

Electronic Giving Allows Ministry to Continue in Social Distancing Times

Giving to your local church means giving to those in need in your local communities, your conference, the nation, and throughout the world. Passing the offering plate in church on Sunday mornings is a physical and symbolic reminder of Jesus' commitment to ministering to all those around us.

When church attendance is slowed or completely stopped, though, to prevent the spread of the Coronavirus, offering online giving is a way to continue to feel connected to your local church and its many ministries. Of course, there is also the low-tech of using the post to mail in an offering check.

There are several easy steps churches can implement right now to create an online giving platform. United Methodist Communications offers resources for online/electronic giving options at <http://www.umcom.org/learn/make-giving-easy-services-credit-card-readers-and-more>.

The Desert Southwest Conference uses Vanco to process its electronic contributions. For an article on Vanco's Give + program, see <https://www.gcf.org/newsletter/2019/june/05/vancos-giveplus-shares-3-tips-to-increase-summer-giving/>

Other ways churches expand the offering plate to include

- Google Pay -- <https://pay.google.com/about/>
- Text to Give, such as Give Lively -- <https://www.givelively.org/text-to-donate>
- PayPal -- <https://www.paypal.com/us/home>

Here are just a few examples of church "Donate" or "Give" web pages across the Desert Southwest Conference:

- See Paradise Valley UMC's electronic giving web page at <https://pushpay.com/g/paradisevalleyumc?src=hpp>.
- See First UMC of Phoenix's electronic giving web page at <https://firstchurch.church/?s=giving>.
- See Dove of the Desert UMC's electronic giving web page at <http://www.doveofthedesert.com/GiveOnline>.
- See Vista de le Montaña UMC's electronic giving web page at https://www.eservicepayments.com/cgi-bin/Vanco_ver3.vps?appver3=wWsk24ZWJSTZKsGd1RMKlg0BDvsSG3VIWQCPJNNxD8upkiY7JIDavDsozUE7KGG0nFx2NSo8LdUKGuGuF396vbSYHnjS7ahsaKvFjUU80oTeXHubq5Z7ap5JVmPErc4ZeYHCKCZhESjGNQmZ5B-6dxxxfg8Zrlif5DWd7UAivxIA=&ver=3.
- See Desert Spring UMC's electronic giving web page at <https://desertspringchurch.com/give>.

Stewardship and finance experts from across the country recommend churches use direct bank transfers – electronic funds transferring – so that churches experience fewer fees than using a platform based solely on credit card donations. However, they acknowledge that credit card apps are sometimes easier for those who give.

Management of online donations may seem like a daunting new process for churches, but many who have already implemented such changes say churchgoers appreciate the convenience of online giving.

This is an opportune moment for the Church, called to serve in God's world in new ways. After the Coronavirus is long gone, churches will have established a sustainable, flexible way to continue supporting God's kingdom.