



Beyond *the* Offering



Energizing Congregational Giving

Alexander Haas
TRANSFORMING INSTITUTIONS THAT TRANSFORM LIVES

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from the Carolina office of
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& Human Services

It's All Local

The old saying *all politics is local* can be adapted into a saying for our congregations and houses of worship. That saying is *all churches are local*.

By that I mean, no matter how many national studies or trends we may read, the reality of how we engage in ministry and mission all boils down to our local congregations and what they're experiencing.

In recent years, I've counseled many Episcopal parishes of all shapes and sizes, for example. While I've read numerous studies citing the struggles to maintain membership numbers and levels of financial giving in the Episcopal Church at large, I experience many local parishes that are thriving and growing – bucking the national trends. They are adapting and adjusting to the environment in which they find themselves as they emerge from the pandemic.

So, while it is important to review the trends on the national scale, I encourage you to evaluate regularly what you're experiencing in your local congregation.

When approached by congregations for assistance in strengthening their philanthropic opportunities, I often encourage leaders and their congregations to undertake a strategic planning process first.

Here are three steps you might consider if you'd like to begin some strategic planning yourself:

First, **engage in a “brainstorming session”** with your clergy and lay leadership to help clarify the direction for your present and future. You might consider some type of simple written survey prior to the brainstorming session to determine if common themes emerge. Then at the actual session, you can take a deeper dive into exploring the themes by asking probing questions.

Second, as in most strategic planning processes in the business world,

groups **conduct a SWOT analysis** in which the group names internal Strengths, Weaknesses, then external Opportunities, and Threats. Another recent business approach used by some organizations is more positive oriented in nature and less focused on weaknesses and threats. It is a SOAR analysis – focused on determining congregational **Strengths, Opportunities, Aspirations** (long-term hopes as a congregation), and **Results** (the measurable factors of ministry). I find this approach more helpful in faith-based settings.

Third, after conducting your internal and external assessment, use the STOP, START, and CONTINUE method for evaluating your programs, ministries, and activities. As a congregation, what should we stop? What might we start? And which of our current approaches should we continue? Often, this process aids a congregation in evaluating the current climate of their local communities to determine how to best use their financial resources and become more effective in their ministries.

Yes, many national studies are underway helping us to see the trends we're experiencing in faith communities at large. But there's nothing like adding to that review of trends by launching a strategic planning process to help you look beyond the trends to building your own local hope-filled future.

We Are Here to Help!

Do you need help with planning for next year? Our church consultants are here to guide you.

Alexander Haas is dedicated to helping churches/congregations build strong fundraising programs to meet both immediate and long-term objectives for mission and ministry.

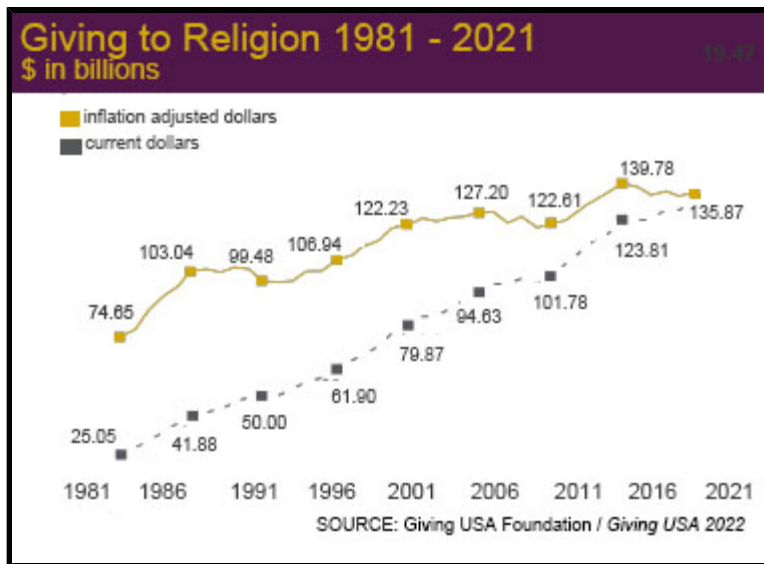
Simply send us some basic information [using this link](#) and we will reach out to get the ball rolling.

Our Team

Giving to Religion in 2021

Giving USA 2022: The Annual Report on Philanthropy for the Year 2021, released on June 21, reports that individuals, bequests, foundations, and corporations gave an estimated \$484.85 billion to U.S. charities in 2021. Total charitable giving in 2021 grew 4.0% over the revised total of \$466.23 billion contributed in 2020. However, while giving increased in current dollars, it declined (-0.7%) after adjusting for inflation.

Giving to religion grew by 5.4% between 2020 and 2021, with an estimated \$135.78 billion in contributions. Inflation-adjusted giving to the religion subsector stayed flat with growth of 0.7% in 2021 and comprised 27% of all donations received by charities in 2021.



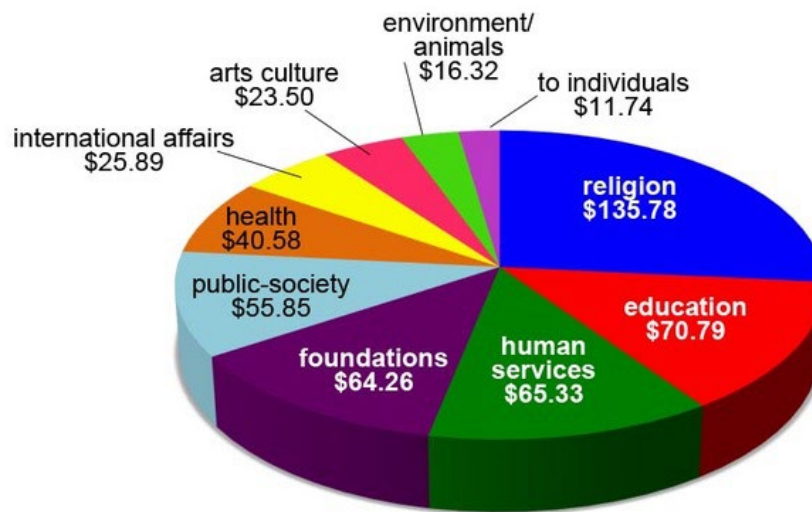
In the five-year period beginning in 2017, giving to religion realized the slowest rate of growth of all sectors. Despite its slow rate of growth in the five-year period beginning in 2017, giving to religion received by far the highest total donations over the same five-year period compared to any other subsector.

Cumulatively, current-dollar giving to religion increased 5.3% between 2019 and 2021.

Adjusted for inflation, giving to religion declined -1.4% between 2019 and 2020, and remained flat at 0.7% between 2020 and 2021. Cumulatively, giving to religion stayed flat at -0.7% in inflation-adjusted dollars between 2019 and 2021.

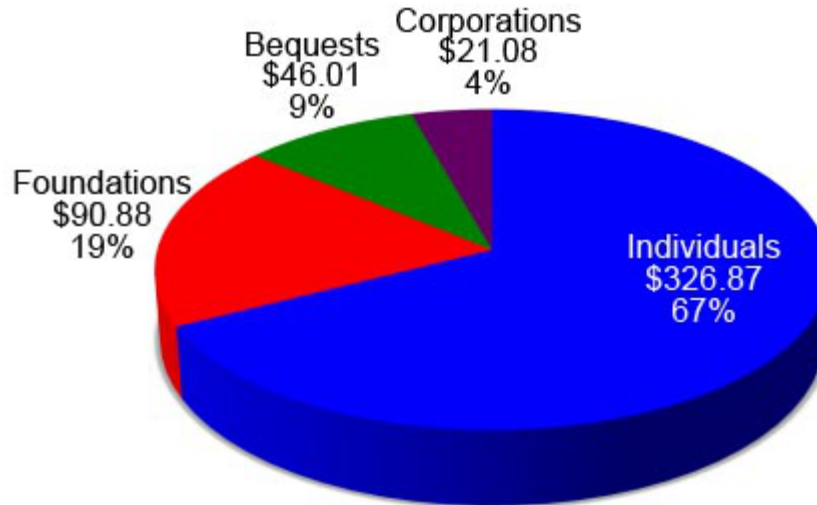
According to Blackbaud Institute, online giving to its sample of faith-based organizations increased 9.4% between 2020 and 2021. Online giving comprised 16.8% of total giving for these organizations.

Giving by Recipient in 2021 \$484.85 billion



Giving by Source in 2021

\$484.85 billion



Millennials Adopt Digital Worship But Don't Abandon In Person

A study (out of Canada) suggests that millennials, the first generation to experience a smartphone-free childhood, are still keeping one foot firmly planted in the real world — at least when it comes to religion, while also embracing digital worship.

The study, led by University of Waterloo sociologist Sarah Wilkins-Laflamme, found that a sizable minority of millennials in the US and Canada turns to digital religious or spiritual activities on at least a monthly basis. But only 5% said they do so without engaging in in-person forms of religion or spirituality once a month or more.

The findings should comfort faith leaders who worry that technology will displace religiosity, said Pauline Cheong, a professor at Arizona State University, “(Digital religion) is not a disruption or huge tear in the social fabric,” said Cheong. “There are a lot of savvy religious users using it to complement existing ties (to religion).”

“The overall takeaway for me was that digital religion is definitely a thing, but it’s a thing that only a chunk of the (millennial) population does,” said Wilkins-Laflamme.

Forty-one percent of US respondents reported passively consuming any kind of religious or spiritual digital content at least once a month, while only 32% of US respondents took the time to post about religion or spirituality on social media monthly.

It’s not yet clear whether Gen Z, who are more digitally native than millennials, will engage in real-world religion as much as their elders. Paul McClure, a sociologist who studies religion and technology at the University of Lynchburg, noted that his own research shows that greater Internet use is associated with lower levels of religiosity.

His latest study, published in June, found that among US youth ages 13 to 19 years, increased screen time is negatively associated with religious commitment, even when their parents are highly religious. “We cannot say for sure...but it is clear that screen time either displaces or substitutes for religious belief, identity and practice among adolescents from religious families.”

“Moving forward, religious organizations and leaders need to do what they can to maintain and sustain the trust, to cultivate healthy relationships,” Cheong said.

“Religious groups who don’t have an online presence will really struggle with those two generations (Gen Zers and millennials),” she said. *RNS, 8-3*

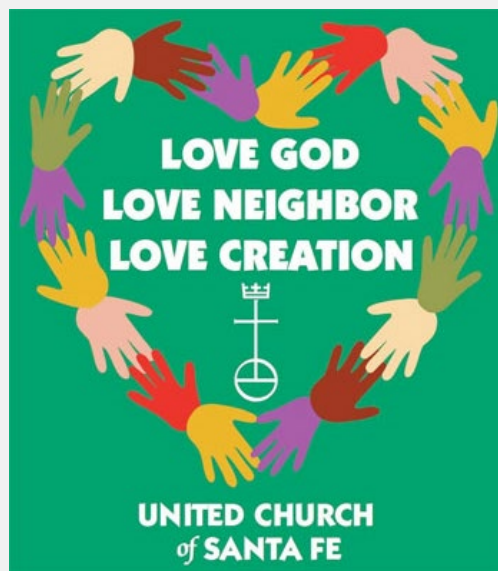
Giving Increased in '21 Despite Uncertainty

Overall charitable giving increased 27% in 2021, buoyed in large part by continuing strength in financial markets with philanthropic activity returning to pre-pandemic trends. A report from **BNY Mellon Wealth Management** found that its Charitable Gift Fund received record contributions of \$136.4 million in 2021—the fund reported assets of \$235 million in 2020. Overall, the number of charitable gifts increased 10% and the average gift size increased 15%.

- New donors slightly outnumbered repeat donors (51% to 49%) and on average made gifts that were nearly 19% larger, which may reflect lower balances or donor fatigue for existing clients.
- Gifts of more than \$100,000 represented 29% of the total number of gifts in 2021, but accounted for 85% of total giving.
- Older donors have taken the lead in making the largest average gifts.
- While BNY saw a 33% increase in the creation of new trusts, described as “a slight uptick,” the report noted that overall, total giving from trusts decreased, while total dollar additions to trusts was down by 50%—a sign of the diminishing long-term interest in traditional trusts.
- DAFs are now the preferred philanthropic vehicle among BNY clients—31% compared to 26% for charitable trusts. *PND, 8-22*

[Download the report here.](#)

Welcome Returning Client Partner



We Know Faith-Based Organizations

For more than 35 years, Alexander Haas has been a fixture in the nonprofit community. We are honored to have worked with both large and small faith-based organizations, helping sow the seeds of compassion, hope and charity. Take a look at our list of religious congregation clients, past and present.

[Our Clients](#)

A Fresh Approach to Fundraising

Raising the funds to meet the mission and ministry needs of churches is becoming increasingly challenging. At Alexander Haas, we understand the challenges that congregations face in raising the funds to support their mission. More importantly, we understand how to overcome those challenges. We offer a variety of stewardship services for the unique needs of faith-based organizations.

Our Services



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