



Giving in Faith

2022
REPORT

Dynamic Leadership, Deep Generosity,
and the Role of Digital



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About this study

The last two years have brought considerable change and uncharted territory for us all. Places of worship across the United States felt the weight of the COVID-19 pandemic. Faith leaders faced new challenges in providing worship spaces, maintaining and nurturing community, and supporting the spiritual growth of their members as they managed unknown situations.

In February 2022, Givelify partnered with the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving, part of Indiana University Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, to gain a better understanding of how individuals and congregations navigated the ongoing pandemic. We heard from 524 faith leaders and 852 faith givers who shared their experiences on community, giving, and worship.

While much recent research focuses on the impact of the pandemic on congregations, this study sheds light on the ways in which individual giving and gathering behaviors changed throughout 2021. It also highlights the key factors that individuals consider when making decisions about attendance, gathering, and giving.

The 2022 *Giving in Faith* study holistically examines the relationship between the giver and their faith from the perspective of the individual giver, the faith leader, and the congregation.

Key themes

- Faith leaders hold multifaceted roles and are pivotal in driving engagement and community
- Digital is here to stay, and savvy leaders will cultivate digital communities
- In challenging times, giving prevailed, and givers want to be even more generous

The findings reveal one powerful overarching theme:

To fulfill the call of spiritual leadership, faith leaders take on multiple pivotal roles. They drive engagement, grow membership, and nurture community. They spearhead technology adoption and are entrusted with the sacred guardianship of the tenet of giving.

Looking back: challenging the digital divide

Our findings suggest that faith leaders forever changed the definition of assembly from a primarily in-person experience to a gathering of fully virtual and hybrid attendance. A key benefit of virtual worship was wider audience reach, which allowed people to attend services regardless of circumstance or location.





Looking back: challenging the digital divide

For many congregations across the United States, the COVID-19 pandemic widened the digital divide: the gap between those with easy access to, knowledge of, and proficiency with digital technology and those without. The abrupt upheaval of early 2020 left many congregations unprepared, unable, or unwilling to adopt digital technology to bring their services online and stay connected with their congregants while pandemic-related safety measures were mandated.¹

Our study revealed the top reasons faith leaders did not offer virtual worship services before the pandemic:

- Lack of necessary equipment (48%)
- Lack of interest from congregants (36%)
- Lack of interest from leadership (28%)

Recent research on the digital divide in places of worship supports these findings. Furthermore, reluctance from leaders to adopt digital components, even when congregants expressed a desire for these technologies, slowed access and adoption.¹

This digital reluctance, combined with the disruption of in-person worship, had a profound effect on both attendance and giving for places of worship that had not yet implemented digital options. A study by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research found that while 57% of congregations reported some decline in attendance between 2019 and 2021, the steepest decline in attendance was observed by congregations that offered only in-person worship.²



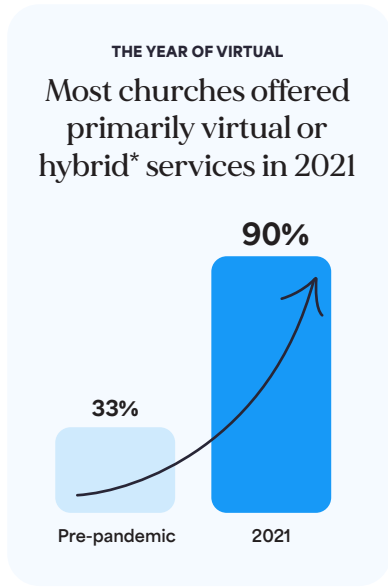


Digital adoption reshaped gathering

Faith leaders have always worn many hats to fulfill the call of spiritual leadership. The unique challenges of 2021 required faith leaders to adopt new technologies and further expand their role as worship shifted to a virtual format.³ In fact, prior to the pandemic, 67% of congregations we surveyed did not offer virtual worship services. As noted earlier, offering only in-person worship services negatively affected congregational attendance. However, we found that faith leaders who embraced technology and recognized the importance of connecting with their congregants had a different experience.



As more leaders began to offer virtual worship, congregations that adopted digital solutions saw their attendance numbers recover. While some studies² reported declining rates of attendance in 2021, our study found that, during the same timeframe, 66% of organizations that adopted digital worship or giving reported an increased or steady rate of attendance.



*Hybrid: a blend of in-person and online worship

Additionally, they received a strong positive response from their congregants:

Most individuals (91%) reported that they did not change affiliation from their primary place of worship during the pandemic, finding solace in their spiritual family and leader.

It is no surprise that many leaders embraced the role of “digital creatives” or “digital strategists” to effectively reach their congregation under newfound circumstances.⁴ Providing a digital means of attendance during this uncertain time was not only essential, but it also forever changed what it means to assemble for worship.

Faith leaders spearheaded virtual services and transformed the way we gather for worship:

- **90% of faith leaders** reported that they offered online services in 2021, which were primarily live-streamed with some audience interaction (65%). These statistics closely echo virtual worship trends from other national surveys.^{2,5}
- **57% of faith leaders** sought to reach audiences across greater distances by offering virtual worship services, recognizing that it allows for the inclusion of current, former, and new members regardless of life circumstances or location.
- **84% of organizations** will continue to provide virtual services, with another 13% reporting that they will likely continue to offer a virtual component to their services.

SECTION 2

Faith leaders hold multifaceted roles and are pivotal in driving engagement, community, and giving

The primary factor that drew givers in this study to their chosen place of worship is the faith leader. The faith leader's ability to reinforce the religious conviction to give, craft the worship experience, and champion community outreach is the unifying factor that inspires their members to give generously.





Faith leaders hold multifaceted roles and are pivotal in driving engagement, community, and giving

The COVID-19 pandemic was a time of economic hardship and uncertainty for many individuals. In a survey conducted in 2020, about a quarter of Americans reported that they or someone in their household lost employment, and about a third of adults reported a reduction in income.⁶ A quarter of Americans also reported difficulties paying their bills during the pandemic.⁶

We see those experiences reflected among our survey respondents as well:

- 63% of respondents reported changes in their household expenses or income.
 - Of those who experienced financial change, 51% of givers reported a loss in income, and 67% of givers reported an increase in household bills.
- 72% of givers reported that they received some form of monetary or non-monetary assistance during the pandemic.

Even though givers faced financial difficulties over the last two years, they provided incredibly generous support toward the organizations and causes that they support. Most givers reported that they maintained or even increased their generous giving during this time: 53% of individuals who changed their giving behavior gave more in 2021 than they had in the past.

Individual givers also stepped up to help their communities in times of need:

More than two-thirds of givers (70%) offered monetary or non-monetary assistance to their neighbors and community during the pandemic in addition to their regular giving.



“When we first started we were averaging 300 families a month. It went to 300 a week, to 500 a week, to 1,000 a week, to 3,000 a week, to 4,000 a week. I was amazed.”

- Dr. Jamal Bryant, Pastor
New Birth Missionary Baptist - Atlanta, GA

Driving community through outreach

Despite the economic challenges imposed by the pandemic, doing good and giving back were essential for both faith leaders and their congregants. Givers were generous in providing assistance, and almost all (97%) expect their congregations to serve and uplift their communities. Congregations were largely able to meet or exceed these expectations. Over 90% of congregations surveyed offered community outreach or services, and 73% of faith leaders reported that their outreach increased or stayed the same during the pandemic, even as congregational finances decreased and expenses increased.

Faith leaders were pivotal in driving this community outreach: 82% reported that the desire of leadership to support causes in the community resulted in the increase in outreach during the pandemic.

Building community is not new for faith leaders, but they were tasked to cultivate community within and outside a congregation during unprecedented times. This study illuminates the power of faith communities: Givers want to be benevolent, and they expect their congregations to be an extension of their generosity within their communities. Likewise, faith leaders are not only deeply committed to the communities they serve, but they are beacons of light who champion new outreach.

Desires of leadership to support community causes resulted in

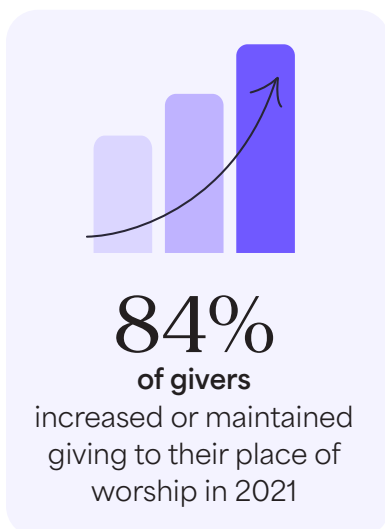
73%

of their organizations increasing or maintaining outreach.



Religious conviction and teaching giving

Many people experienced financial uncertainty during the pandemic, yet they provided incredibly generous support toward their places of worship. A majority—84%—of givers reported that they maintained or increased their giving to their places of worship in 2021. This is a trend we observed within the faith community who use Givelify: Total charitable giving grew 174% between 2019 and 2021.



Congregations substantiate the overwhelming generosity of their members: 77% of faith leaders reported that giving to their congregations increased or remained the same in 2021, which reflects giving to congregations reported in other national studies.⁷ Among the primary reasons faith givers financially support their places of worship are: religious conviction (65%), the worship experience (37%), and a desire to compensate the place of worship for opportunities it provides them (26%).

Considering that faithful individuals identified “the religious leader and their teaching” as the top factor that attracted them to their primary place of worship, it is not surprising that givers expect their faith leaders to nurture a culture of generosity. Ultimately, it is the faith leader’s ability to reinforce the religious conviction to give (40% report that they teach their attendees about the religious mandate to give), craft the worship experience, and champion community outreach that inspires their members to give generously. Faith leaders not only inspire through religious teaching, but almost all (94%) teach about giving at least some point in the year, often during service (79%).

Congregations and their congregants also believe that giving regularly, even more so than regular attendance, is a fundamental component of belonging:

71% of faith leaders and 68% of individuals agree that giving either a minimum amount or any amount to their place of worship on a regular basis is necessary for membership.



Leadership is at the center of giving influence



Faith leaders who strengthen their congregation's pious belief see this reflected in their giving

65% of givers report that religious conviction inspires them to give



Faith leaders who build community, deliver impactful sermons, and make givers feel welcome encourage generous giving

37% of givers report the worship experience directly impacts their giving



A faith leader's hard work does not go unnoticed

26% of givers are inspired to compensate their place of worship for all it does for them in their community

Digital is here to stay; savvy leaders will cultivate digital communities

Faith leaders recognize the increasing digitalization of worship and giving. Our findings suggest that how we worship has been fundamentally transformed, now providing congregants greater access to and choices of places of worship. Almost all of the congregations we surveyed intend to continue offering virtual worship services and digital giving after the pandemic.





Faith givers have embraced virtual worship

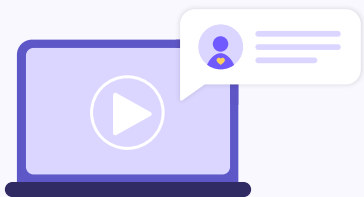
The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed how we interact with organizations and people, and it has accelerated the integration of digital tools into our day-to-day lives.⁸ These societal shifts, combined with the accessibility of virtual worship services, have also influenced how givers want to engage with their places of worship.

The Pew Research Center recently reported that the proportion of religious Americans watching worship services virtually has remained relatively steady, around 60%, between 2021 and March 2022.⁹

This was also reflected in our survey responses:

71% of givers attended their places of worship virtually (45%) or in a hybrid format (26%) in 2021.

Faith leaders are aware of the increasing digitalization of worship. Even as many places of worship have resumed in-person worship, both national studies^{5, 10} and our study find that:



An overwhelming majority of faith leaders (97%) intend to continue offering virtual worship services and digital technologies implemented during the pandemic.



Virtual worship creates access and choices



1 in 5
givers plan to attend multiple places of worship

With the rapid growth and availability of virtual worship, there are now even more choices and opportunities to connect than ever before. One in three churchgoers attended online worship services from their non-primary place of worship during the pandemic.¹¹ Moreover, one in five churchgoers attended virtual worship services from other churches more often during the pandemic than they did pre-pandemic,¹² and givers report that they intend to continue to do so in the future (19%).

The structure of social networks has dramatically changed in the last several years due to the influence and accessibility of the internet and social platforms. Previously, relationships were built upon physical proximity and the ability to gather in person, but the way we form our social networks has become ever more decentralized.¹³

We see this decentralization reflected in how individuals perceive the digitalization of worship:

59% of givers believe that virtual attendance is acceptable for belonging to their places of worship.

This framework has not only reshaped the physical space (i.e., attendance) of congregations, but it has also transformed giving behavior. Our 2020 *Giving in Faith* report revealed that 20% of givers were giving to multiple organizations during the pandemic.¹⁴ This pattern is clearly here to stay: In our current study, 21% of givers reported that they intend to give to multiple places of worship and other organizations.



21%
of givers
intend to give to multiple places of worship

Navigating a new environment, one where givers have become accustomed to visiting and giving to multiple places of worship digitally, presents an opportunity for congregations. These changes in how services are attended, how social interactions are taking place, and how content is being consumed have fundamental implications on the very fabric of belonging and faith-based leadership.

While the pandemic accelerated the need to “digitize” services, it is clear that leaders must maintain their role as “digital strategists” to meet the needs, preferences, and behaviors of their congregations.



“Our seniors, predominantly in the pandemic, they felt alone, lonely. And we saw this as a need so we provided computers because we wanted them to connect with the digital world.”

- Dr. Jazz
Victory Grace Center,
Bowie, MD

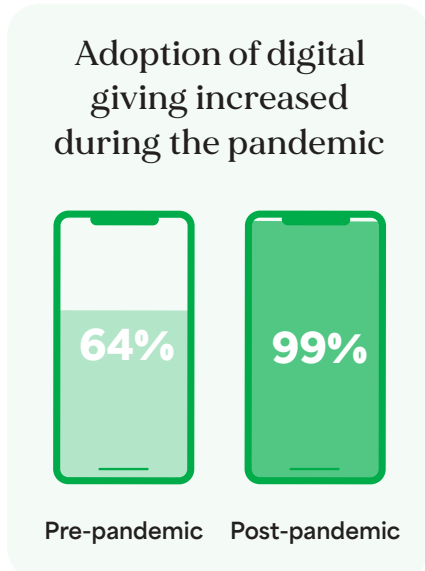


Embracing digital giving beyond 2022

The reluctance of some organizations to adopt digital technology early in the pandemic had a substantial impact on congregational finances. Just prior to the beginning of the pandemic, the National Congregations Study reported that 48% of churches surveyed offered online giving.¹⁵ Smaller congregations with fewer than 50 average attendees were most likely to report that they did not offer online giving options.¹⁶ Congregations that did not provide any digital means of giving early in the pandemic reported the steepest decreases in overall giving.¹⁷

Faith leaders who had already embraced online and mobile giving prior to the pandemic, or were quick to adopt it early in 2020, tended to weather the economic impact of the pandemic better. For example, findings from our 2020 *Giving in Faith* report show that congregations with a digital presence, including a website, live

streaming, or social media, received 533% more donations compared to congregations who did not adopt digital.¹⁴



Not only did faith leaders spearhead the transition to virtual worship services, but they also ensured that digital giving was easy and accessible. Seventy-one percent of organizations reported that their leadership was the driving force behind implementing digital giving options, and 27% directly cited the pandemic as the reason for their organization adopting online and mobile giving. As a result, 99% of leaders reported that their organization now offers digital giving. This is corroborated by other national studies that show that most congregations currently have online giving options.^{5, 16}

92% of givers intend to give to their places of worship digitally

We see this shift reflected in the behavior of faith givers who turned to digital giving during the pandemic. Almost all givers (92%) intend to continue using online and mobile giving options to give to their places of worship, continuing the trend we uncovered in our 2020 report.¹⁴

Looking forward: aspiring to do more good together

Worship and giving are interconnected. For givers, giving is a spiritual act, and they want to do more of it. For faith leaders, giving joyfully is a fundamental expectation for members of their congregations.





Looking forward: aspiring to do more good together

Navigating uncharted territory meant adapting to new tools and embracing technology at unprecedented speed. Faith leaders who offered virtual services and digital giving helped members stay connected to their place of worship during a very difficult time. As a result, congregations established new digital communities that both congregants and faith leaders are keen to sustain.

“Churches are experiencing the growth of the church with ‘no walls’ and it is difficult to declare definitive membership.”

-Survey Respondent

As our study has shown, faith givers displayed an impressive level of resiliency and generosity throughout the uncertainty of the pandemic. The dedication of givers enabled their congregations to emerge from the pandemic without decreases in their levels of attendance. Despite their own financial hardships, givers provided consistent and significant financial support to their places of worship and their communities. Furthermore, givers want to continue to do more good.

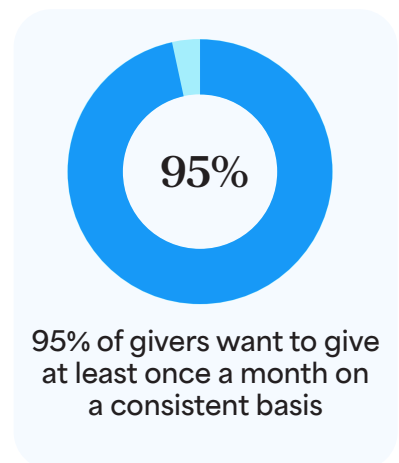


Givers desire inspired moments of generosity

All givers expressed that they want to continue giving at their current level or increase their giving to their place of worship in the future, with 95% of givers planning to give consistently at least once a month.

100% of givers want to donate the same amount or more in the future.

While our study found that individuals want to give more and give more frequently, our findings also suggest that givers may want to maintain the personal and intentional aspect of their giving. Although 55% of faith leaders of congregations surveyed in the National Study of Congregations' Economic Practices report offered an automatic recurring giving option¹⁸, we found that only 2% of givers selected the automatic recurring option when asked about how often they intend to give to places of worship in the future.



95% of givers want to give at least once a month on a consistent basis

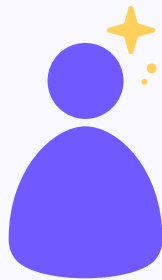
“It’s not about millennials or reaching a certain population of people. It’s about staying relevant and making sure you are giving people options... Nobody is taking away the envelopes in the church, nobody is taking away the offering basket. Instead we have options for you.”

- Demetra M., Givelify Donor



Faith leaders inspire generosity and cultivate giving

Our study revealed that faith leaders undertook critical roles that enabled them to not only navigate unpredictable circumstances but also spearhead digital engagement, community outreach, and giving. The efforts of faith leaders in nurturing community have not gone unnoticed by givers: When considering what attracted givers to their primary place of worship, they recognized faith leaders as the most important factor over all others, including additional programming offered, being moved by the music, and proximity to their home.



The religious leader and their teaching is the leading factor that attracts givers to their primary place of worship.

As selected by 60% of givers

Moreover, the faith leader's ability to craft the worship experience, champion services for their community, and reinforce the religious conviction to give is the unifying factor that inspires their members to give generously. Consequently, givers are motivated to gather in worship and give to their places of worship more generously, consistently, and intentionally. Thus, faith leaders are pivotal in cultivating a culture of generosity within their congregations, and it is imperative that they continue to complement their roles as a spiritual leader with that of a fundraising officer.

Key takeaways and tips

1 Leverage the technology investments you've started

Givers have formed habits around virtual services and online giving

- Continue to offer virtual services and online giving to be more accessible to your existing members and reach a wider global audience
- Ask for volunteers to create your own tech team. Start small. A team of one makes a difference

2 Emulate your immersive in-person worship experience virtually

Members and non-members will continue to attend virtual services, and want a sense of belonging

- Have a digital experience team welcome and connect with virtual attendees
- Recognize your digital givers just like you recognize those participating in the “passing the plate” tradition (e.g. ask them to wave their phones during giving ceremonies)

3 Inspire generosity through powerful show & tell

Givers want to give and want to give more

- Show your congregants the impact of all of their generosity
- Lean into your storytelling skills to teach and inspire generosity

4 Adapt to the changing needs in the community

Givers expect their congregations to serve and uplift their communities

- Ask and learn what your congregants or surrounding community's unmet needs are (e.g. a short email, asking their thoughts, could reveal interesting findings)
- Champion new programs and services that fulfill your mission and drive impact

5 Embrace your role as the spiritual, fundraising, and community leader

Givers expect your teachings on giving

- Strengthen your members' pious beliefs and craft worship experiences to nurture your congregation
- Teach giving to inspire a more generous congregation

Faith leaders should be proud of their extraordinary leadership during these challenging and unpredictable times. Because of their efforts, the future of faith and giving looks bright, and places of worship continue to be pillars of their communities.

2022 *Giving in Faith* research partners



Givelify is the most loved and trusted online and mobile giving platform. Along with its powerful donation management system, it's the fastest growing technology for advancing generosity in the world. Givelify instantly connects people to their heart's impulse to do good with award-winning products and experiences.

A global community of more than one million generous people have supported their favorite places of worship, nonprofits and causes with over \$3 billion in donations across more than 55,000 organizations. Givelify leads all giving apps on the App Store and Google Play Store with more than 90,000 verified authentic reviews and an average 4.9 out of 5-star rating.

Learn more at Givelify.com



Lake Institute on Faith & Giving fosters a deeper understanding of the dynamic relationship between faith and giving, through research, education, and public conversation. It serves as a bridge between academic and faith-based organizations and networks, and we actively share information and insights in both directions. Lake Institute conducts and encourages research on faith and giving, shaped by insight from practitioners. The Institute translates research findings into educational programs, resources, and events for practitioners, and convenes key partners and influencers to help advance public understanding about the nature and importance of faith and giving. Lake Institute works within and among faith traditions, seeking to reflect and support the diversity of religious expression in the American context.

A part of Indiana University's Lilly Family School of Philanthropy, Lake Institute was created in 2002 and exists through the generosity of the late Tom and Marjorie Lake, their late daughter and son-in-law Karen Lake and Donald Buttrey, and Lilly Endowment Inc. We strive to honor the Lake family's philanthropic values by illuminating the vital connection between faith and generosity.

Learn more at LakeInstitute.org

Methodology

This report uses data from an online survey of faith leaders (i.e., those who identified as religious leaders on behalf of a place of worship) and faith givers (i.e., individuals who were not responding on behalf of an organization) in the United States. The online survey was developed jointly by Givelify and the Lake Institute on Faith & Giving, and it was fielded in February 2022.

In the survey, we asked faith givers questions about how their giving, attendance, and affiliation with their places of worship were both impacted in 2021 and are expected to change in the future. We also asked faith leaders questions about attendance and membership at their places of worship, how they receive gifts from their congregants, how they delivered services, the community outreach they offer, and their congregations' finances in 2021.

We received a total of 1,405 responses from the general public and from people who have used Givelify to give or receive donations. All respondents were provided a small incentive as compensation for their time and effort. Nineteen responses were removed from the final analysis for completing the survey faster than 1.5 standard deviations from the average completion time (approximately 13 minutes). Ten responses from givers were removed from the final analysis because they do not belong to any religion. The final sample consisted of 1,376 responses, consisting of 524 who self-identified as faith leaders and 852 who self-identified as faith givers.

Summary statistics for faith givers

Average age (n=846)	54.2 years
Gender	
Female	76.6%
Male	19.3%
Prefer to self-describe	0.2%
Prefer not to say	3.9%
Race/Ethnicity	
American Indian or Alaska Native	1.1%
Asian (including Indian subcontinent and Philippines)	0.5%
Black or African American (including African and Caribbean)	79%
Latina/Latino/Latinx or Hispanic	0.9%
Middle Eastern or North African	0.2%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.2%
White (not Hispanic or Latino)	9.4%
Other	1.5%
Prefer not to say	10%

Religious Affiliation

Denominational Christian Religion	58.5%
Non-Denominational Christian Religion	29.3%
Other World Religion (e.g. Buddhist, Islam, Judaism, Sikh, etc.)	0.4%
Prefer not to say	11.9%

Annual household income

Less than \$25,000	9.6%
\$25,000 - \$49,999	21.2%
\$50,000 to \$74,999	19.3%
\$75,000 to \$99,999	11.7%
\$100,000 to \$149,999	9.7%
\$150,000 or more	5.1%
Prefer not to say	23.3%

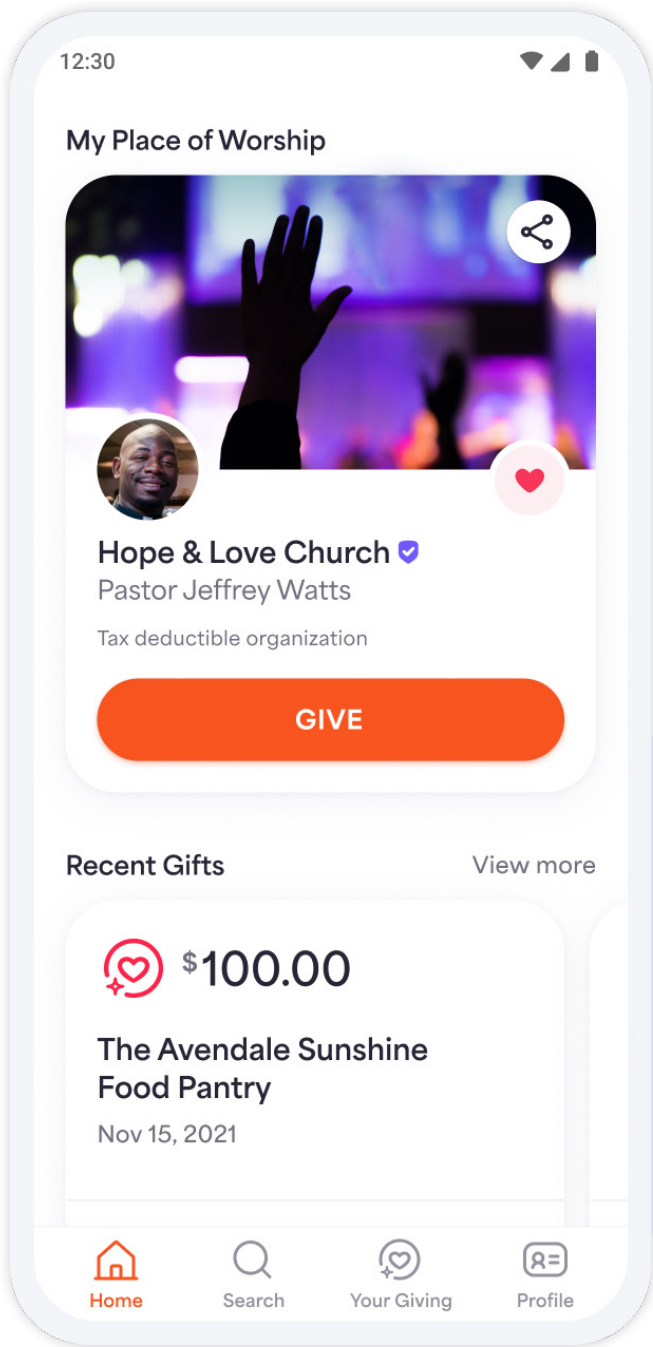
Summary statistics for faith leaders

Role in their organization

Senior Pastor	52.9%
Finance Team	19.3%
Administrative Staff	14.3%
Ministerial Staff	6.5%
Other	7.1%

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Givelify is the most loved and trusted online and mobile giving platform. Along with its powerful donation management system, it's the fastest growing technology for advancing generosity. More than one million givers have donated over \$3 billion to 55,000+ places of worship and nonprofits to date.

More good together.



4.9 out of 5 stars and more than 90,000 reviews

