing them of the special offering. Edit the following to best suit your message.

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

**In 2022 CHURCH NAME saw scores of lives changed by the power of the Gospel, and *your* generosity helped make that happen.** On behalf of countless lives changed, let me say thank you!

**Because of the faithful generosity of our members,** we have been able to: (Insert your examples)

- List an outreach ministry your church supported,
- Report on children and youth outreach results.
- List any other victories accomplished because of members' generosity.

Thank you, NAME Church, for helping make all the above and MUCH more possible!

**You helped make all the above possible through your generosity!** We have much more to do as we prepare for our mission to continue into the New Year. Consider these challenges of need: (**Insert your own needs**)

- We must upgrade all our technical gear to better minister to our three campuses.
- We must improve our Small Group ministry with these tools to continue personal ministry to you and your family and give us the opportunity for virtual opportunities in apartment complexes and other options.
- Funding is needed for the Motion Student conference and local groups being held soon. We are passionate about raising NextGen leaders!

These challenges are an opportunity for our church to step up and continue being the hands and feet of Jesus!

**I wanted to alert you to a special end-of-year offering push we will hold in the next few weeks through the end of the current year.** We challenge our entire church family to give a gift over and above their regular giving for a special Christmas offering.

Our end-of-year Christmas giving appeal has a two-fold goal. **First**, we have a goal of raising one week's offering. Achieving this will better position us for the New Year. Our giving goal is to receive an additional \$10,000 (Insert your giving goal) above our normal offering. Your generosity will help us achieve that goal. The **secondary goal is to motivate others to join generous people like you.**

You will be hearing more about this in the weeks to come. Will you join me in taking the challenge by giving an extra offering for our Christmas offering?

Blessings,

Pastor Mark

**PS. I have included a special envelope to make it easy for you to give, or you can go to our website at <http://ourchurch.org/give> and follow the simple steps to give.**

## Congregational Direct Mail Appeal Sample - Send Monday, November 14

The following letter is designed to be sent out to the entire congregation, informing them of the special offering Christmas offering. Edit the following to best suit your message.

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

Are you tired of all the bad news? Do you ever find yourself changing the channel when negative news comes on? You are not alone. A recent Baylor Religion Survey found that the COVID-19 pandemic has made Americans significantly angrier, sadder, lonelier, and more worried. After nearly two full years of bad news, can you blame them?

**I want to announce that there is Good News, Christmas is coming!** The story of Christmas is a story of good news. The Gospel of Luke tells about the birth of Jesus. It records the story of nearby shepherds tending their flocks at night when an angel of the Lord appears to them. Here is what the text says, "the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. **I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.**"

In a world filled with bad news, **CHURCH NAME is committed to sharing the Good News of the Gospel to our community and world.** (INSERT A ONE-SENTENCE EXAMPLE OF A MISSION OR MINISTRY ENDEAVOR IN 2020). The faithful generosity of our members allows us to spread the good news of the Gospel. Give now at <https://yourchurchwebsite.org/give>.

**I'm asking our church family to prayerfully help us spread the Good News through our special Christmas offering!** We accomplished much due to your generosity, but there is much more to do. We are asking every member to give an extra gift over and above their normal giving to help us end this year well and position us for an even greater New Year of sharing the Good News.

The Gospel of Luke records the shepherd's visit to see baby Jesus, "When they had seen him, **they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child**, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them." Let's spread the word and bring joy to those who are angrier, sadder, lonelier, and more worried. Every time you give here at our church, you help us spread that Good News in our town and worldwide. Let's give generously today so that Good News can continue to spread.

We provide multiple ways by which you can give. We have inserted an envelope for ease of use. Did you know that **giving online gets your gift that much quicker to missions and ministry?** One of the easiest ways to give is through our online site at <https://yourchurchwebsite.org/give>.

Find the best way to give as God leads and help us continue to proclaim Good News!

Pastor Mark

**PS. The best and easiest way to give is automatically setting up your giving! We show you how at <https://yourchurchwebsite.org/recurringgiving>. Set up your gifts to be recurring for 2023, and never worry about missing your gift again.**

**Email Samples** – The following samples can be edited to fit your church.

**Giving Tuesday email – Send at 2 p.m. EST Tuesday, November 29**

**Subject Line: Were you in line at 6 a.m. or online?**

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

**It used to be that the holiday shopping period kicked off each year the Friday after Thanksgiving with what has become known as Black Friday.** People would get up at crazy hours of the day to stand in line, hoping to get the best deal on the newest trinket or bobble for Christmas.

**\$14.04 billion was spent last year on Black Friday!** Most of those gifts were broken, lost, or forgotten within days after Christmas.

**More and more people are shopping online, avoiding crowds but still getting bargains.** Last year on Cyber Monday, the Monday after Thanksgiving, \$10.7 billion in sales were racked up. Who knows what was spent online yesterday?

**Not to be outdone, along came Giving Tuesday to remind us of what matters, helping people.** Charities across the country send emails asking you to support their cause. While I believe in their work, the best gift you can give today is to OUR CHURCH! You can give now at <http://ourchurch.org/give>.

**Why should you give to Our Church?** We are changing lives day in and day out. We are making a difference in our community through all that we do. Give now to help us better reach our community. You can give your gift at <http://ourchurch.org/give>.

Let me thank you for your support of OUR CHURCH! We are making a difference in OUR CITY, thanks to you!

Blessings,

Bro. Mark

**Pre-Christmas Email Blast – Send December 19**

**Subject line: \$886 versus \$200; which is it?**

Dear Friend of Community Church,

**How much do we spend on Christmas compared to how much we give to a church?** Last year Americans spent, on average, \$886 on Christmas and gave about \$200 a year to their church! What does that say about what we truly value?

**Let's change that average this Christmas with a generous gift to Community Church!** This Sunday, we will celebrate the Birth of Jesus. Wouldn't it be great to give a gift in honor of what his life means to us?

**Give now at [www.CommunityChurch.org/give](http://www.CommunityChurch.org/give). Insert your giving link here!**

**What is so special about giving?** Your gift will be used to fully fund all our missions and ministry initiatives for the rest of this year and get us off to a great start for 2023.

**Give early at [www.CommunityChurch.org/give](http://www.CommunityChurch.org/give).**

Whether at church or online, let's take up an offering worthy of our Lord to support His church!

Your pastor,

Dr. Pastor

**PS. If you are going out of town, you can still give by using our online giving platform at [www.CommunityChurch.org/give](http://www.CommunityChurch.org/give). Give now!**

**Email blast to be sent out on December 24. The tenor of this note is short and more one of thanks.**

**Subject line: Merry Christmas, OUR CHURCH Family!**

Dear Church Family,

Valerie and I simply wanted to email you and wish you and your family a Christ-filled Merry Christmas! This email may find you on your way home from work, in line with that last-minute gift, or already comfortably at home and relaxing wherever you are; Merry Christmas!

As we gather with our family here in INSERT WHERE YOU WILL BE, we cannot help but think of you all and give praise to God for the honor of serving you. I pray this special time for us Christians will be a special time for you and your family. May God grant us all a very special time tomorrow as we pause to thank our Immanuel!

Your Pastor,

Bro. Mark

**PS. If you are going out of town this Sunday, you can still give by using our online giving platform at [www.CommunityChurch.org/give](http://www.CommunityChurch.org/give) Thanks for your generosity!**

December 26<sup>th</sup> email blast

**Subject line: What does 83% mean for Our Church?**

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

**83%.** According to a study by the International Bible Society, that is the percentage of all Christians who commit to Jesus between the ages of 4 and 14. Therefore, a window of opportunity exists to reach children during these key ages. If they don't accept Christ during those formative years, then it becomes increasingly more problematic than they ever will. Studies have found that those aged 19 and over have a 6% probability of becoming Christians.

**Our Church is passionate about reaching children for Christ!** Every time you give, you help us reach children. Your gift right now can help us fully fund our children's ministry right now. It's easy to give by simply clicking on this link <http://ourchurch.org/give>. **Insert your giving link.**

**As we approach the end of the year, I want to assure our children and student workers that their ministries will have all the funds they need, not simply to end this year but to start the next.** Your sacrificial gift will give everyone in our church an opportunity to invest in the next generation.

**If there is hope for America, it is in reaching the next generation for Christ!**

**You can give now by going to <http://ourchurch.org/give>. Insert your giving link.**

Thanks for helping us reach this 83% window of opportunity with your generous gift. Together we will make a difference!

Blessings,

Your Pastor

**PS. Did you know that you can set up your giving to be automatic? To find out how to go to our giving page and follow the simple instructions at <http://OURCHURCH.ORG/GIVE>.**

**December 31 Last email blast to be sent at 2 p.m. EST.**

**Subject line: Will Your Team Win in the Last 2 Minutes?**

Dear,

**Many of the bowl games we watch in the next few days will be won or lost in the last two minutes!** The teams that win will be the teams with the best plans. It might surprise you, but these last few minutes of the year are crucial for OUR CHURCH.

**We are focused on reaching our city for Jesus, and every gift given in the next few hours will better help us accomplish this!** I am asking each member to consider making one last end-of-year gift. **You can give easily by going to <http://ourchurch.org/give>.**

We are set to have an amazing year in 2023, and your generous gift will help us finish this year well and set the stage for what is to come. **Please consider giving at <http://ourchurch.org/give>.**

Thanks for your generosity. The game OUR CHURCH is involved in makes an eternal difference because it is not a game. We are on the front lines of making a difference for the Kingdom! **Your gift now will help us accomplish this! <http://ourchurch.org/give>**

Thanks for giving!

Your pastor

**Want to start the year out, right? Set up your 2023 giving to be automatic. You can schedule your entire 2023 giving to be easy, safe, and automated by following the recurring giving steps at <http://ourchurch.org/give>.**

## Offering Talks

### How Many Turkeys Does It Take? – November 20

In case you missed it, this week is Thanksgiving. **How many turkeys does it take to feed Americans on Thanksgiving?** Before you grab your phone to Google that, let me make this a multiple-choice question. Is the answer,

- A. 46 million,
- B. 56 million or
- C. 66 million?

How many say A? How many say B? How many say C? How many of you cheated and Googled it?

The correct answer, according to one study, is 46 million. According to the National Turkey Federation, the average weight of turkeys purchased for Thanksgiving is 15 pounds, which is around 675 million pounds of turkey consumed in the US. That is a lot of turkeys!

While the main dish for most, Turkey is just one of many food choices we will consume over Thanksgiving weekend. The average household spending for Thanksgiving weekend is projected to be \$342. In total, Americans will spend almost 3 billion dollars on food for Thanksgiving.

Clearly, we love Thanksgiving. It might be more accurate to say we love to eat, and Thanksgiving gives us an excuse to splurge on our diets. I will do my fair share of splurging.

We can lose sight of why we hold Thanksgiving during all this eating. It is supposed to be a time of reflection and Thanksgiving for the blessings we have received from God. So, take some time out of your feasting and stop to truly thank the Lord for all of His blessings in our lives. You might even ask those at your table to share one blessing they are thankful for.

Did you realize that your offering today is an act of Thanksgiving? Throughout Scripture, we see that the people of God often bring what was called an offering of thanks. Psalm 50:23 says, "He who offers a sacrifice of thanksgiving honors me." Psalm 116:17 says, "To You, I shall offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and call upon the name of the Lord."

These acts of worship reminded them of God's provision and protection. It was a way of showing thankfulness. When we view our gifts as an expression of Thanksgiving, it changes our view of giving. So, let's use today's offering as an expression of our Thanksgiving to God for all he has done for us

1. <https://www.republicworld.com/lifestyle/festivals/how-many-turkeys-are-eaten-on-thanksgiving-day-see-details-here.html>

## **Your Gift Matters – November 27**

**Did anyone get up early Friday morning and stand in line to be the first in the door for that special sale?** Some of you. How many of you stayed home and shopped online? Did any of you do both? The response here shows the changes in how commerce is done in America.

Black Friday, the day after Thanksgiving, has traditionally been all about standing in line at a brick-and-mortar store to get the best deals on all your Christmas gifts. Now more people shop online than they do at physical stores. Brick-and-mortar stores still see huge numbers of people shopping, but now we like options for purchasing our Christmas gifts.

Here at YOUR CHURCH NAME, we give you several options on how to give. **List the various options.**

We don't care how you give. We just want you to give. Let me give you three reasons why.

First, your gift today honors God and is an act of worship. We encourage everyone, members, and guests, to consider a gift in today's offering as a way of saying thanks to God for all He has done for us.

Secondly, when you give, you are blessed. Consider what Malachi 3:10 says, "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it."

Third, your gift blesses others. Every time you give here, you help us fulfill the mission and ministry God has called us to do. Our church impacts hundreds not simply here in our community but worldwide—your gift matters.

No matter what form your gift comes in, whether cash, check, or electronically, you can be assured that we use that gift to extend the Kingdom of God here locally and globally. So, thanks for your generosity. Your gift matters for you and for those you bless with your gift!

## **It's Time for Good News! – December 4**

**A recent Baylor Religion Survey discovered that the COVID-19 pandemic has made Americans significantly angrier, sadder, lonelier, and more worried.** More than one-third reported feeling these emotions more strongly than before the pandemic. I'm sure there are multiple reasons we feel this way, but I contend one leading cause is the News. We have been fed a continual diet of bad news from newspapers to social media to Mainstream media for almost the last two years. I contend it's time for Good News!

Our mission here as a church is STATE YOUR MISSION STATEMENT. That mission is grounded in our faith in Jesus Christ as the world's Savior. We are entering one of our most sacred times as a church, Christmas. The story of Christmas is a story of good news. The Gospel of Luke tells about the birth of Jesus. It records the story of nearby shepherds tending their flocks at night when an angel of the Lord appears to them. Here is what the text says, "the angel said to them, "Do not be afraid. **I bring you good news that will cause great joy for all the people.**"

In a world filled with bad news, **CHURCH NAME is committed to sharing the Good News of the Gospel to our community and world.** The faithful generosity of our members allows us to spread the good news of the Gospel. This month, we ask our church family to prayerfully help us spread the Good News through our special Christmas offering! We accomplished much due to your generosity, but there is much more to do.

Every time you give here at our church, you help us spread that Good News in our town and worldwide. Let's give generously today so that Good News can continue to spread.

## Give a Gift That Lasts – December 11

I saw a study that reported the following about our Christmas shopping habits.

- 60% of US consumers start their Christmas shopping before December. How many of you are in that category?
- 62% of US shoppers buy gifts in the week before Christmas. How many fit here?
- 60% of shoppers in the US prefer to shop online. How many of you would agree?

How many of you are finished with your Christmas shopping? How many of you haven't even started? This year, Americans will spend about \$1,000 on Christmas. Here is my question. How many of those gifts will last? Few of the gifts we give last long, and none last forever.

But, a gift here at YOUR CHURCH lasts forever! We exist (insert your vision statement or use the following) to proclaim the Good News of Jesus working to build up His Kingdom. Every time you give a gift here, you help support that mission. Consider that this year:

- List events such as Our VBS reached over 100 kids, many of whom don't have a church home.
- We took 35 students to camp this summer, teaching them life-long principles and training them to be the next generation of leaders in the Church.

Those are just a few examples of what your generous giving helped us accomplish. Thank you!

We are not done yet! While we only have a few more days this year, we plan on an amazing New Year of missions and ministry. Every time you give in our offering, your gift helps us achieve all God has called us to do. We are building up the Kingdom of God, and your gift helps us do that. Giving here truly is a gift that lasts. So, thank you for your generosity that impacts eternity!

## **Keep the Focus on Christmas – December 18**

**We are exactly one week from Christmas!** Does that evoke excitement or fear in you? For the kid in us, it evokes excitement. The adult in us worries about all that is left to do. Sadly, too many of us get caught up in the hustle and bustle of this season, so our focus gets diverted. Our focus can too easily be on completing our list rather than the true reason we celebrate this time of year, the birth of our Savior!

In our commercialized world, it is easy to forget the true meaning of Christmas. Our country is becoming ever more secularized. Christmas is being obliterated so much that now instead of our kids having a Christmas break, it's called a Winter break. You hear Happy Holidays but rarely hear Merry Christmas. At OUR CHURCH, we never will lose focus on what this season means, the birth of the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ. Christmas is named for Him, who came to show us the way to God.

So here is a word of advice: slow down next week and enjoy the season's true meaning. Stop and listen to those carols. Please read the text of your Christmas cards proclaiming the birth of our Messiah. Take in the lights while thinking that Jesus is THE light of the world. Do what you can today, but don't let the rush of this season cloud out the joy meant for this season. Let's keep the focus on Christmas!

And, in all your gift-giving, please prayerfully consider a gift not only for our offering today but for our special Christmas offering. We want to end this year strong, setting ourselves up for a great New Year. We use your gifts to spread the message of Christmas to our town, state, nation, and, indeed, the world. So, please consider a generous gift today.

## Peace on Earth, Good Will To Men – December 25

**I don't know about you, but I *needed* Christmas for no other reason than to hear Christmas Carols!**

To me, they are uplifting to my spirit. I was going through carols the other day. Does anyone remember the carol *I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day*? Let me read you (sing?) the carol's first verse.

I Heard the Bells on Christmas Day  
Their old familiar carols play,  
And wild and sweet the words repeat  
Of peace on earth, goodwill to men.

If ever there was a time when we need peace on earth and goodwill to men, it's today.

Then I came to the third verse of the carol. I am not sure I have ever read or sung the verse. Let me read it:

And in despair, I bowed my head:  
"There is no peace on earth," I said,  
"For hate is strong and mocks the song  
Of peace on earth, goodwill to men."

When I read that, I thought, wow, the last few years have caused many people to feel despair. I did a little research and found that the author of this carol, American poet Henry Wadsworth Longfellow, wrote the poem on Christmas Day in 1864. Our nation still had six more months of the Civil War left. Longfellow did indeed face despairing times.

But thank God, that's verse three. Listen to the final two verses:

Then pealed the bells more loud and deep:  
"God is not dead, nor doth he sleep;  
The wrong shall fail, the right prevail,  
With peace on earth, goodwill to men."

Till, ringing singing, on its way,  
The world revolved from night to day,  
A voice, a chime, a chant sublime,  
Of peace on earth, goodwill to men! <sup>1</sup>

<https://www.lyricsforchristmas.com/christmas-carols/i-heard-the-bells-on-christmas-day/>

**2022 might be verse three of I Heard the Bells, but we believe God for living out the remaining verses.** Every time you give here, your generosity helps us proclaim the Good News of Peace on Earth, Good Will to Men. Thank you for your support. Because of *you*, we will continue fighting despair in **YOUR CITY**, bringing Peace on Earth and Good Will to Men.

## Start the New Year Right – January 1

**Can you believe that Christmas is over and that this is the last Sunday of the year?**

As we approach the New Year, have you made any New Year's resolutions? Studies show that most resolutions are broken or forgotten within weeks. Part of the problem is that we truly are not serious about that which we resolve to do. For instance, you might have resolved to lose weight and work out more. Yet Monday morning rolls around, and it is cold outside, so you skip the workout to sleep just a few more minutes. Then you grab a donut because you are in a hurry. Before we know it, our resolution is shot!

Along with resolutions like working out more and losing weight, we often resolve to live better or be better Christian. Resolutions like that are valuable and needed in our lives. It reminds us that God is always to be first in our lives. Jesus said, "But **seek first** his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." These words followed his advice about not worrying about the necessities of life. The advice is that when we put God first, all else will fall into place for us by our heavenly Father.

We take up an offering every week to allow us to show that God is first in our lives. Scripture commands us to give, and when we do, we trust God with our finances by putting him first. God has promised us that when we give faithfully, he will open up the windows of heaven and pour out blessings upon us. Those blessings come as we seek him first by putting him first. There is perhaps a no better illustration of that than giving to His work.

So, we encourage you to resolve to put God first this year. A great way to do that is with today's offering. Give to show that God is first in your finances. Give to start the year out right.

**ARE YOU INTERESTED IN GETTING AN OFFERING TALK DELIVERED TO YOU EVERY WEEK?** In my newsletter, "The Stewardship Coach," I write a fresh talk weekly. Find out more at,

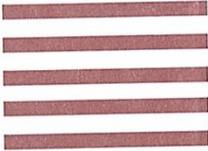
**<https://acts17generosity.com/memberships/silver/>**

**Sample Envelope**

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WINTER HAVEN, FL 33880  
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WINTER HAVEN, FL 33880





**The Stewardship Coach Platform** – In 2006, we developed the directed coaching model for raising funds. We realized pastors and church leaders didn't need or want a canned programmatic approach to raising funds. They needed a partner and not just for a capital campaign but for weekly help. To better meet the needs of church leaders, I created The Stewardship Platform. Churches get expert help for a price they can afford. Here are my

platforms:

**The Stewardship Coach Print Platform** – Access to The Stewardship Coach newsletter and my seasonal playbooks to build out your stewardship platform. <https://acts17generosity.com/memberships/silver/>

**The Stewardship Coach Digital Platform** – Access to all print materials, plus access to all my teaching videos. These members also have email access to me. <https://acts17generosity.com/memberships/gold/>

**The Stewardship Coach Personal Coaching Platform** – This is like hiring me as your Minister of Stewardship. It's a personalized approach. This is a great plan for any church 12-24 months from a major capital project. <https://acts17generosity.com/memberships/platinum/>

These are all priced from \$9.99 to \$99.99. Find out more at: <https://acts17generosity.com/memberships/>.

**Do you need to raise money over and above your regular operating budget? I'm your Huckleberry!**

**I helped Joel Osteen raise \$100 million, so I know I can help you!** I've re-done my plans and pricing for capital campaigns, and it starts at \$99 a month!

**The Digital Campaign** – This is my online group teaching program. Starting in August, I'll teach eight sessions on the keys to a successful capital campaign *and* provide email support for those that attend. It's designed for the smaller church or a church that has done multiple campaigns. The price is \$99 a month with a 12-month minimum commitment. Go to: <https://acts17generosity.com/memberships/diamond/>.

Then, for more personalized coaching, I have three levels priced:

**\$12K – All Virtual** – All the support, all the coaching, 24/7 access to me, and dedicated personal one-on-one time weekly. Billed monthly, this is a great plan for seasoned leaders who need a bit of help.

**\$24K – Onsite and Virtual** – This plan provides at least two onsite visits plus 24/7 virtual support for larger projects with greater need.

**\$36K – For larger projects or first-time campaigns**, this plan provides more onsite support with larger projects. This is my full three-year engagement plan.

**If you are interested in raising over and above money, email me at [mark@acts17generosity.com](mailto:mark@acts17generosity.com).**

**Want to White Paper The Coach?** I have now begun to provide print and digital platforms to various groups who then, in turn, provide it for free to their clients. If you want to know more about that, go to: <https://acts17generosity.com/partnerships/>.



 **Now Accepting Crypto Donations**

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**Grow Recurring Givers.  
Engage your church.**



  
**An Engaging  
Church Platform**

- ✓ Innovative & Integrated Tools for Ministry.
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- ✓ Text Marketing Designed for Ministry.



**Giving**

Increase your growth independent of weekly attendance. Give on any device with 13 methods available to the church including Web, Mobile, Text, Kiosk, Chatbot, Scanned Checks, Facebook, Embedded, and more.



**Mobile App**

A beautiful custom mobile app for your church with advanced ChMS integration. Uniquely crafted for each church and engineered to connect and engage your members daily.



**Form Builder**

The Custom Form Builder engineered for churches makes it easy to visually build web and mobile-friendly custom-forms deeply integrated into your Church Management System.



**Text Marketing**

Enhance church communication by sending inspirational messages, reading plans, group reminders, and donation requests. Engage your congregation with text message event registration and more.



**Chatbot**

The new vital platform for reaching and retaining guests. Connect the congregation and grow your church. Text based Christ acceptance, baptism sign-ups, connection cards and more.



**Metrics**

Get the whole picture with donation insights with intuitive metrics based on ChMS data retroactive five-plus years that include all forms of giving, digital and non-digital.