



Giving in Faith

How Coronavirus Widened the Digital Divide

One-third of faith-based organizations report an increase in donations during the 2020 coronavirus pandemic.



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2021 Update

A year after the pandemic forced places of worship to close their doors, we took a brief snapshot into how digital giving has changed.

As overall giving is slightly up over the past year, the number of people giving is on the decline. Donors, who in the past contributed large gifts, are giving even more during this unprecedented time of need. However, for those who traditionally contribute smaller amounts, there has been some pull back in giving, likely explained by the adverse economy. We expect many of these givers to return as the economy improves.

How are growing churches increasing giving a year after the pandemic?

Providing multiple ways to give

Donors tend to use multiple giving methods including browser-based giving, app-based, and social media giving. Savvy organizations have partnered with giving platforms that provide donors with different giving options.

Embracing non-members

One in five Givelify donors give to multiple organizations and savvy organizations are embracing these non-members and encouraging them to give to their organization. Organizations that have seen the most increase in non-member giving have found ways to actively engage with this newfound audience, be it through social media, direct outreach, or by simple acknowledgement of these gifts immediately following a donation.

Leveraging social media during live events

Many organizations are streaming live-events to their members and intelligently using social media during those events to create an easy way to donate.

Connecting giving to important causes

Many organizations are seeing success by providing additional giving options beyond tithes and offering. Members and non-members are giving generously to important causes, such as Giving Tuesday, as well as local causes.

About This Study

Organizations across the country continue to cope with the devastating financial effects of the 2020 novel coronavirus pandemic. Over 40 million Americans are unemployed, and economists project that more than 100,000 small businesses have permanently shut their doors since the virus rapidly spread in March.

Givelify launched a nationwide survey in May 2020 of faith leaders and their members. We wanted to understand how faith organizations and their members are navigating these uncertain times. Givelify's mobile donation app data provides behavioral data detailing how donors are actually giving throughout the pandemic. Through the survey and mobile app data, we can better understand how online and mobile giving changed through the course of the pandemic and what places of worship can do to set themselves up for long-term viability.

In today's unimaginable health disaster, the most vulnerable organizations were hit the hardest by the coronavirus – some places of worship were among the top groups. Many places of worship have long been a beacon of hope for their communities, especially in times of crisis. In addition to responding to the spiritual needs of their congregants, places of worship also respond to basic needs of their communities by providing food, clothing, shelter, and much more.

In our inaugural Giving in Faith report, we will take a look at four key areas that the survey data uncovered. These areas include:

- How places of worship that adopted online and mobile giving thrived during the pandemic.
- The shift in how donors gave before the pandemic and will give after.
- The trend of online donations to multiple churches from a single donor.
- Statistics that show that online and mobile giving is here to stay.

However, this overnight change revealed that some churches and places of worship were more prepared than others to adopt technology to host services online and receive online donations. The dramatic technology shift uncovered and widened the digital divide among places of worship.

For many, not adopting technology to facilitate online donations meant increasing their risk of financial vulnerability in a time of crisis.

The novel virus quickly exposed many gaps, including the economic inequality that left many communities turning to much needed resources. According to Feeding America, food pantries gave out 32% more food in April 2020 than in 2019. Places of worship and their faith leaders also rose to the occasion knowing many families rely on free meal services.

Faith organizations lean heavily on congregant donations for their financial health and to support community programs. With no in-person services to collect the necessary funds, some places of worship were on unstable fiscal ground themselves. An article by [The Washington Post](#) reported that nearly one-third of congregations have no savings.

Like most organizations across the United States, churches and places of worship had to quickly pivot and respond to the spiritual needs of their communities in a new way. They also had to think about their own financial sustainability differently. Just as all workplaces, universities and schools were turning to technology to adapt to shelter-in-place orders, places of worship were doing the same.



Our Key Findings

Donations Remain Consistent Through Global Pandemic

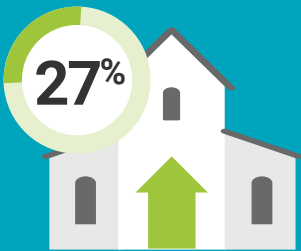


Donations remained consistent or increased for **55% of organizations.**



Only **2%** of donors indicated they **gave less online/mobile vs in person.**

Places of Worship Increased Digital Engagement & Grew Donations



Churches who reported financial improvement through the pandemic had a **27% increased web presence compared to those who did not.**



Digitally savvy organizations with website, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube and live streaming, saw **533% more donations** than slow to adopt digital organizations.



On average, giving amounts **grew from \$102 to \$112.50, a nearly 10% increase.**

Donors Show Financial Support to Multiple Churches



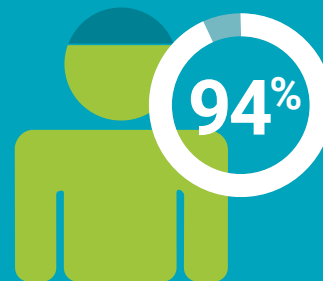
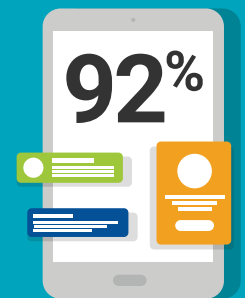
3 times as many donors today are donating to multiple organizations compared to 4 years ago.



20% of donors gave to multiple places of worship during the pandemic.

Online & Mobile Giving is Here to Stay

92% of donors will continue to donate primarily online when the pandemic is over.



94% of faith leaders say online and mobile giving is here to stay.



93% of donors gave primarily online during the pandemic.

Donations Remain Consistent Through Pandemic

As the faithful sheltered in place due to nationwide restrictions, many places of worship braced for the inevitable monetary shortfall. However, the faith organizations Givelify surveyed reported their donations stayed consistent and, in some cases, increased.



Nearly **25%** of places of worship reported overall donations through social distancing remained the same. More encouraging were those faith organizations who reported a moderate or significant increase in donations, **26%** and **5%** respectively.

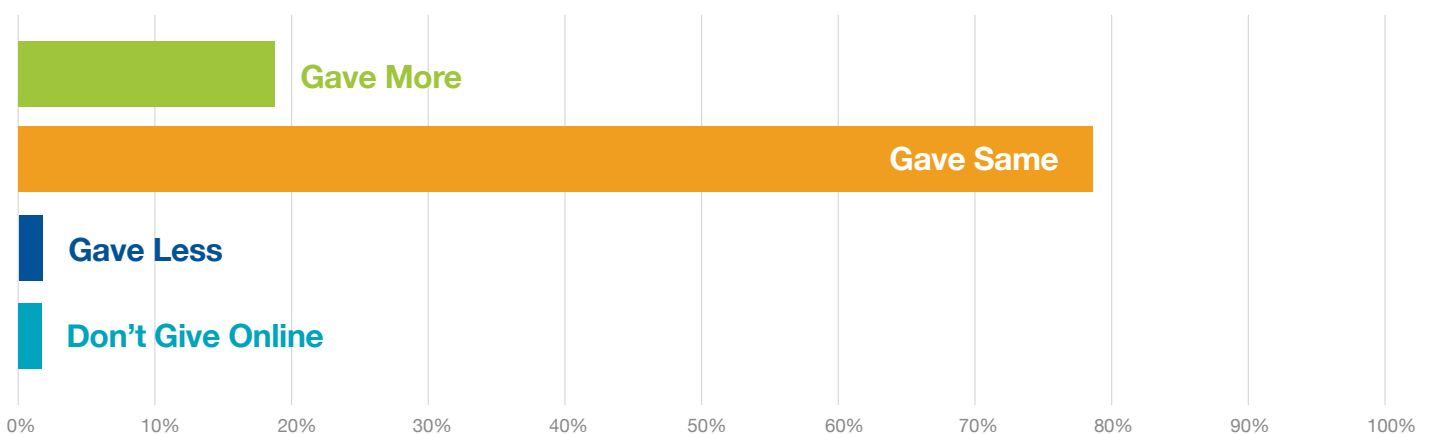
How have your overall donations changed from social distancing?



An interesting trend discovered in the research was that many donors give more when they give online.

In fact, when donors give digitally, **nearly 20% of them give more than they would in-person.**

When you give digitally, do you give more, less or the same as in person?



While not all donors increased their giving amounts when they give online, around **80% continued to give at the same levels** and only **2% decreased their donation**. Faith leaders who are looking to increase donations should incorporate online and mobile giving into their overall donation mix.

Giving Grew For Places of Worship with Digital Engagement

As we shared earlier, a majority of churches saw donations increase or remain consistent. This is a direct result of these faith-based organizations embracing online and mobile giving.

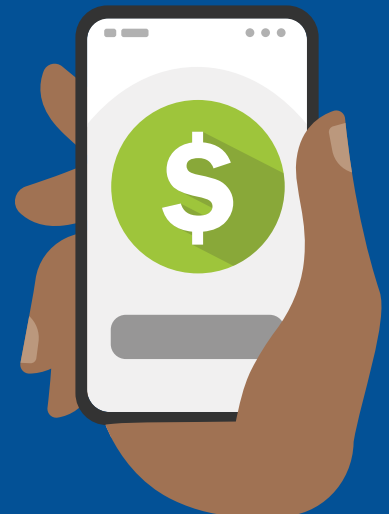
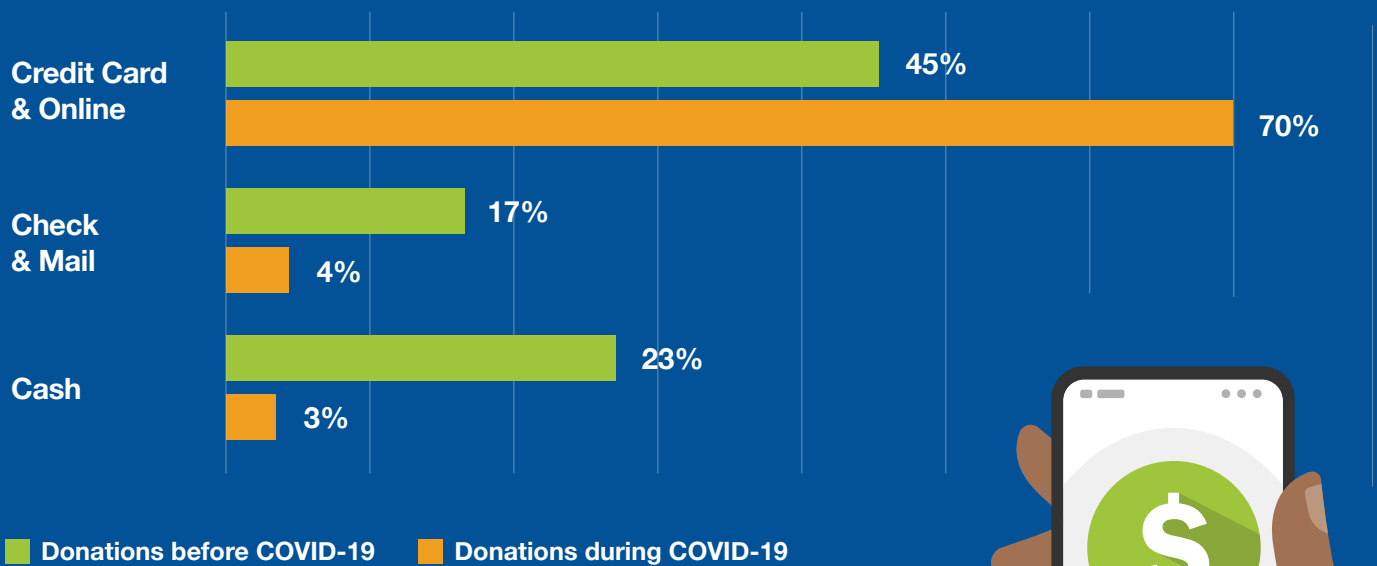


Digitally savvy organizations, those who have a website, live streaming, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube saw **533% more donations compared to organizations without a significant digital presence during the pandemic.**

Prior to the pandemic, these digital early adopting organizations received 2.5 times the donations per organization. These digital pioneers prove it pays to embrace technology during normal times, but the pandemic dramatically improved their ability to receive donations.

Online and mobile giving saw a significant jump during the pandemic. Those places of worship that adopted digital tools reported the mix of donations changed significantly.

Donations changed from in-person to digital methods during COVID-19

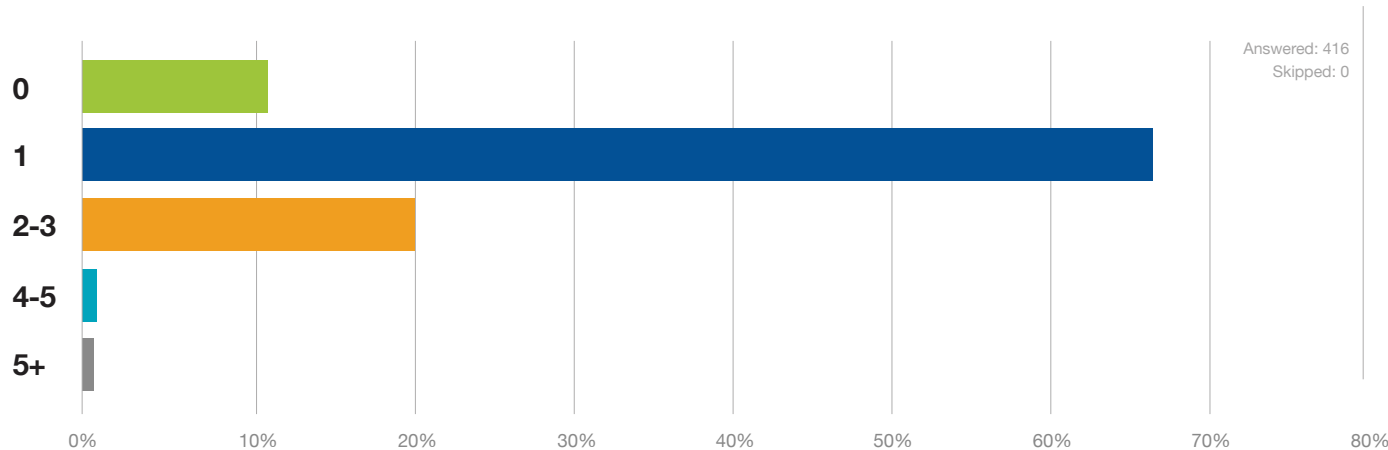


Based on Givelify's mobile donation app data, **donors increased their online and mobile giving amounts, on average, by 10% – from \$102 to \$112.50.**

Donors Show Financial Support to Multiple Churches

A critical trend Givelify uncovered through its nationwide survey was that **nearly 1 in 5 donors gave to multiple places of worship during the pandemic**. And, a majority of places of worship experienced this increase in overall donations through online and mobile channels.

How many unique places of worship have you given to during the pandemic?



A faith leader who responded to Givelify’s survey said overall donations, “... increased due to non-members unable to attend church at their regular service saw our Facebook Live services and mailing.”

325
PERCENT

Givelify, through its proprietary giving app data, discovered donors who gave primarily via online/mobile were **over 325% more likely to give to two or more organizations compared to donors giving primarily by plate, cash, check or mail.**

One pastor indicated, “**our members are still faithfully giving and we are also receiving donations from non-members who watch our services online now.**”

Small places of worship may have a congregation size of **50 people**, but can have an immediate connection to hundreds or thousands who can instantly give on their mobile devices and online.



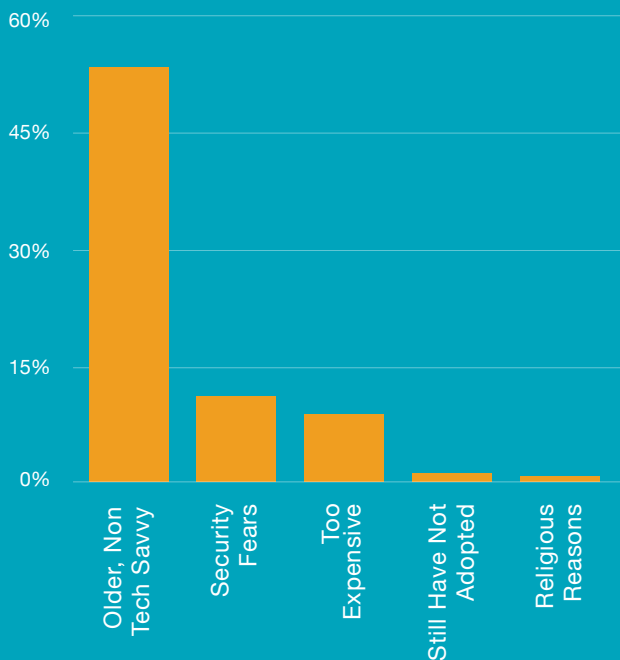
Online & Mobile Giving is Here to Stay

Usage and adoption of online and mobile giving platforms is on the rise, according to our survey data. And both donors and faith leaders agree donating through digital channels is here to stay. However, while the overwhelming majority of faith leaders say they will continue encouraging online and mobile giving after the pandemic, this eager adoption was not always the case.

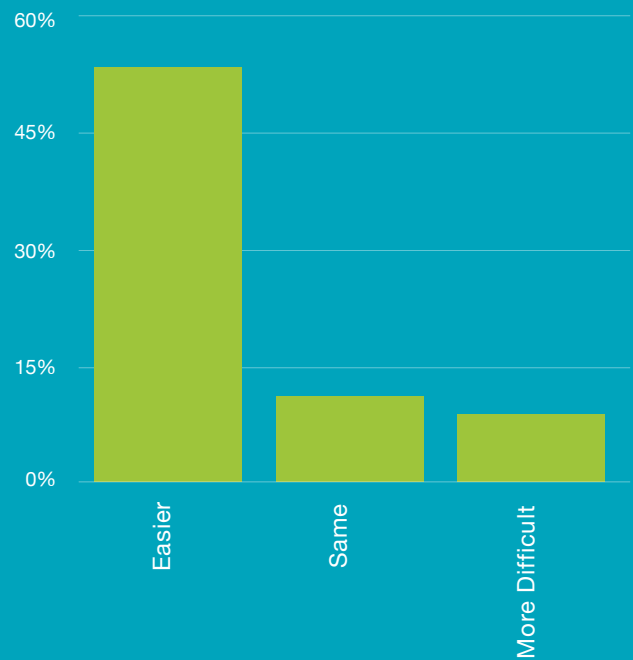


Nearly 54% of faith leaders said an older, non-tech savvy congregation was the main reason they did not adopt online and mobile giving sooner. Security fears and costs were other reasons.

Reasons that prevent leaders from adopting online & mobile giving sooner.



If you are new to online & mobile giving since the pandemic, is it easier or more difficult?



In comparison, faith donors who were new to online and mobile giving reported it was easier than expected.

Some faith leaders have overcome their reluctance to embrace online and mobile giving due to fear that their older members will not use it. These organizations have found that not only do older members enjoy using online and mobile giving, they find it is much easier to use and they often give more than in person. A critical takeaway is for faith leaders to try online and mobile giving and see how their own congregation responds.

Key Takeaways



While nearly **45% of congregations said they were getting by or struggling financially before the pandemic**, places of worship that leveraged online and mobile giving fared better than those who lagged in adoption.



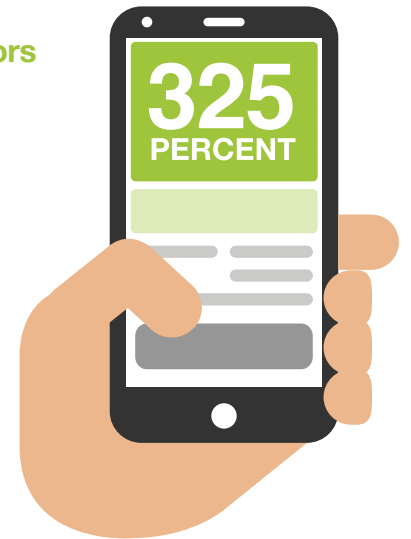
Donations remained consistent or increased for 55% of organizations.

On average, donation amounts during the pandemic rose about 10%. online and mobile giving provides a level of simplicity and convenience for donors and lends itself to make giving in larger amounts easier.

Donors who give digitally are 325% more likely to give to multiple churches!

When a place of worship embraces digital giving, they are also increasing the likelihood that a donor from a different house of worship will give to them, too.

As a matter of fact, 20% of donors gave to multiple churches.



Our Conclusion

The pandemic's effect on the nation brought unimaginable change. A surging economy was brought to a grinding halt. Millions of Americans lost their jobs, hundreds of thousands lost their lives, and businesses shuttered. The most vulnerable felt these negative effects more acutely than the rest.

Faith-based organizations are an essential service in their communities. But despite their need, the pandemic is forcing places of worship to fight for financial survival. This global health crisis has exposed unanticipated gaps. Likewise, there are helpful lessons that places of worship would do well to put into practice now.

Places of worship must take the steps to modernize or potentially risk permanent closure. Even post-pandemic, as things go back to normal or a new normal, they must be prepared for future unknown tragedies and disasters.

An overwhelming majority of faith organizations saw an increase with online and mobile donations during the pandemic. Unfortunately, many places of worship were left behind because of fear or lack of understanding that their congregation would be able to embrace online and mobile giving.

Online and mobile giving is vital to the financial health of places of worship and their survival through unpredictable events. The role that faith organizations play is crucial for thriving communities. Modern innovations serve to enhance and provide a stronger foundation for congregations in today's ever-changing world.

Methodology

Givelify used three different methods in collecting research for this report. They were...

1

Givelify conducted a nationwide survey to **308 donors** (members of faith-based organizations) who have downloaded the Givelify mobile giving app to make donations. The survey was conducted in early May 2020 with a small incentive in place to encourage participation in the survey. **73% of donors who responded to the survey were male.**

2

Givelify conducted a second survey to **418 leaders of faith-based organizations**. These faith-based organizations spanned various faith denominations though Christians were the most prominent. The faith leaders fell into the following Christian denominations: **1% Catholic, 79% Protestant, 0% Orthodox, 18% non-denominational and 1% did not specify**. The faith-organizations were from organizations with less than 50 parishioners and up to 500+ parishioners. **57% of faith leaders had a weekly attendance of 49-99 members and 38% were 100-249 member organizations. 50% of faith leaders were female as well.**

3

Both sets of data were matched with Givelify's mobile giving app data to capture real behavioral insights beyond survey data. **This allowed Givelify to analyze actual giving data based on online and mobile giving behaviors as well as aggregate donations received by the faith-based organizations themselves.**

About Givelify

Givelify is where places of worship and nonprofits come to instantly connect with the fastest growing community of people doing good one simple, joyful gift at a time.

With a rating of **4.9 out of 5 from nearly 40,000 verified reviews** on the [App Store](#) and [Google Play](#), Givelify's free mobile giving app is the most downloaded, highest rated and most reviewed platform for growing online donations.

Over 45,000 places of worship and nonprofits are growing generosity and furthering their missions on Givelify. To learn more or to join for free, visit us online www.givelify.com.

Check out our App Store & Google Play Reviews

