

EBOOK

TIPPING POINT: How Parishes Should Approach eGiving after COVID-19

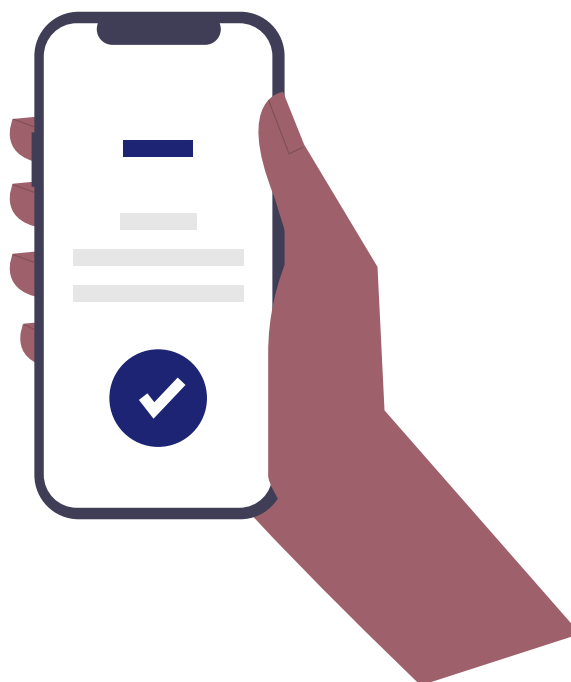


Churches have reached a tipping point with online giving – it’s no longer a question of if an eGiving option should be available, but rather what kind of giving experience parishes will offer to generous supporters who want to sustain important ministries and programs.

The global pandemic brought this question into focus, but churches across the country are still struggling with how and when to update, enhance, or even completely overhaul their online giving platforms. In talking with individual parishes, **Faith Direct consistently encounters three specific topics of urgent importance to church leaders:**

- 1. Is it even appropriate to consider giving changes in these challenging times?**
- 2. How complicated will it be to overhaul the parish’s eGiving options?**
- 3. What will it cost implement changes to online giving?**

This eBook addresses each of these questions, based on the Faith Direct team’s years of experience in empowering churches to improve and innovate their eGiving platforms and update existing networks. **Let’s take a look at the best ways for parishes to approach eGiving today...**



The Time is Now: Addressing 3 Top Concerns about Making Changes to Parish eGiving

We get it – now may seem like a less-than-optimal time to make changes to your parish offertory. There's been **economic upheaval**. Families have **struggled**. **Pandemic-related uncertainty lingers**. There is an understandable instinct to **stick with what you know**.

Even in “normal” times, though, it's easy to find reasons to resist change. The reality is, **whenever you feel that your offertory isn't growing enough to strengthen your ministries – that is the right time to make a change**. There's hardly ever a bad time to make adjustments that benefit your parish and the ministries that mean the most to your church families and your community.

Given all that, it's important to think clearly about the greatest obstacles to change, and how these concerns could be holding your parish back from achieving greater financial strength and effectiveness for your ministries and programs. Based on Faith Direct's conversations with parishes, **here are three primary concerns facing churches now, and the advice we're giving to parish officials as they struggle with these concerns:**

1. If you don't want to bring up giving out of concern for families in your parish who are struggling...

This is of course a valid and thoughtful concern – but even in the best of times, there will be families who are struggling financially. And even though these families may not be able to fully participate in offertory now, **they want and need the parish to be there for them, and they want the church to be strong. Most families who are struggling will not be hurt or insulted that you're looking for ways to strengthen the parish offertory**. They'll likely appreciate it, knowing that the church continuously strives to be present for them and remain strong and available in challenging times.





2. If you fear that parishioners who are comfortable with your current giving options will be hesitant to go through the process of changing or updating their giving...

Rest assured that the best eGiving platforms will make the process as painless and straightforward as possible. Faith Direct, for example, takes on much of the work of transitioning each parish to our platform as part of a full-service approach to giving, **handling everything from proactively creating new accounts for you to share with current eGivers to developing marketing materials personalized to your parish that encourage families to embrace eGiving.** The best online partners will do everything possible to make your church life more efficient and cost-effective – and this caring approach should be reflected in the process of introducing a new giving platform.

3. If you're concerned that there's too much uncertainty in our world to be making changes in your parish...

Think of how important the church is during times of uncertainty. **Throughout many crises – local, national, or even global – local parishes have been at the forefront of assisting those in need and reminding communities of the power and comfort of Christ's unwavering love for all of us.** Especially in unsettling times, it is important for parishes to maintain and expand life-changing ministries, and strengthening church offertory is an essential way to sustain programs that provide a much-needed sense of certainty when the world is in flux.

Adjusting and enhancing your parish offertory is a major step, and thinking through the pitfalls of such a change is an expression of love and leadership for your church. As you consider what's at stake for your parish, always remember that the stronger offertory that can flourish thanks to **a sound eGiving strategy can help you expand the ministries** that address the uncertainty and upheaval that can confront our world – and that's a change that can truly inspire your parish!

Faith Direct understands that your parish's concerns and circumstances are entirely unique – **let's talk about the challenges your church faces and the opportunities that exist to strengthen your offertory!** You can reach out to us here to schedule a conversation.

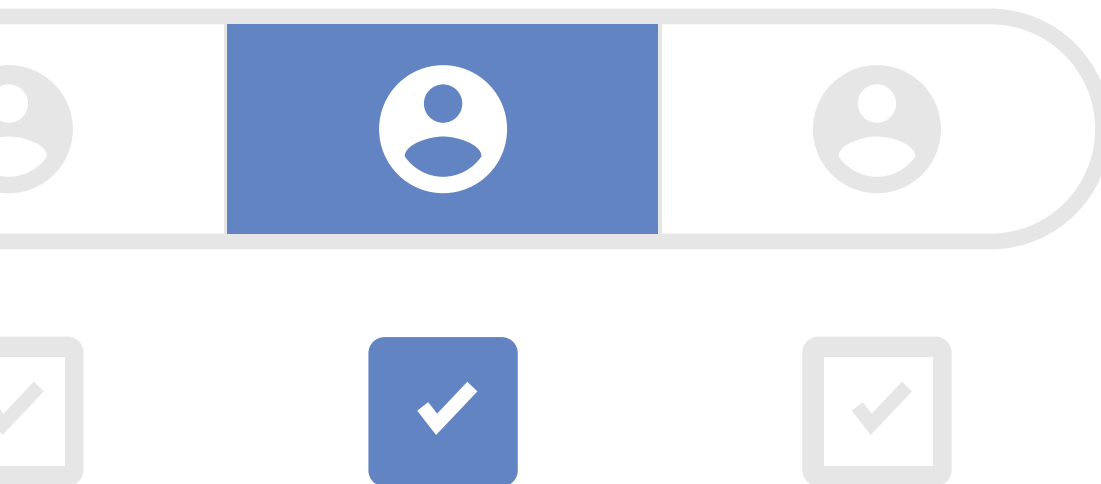
A Change for Good: How Faith Direct Simplifies the Transition to Your New Program

If you have an eGiving option already in place for your parish, changing course and asking your parishioners to switch over to a new service can seem like a daunting task – but it doesn't have to be! And it definitely shouldn't stop you from making changes that can strengthen your offertory and build deeper long-term support for your parish ministries.

Faith Direct has more than fifteen years of experience in helping parishes navigate this process, and in fact some 70% of our new parish clients have used a competitive program or bank service. **Our team has identified three proven strategies for simplifying the transition from an existing service to the Faith Direct platform. Here's how we help parishes make the switch:**

1. We do the legwork to make the transition easy for your existing eGivers ...

When a new parish with a legacy program joins Faith Direct, we proactively create new user accounts and temporary passwords for your current donors, so they can quickly sign in with Faith Direct and set up their giving with us. Parishes tell us that this has a major impact in helping people make the switch – when parishioners know that much of the work is already done for them, they're less apprehensive about taking the initiative and updating their giving.



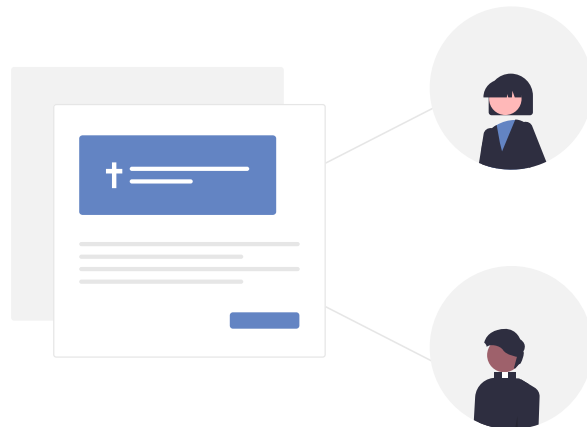
2. We offer dedicated customer service to help current givers who have questions about how Faith Direct works and what they need to do to switch over...

Parishioners will inevitably have some questions about a new program – and the easier it is for them to get answers, the more confident they will be that this is a sensible change for the church. **Faith Direct’s customer service agents are available via phone and email to field questions about giving options, payment methods, security concerns, and other topics** that may arise as a parish transitions to our platform – and each parish is assigned a church success team to help the front office staff implement the new program and address any direct questions from parishioners.

3. We provide customized marketing materials that help churches get the word out about how to move their giving to the Faith Direct platform...

Parishes that make the switch to Faith Direct have access to specific marketing and promotional materials, including emails, letters, and bulletin announcements, that are customized to each church and have been tested and proven to be effective over our fifteen years of experience with helping parishes strengthen their offertory. These materials include messages tailored specifically for current eGivers – introducing them to Faith Direct, sharing their new account information and options for updating their giving, and connecting parishioners to our customer service team should they have questions.

eGiving is all about simplicity and efficiency, and Faith Direct understands the importance of making it as painless as possible for current donors to make the switch from your existing program to our full-service platform. **If you have specific questions about how Faith Direct can work with your parish to improve your eGiving options, we’re happy to speak with you.**



The Bottom Line: Five Questions to Ask about the Cost of eGiving

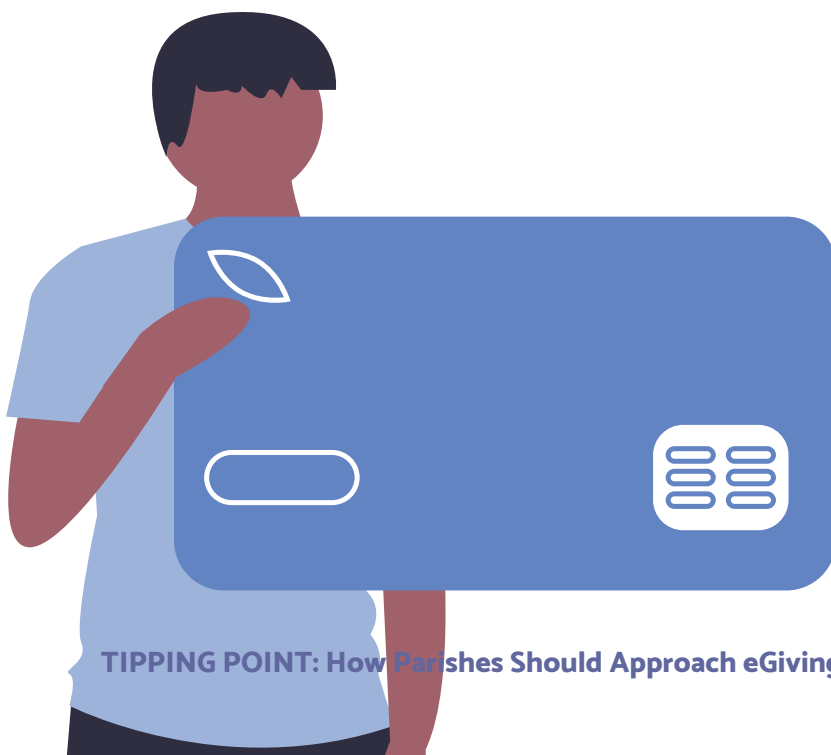
Let's talk about pricing...

Many eGiving programs attract parishes by offering a seemingly low upfront cost structure. This is a classic marketing strategy – getting people in the door with a low price. It might be good marketing, but it's not necessarily good for churches. **Parishes that buy into an eGiving service with lower upfront pricing can quickly find their costs escalating as more people use the program.** And “basic” services can burden front-office staff with extra, time-consuming tasks.

eGiving is a long-term process, so it's important to think of your costs that way as well. Here are five questions to ask as you consider the true overall costs of a successful eGiving program:

1. Is the pricing structure a flat fee, or is it percentage-based?

Flat-fee pricing means your parish's costs will remain consistent, month after month. Under a percentage-based plan that's tied to the amount of your monthly offertory, your parish's costs will increase as more of your members sign up for eGiving – having the perverse effect of costing your parish more if your members are inspired to support key ministries by signing up for eGiving. The last thing parishes need is to be punished as their eGiving program grows – but that's what happens under percentage-based fee structures.



2. How much time will your church staff be required to spend maintaining and managing your eGiving platform?

In general, **eGiving saves time** for your front-office staff because they don't have to spend so many hours processing individual checks and documenting and safely handling cash offerings (and this makes your offertory more secure as well) – but just how much time your parish can save **depends on the platform you chose**.

If a program makes your team responsible for time-consuming tasks like updating payment and credit card information, dealing with declined transactions, and tracking card expirations, you will need to consider that in your overall staffing and budget calculations. **A full-service program like Faith Direct will take this burden off your parish staff, allowing them to dedicate more time directly to ministries and programs.**

3. Does the eGiving provider offer dedicated customer care for the parish?

Your parish will inevitably have questions about implementing and managing your eGiving program – and some church members will likely need help with enrollment and account management. Will the eGiving provider you choose be there with the answers you need?

Faith Direct assigns a church success manager to every parish, ensuring a direct resource for questions related to the program, communication strategies, and reporting – and we also offer dedicated email and phone customer service for parishioners who need help. If a program requires your church staff to figure out how eGiving works and field questions from members, that's more time your team will have to spend on administrative tasks – and less time to focus on ministries.

4. Do the programs you are considering have strategies to help your parish with marketing and promoting eGiving?

It's not enough for a parish to simply offer an eGiving option – parishioners need to know the option exists, and they need to be informed of why recurring, automatic gifts are especially helpful in sustaining and expanding important ministries. If promoting eGiving falls to the parish, that's even more time required for your busy front-office staff – and again, that translates to less time your staff can dedicate to ministries.

Faith Direct offers tested marketing materials customized with each parish's branding, because we want parishes to succeed and because we've learned that church members respond more enthusiastically to an eGiving option that truly reflects the parish's identify and overall mission. If such resources aren't available to the parish – or if they drive up your cost – your parish will pay, one way or the other.

5. Are special features that will enhance your parish offertory and church operations included in the eGiving program's cost?

As church members grow more tech savvy and use digital tools to handle everything from supporting causes they love to buying groceries and making dinner reservations, they will expect such flexibility from your eGiving platform.

Some providers do not offer such added services at all, while others only offer enhancements as “add-ons” or “upgrades” that will increase your costs. Faith Direct includes features like text-to-give and event registration as part of our overall platform – **it's important to know exactly what's included in any pricing given to you by potential eGiving providers.**

eGiving is an investment for your parish that's geared towards consistency and long-term growth to sustain your church ministries, and **it's important to take a “big picture” look at how a program's cost structure will impact your parish now and in the future.** If you want to learn more about Faith Direct's flat-fee cost structure, why it's more beneficial and equitable for parishes, and the services features included in the cost, let's start a conversation today!



Move Your Parish Offertory Forward with Faith Direct

With an established reputation as the leading full-service eGiving provider, **Faith Direct processes donations for over 1,000 parishes nationally.**

Our customer driven approach to managed giving has resulted in 98% client retention each year, and our approach and client results have become the model that multiple companies have tried to emulate: 70% of our new parish clients have used a competitive program or bank service.

To learn more about how Faith Direct can meet your parish's needs, visit our website or schedule a talk with us today!

Move Forward

