

Our Savior is currently developing online giving options and will soon have them in place . . . Please prayerfully consider first fruit and proportional giving during this unusual time. – Pastor Rob

Giving offerings to my congregation in difficult times



By Mark Hofman

For LCMS congregations to survive — and thrive — our worship offerings must continue as much as possible when the world is largely locked down and people are prohibited by law or, by a desire to keep pestilence from spreading, from attending church services.

This is hardly a demand of you to give in tough times. You are free to choose and make decisions that are best for you, made by you. Giving to the Lord is between you and the Lord.

We confess this: **All charitable giving is voluntary.** All charitable giving is a prayerful response to the Gospel. Our salvation is not rooted in what we give or what we do; rather, it is already secure because of what Christ has accomplished for us.

In an earlier message, Rev. Dr. Matthew C. Harrison, president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, paraphrased a directive of Luther's that was written during a time of plague:

Take care of yourself, then as you can in your vocation and are able, care for others.

We are God's people, and in His Word (e.g., "Love your neighbor as yourself") we are specifically told to "care for others."

We are called by the Word of God to make a difference in the lives of our neighbors in ways consistent with God's gifts to us in our vocations and abilities.

Most of us will very likely have everything we need for these trying times. Through His Word and Spirit, God is stirring us all to action.

How can those of us whom God calls into action continue to give bold witness that our faith is in Christ Jesus, not the material blessings of this world?

How can we help our congregations, including our own, stay strong and courageous in giving that same witness to communities living with heightened anxiety?

Here are a few options to prayerfully consider:

- Mail your regular offering to the church office or drop it off at the church office or parsonage during the week.
- Your bank or credit union may offer “online bill payment” services as financial tools. While our gifts to God are not paying a “bill” (because Jesus already did that for us), such tools can electronically deliver your offering without your having to write a check or use cash. Set up your congregation as you would a utility company or doctor’s office. Some of these tools also allow you to create a recurring gift (payment) made automatically.
- If you are eligible, use the available IRA Qualified Charitable Distribution option and have your IRA trustee send a portion of your required minimum distribution (if not needed) to the church for you. If you have established a donor advised fund, continue to send or consider sending an advised grant to your congregation.
- More congregations are offering an online donation option on their websites, and more are providing members with things like smartphone apps that support giving by credit or debit card. One such app is Give+ (Give Plus), which lets the user find a participating congregation. If your congregation does not have such an option, your parish leadership can contact the Lutheran Church Extension Fund or the Lutheran Federal Credit Union for help.
- If your congregation doesn’t have a website with online donation tools, some community foundations (including Thrivent/InFaith) provide online donation tools that allow you to direct a gift to your congregation.

There may be more options than we could list here. If you have one you’d like to recommend, please send an email to mission.advancement@lcms.org for us to share with other congregations. Your idea could prove very helpful to congregational leaders who are reaching out to the LCMS International Center asking for resources they can use.

With sincere thanks and blessings in Christ,

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