



# 4 Ways to Improve Stewardship in Your Church



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When the economy is good, it's usually a good time for charitable giving, too. For the third year in a row, Americans donated a record amount to charitable organizations, according to [Giving USA](#). Total dollars given to churches increased 3 percent, and the church's share of the giving pie remained at 32 percent of all contributions, stopping more than 30 years of steady decline.

But as we've seen in the past, whether times are good or bad, it's important to make giving as easy as possible. In our [Churchgoer Giving Study](#), we uncover why churches should prioritize churchgoer giving preferences. Only 25 percent of those surveyed reported that their churches offered electronic giving options, while 60 percent either are using e-Giving now or would use it if it were available. That's a big gap and filling it offers advantages to churches and members alike.



We've pulled together four ways church leaders can focus on encouraging financial stewardship within their congregation based on what we've learned from nonprofits and our own research.

# 1. Like nonprofits, look for alternatives to pledge drives.

A roundtable discussion with contributors from Vanco's [Voices on Stewardship](#) blog revealed in 2016 that more than 65 percent of the respondents work with churches that still rely on traditional stewardship campaigns as their primary fundraiser.

For churches looking for alternatives to pledge drives, nonprofits offer some good models. For example, nonprofits analyze their giving data to blueprint their future giving needs, and they do a better job of communicating their fundraising goals, sharing their mission and vision and letting donors choose how they give.

Nonprofits also track donors on an individual level to know whether they like to be invited to big events or face-to-face meetings, if they prefer direct mail or email and how much they've contributed previously. Nonprofits use this knowledge to facilitate and increase their donors' generosity over time, which is something churches rarely do.













## 2. Set and talk about financial goals year-round.

Members may be aware of their church's financial plans, but they aren't necessarily engaged in setting goals or determining a path to reaching them. One reason is that some churches only talk about their finances during pledge drives or certain times of the year. Vanco's roundtable discussion found that churches typically discuss financials from the pulpit on a quarterly or annual basis, but each respondent agreed it's time for churches to get more serious about long-term giving. Communication is part of that.

Making finances a regular part of the conversation is essential to helping members understand and support the church's vision, and that will likely make a positive impact on the church budget. Talk to your congregation about your finances on a quarterly basis and explain how they fit within your mission as a church. Giving context to financial statements by sharing stories of changed lives and impacted communities is important to engage members in the health and outreach of your church.





### 3. Provide your congregation with more giving options.

Getting your members to engage with your church financially means understanding their giving preferences and providing them with a variety of ways to express their generosity and support your mission. Let them choose the giving method they prefer, and let them give whenever and wherever they want. Here are three giving options that members value:



**Card Readers:** With a mobile or desktop card reader, your church can use a laptop or tablet to accept debit and credit card payments. Members can conveniently and securely make offerings or payments on the spot.



**Kiosk:** A kiosk can accept contributions or payments anywhere in your community. It's easy to use – members simply choose a fund and swipe their card to give.



**Text:** Sending a text message is one of the fastest ways to give. It takes seconds for members to give anywhere, anytime using their mobile phone.









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## 4. Make giving and payments an easy option any day of the week.

Members aren't just at your church on Sundays. They attend different activities throughout the week, but aren't always able to write a check for programs or special events. Providing flexible options will make a huge difference for them and for you. Here are some ideas to create giving and payment opportunities every day of the week:



**Parents:** Busy moms and dads often don't have time to stop and write a check when they're dropping off or picking up their kids from church programs. Think of the time they'd save by setting up recurring payments for tuition and lunches. Help parents do just that by setting up recurring payments or one-time payments for supplies and field trips – simply and safely.



**Volunteers:** The volunteer treasurer of the scout troop your church sponsors spends countless hours taking in and manually processing hundreds, even thousands, of checks each year. The job would be much easier if outings, camps and dues could be paid for with debit and credit cards or through a mobile device. Your volunteers would also love to be able to donate after a Saturday fixing up a playground. Make it easy with a mobile app so they can give any time they want.



**Guests:** Gathering up the family or coming straight from work for a meetup at the fellowship hall can be difficult, so it's understandable when members or guests forget their checkbooks or are short of cash. Make everyone feel welcome at your Wednesday dinner with a variety of payment options. Give them the chance to relax and catch up with more ways to pay.



**Sports participants:** Your gymnasium and athletic fields can help keep your community connected all year. Easily collect registration fees and payments for photographs, uniforms and equipment with online payment options. No more stopping to write checks or return checks if they're made out incorrectly. e-Giving saves your sports participants time and hassle.

# Focus on your members and guests

At the heart of e-Giving is a desire to make a positive impact on the lives of others and invest in the church's mission. In addition, talking about your financial goals and getting everyone on the same page helps your members feel connected and better equipped to give.

These are just a few steps toward encouraging stewardship in your church. If you're not sure where to start, we have some great resources to enable you to encourage a spirit of giving. Visit our Vanco [resources page](#) online, or give us a call to learn more about e-Giving options for your church.





*Give us a call at **800-675-7430**  
to speak with a giving expert, or  
visit **VancoPayments.com**.*

*We'd love to chat!*

# About Vanco Payment Solutions

Vanco Payment Solutions helps churches effectively manage and grow financial stewardship. Working with more than 20,000 churches, we're the largest provider of electronic giving and payment solutions designed especially for faith-based organizations. For nearly 20 years, we've listened to our loyal, long-time family of customers, understood their giving needs and supported them through every step of building a complete electronic giving program. We can help your church select the right combination of services and grow e-Giving across your congregation.



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