



Tips and Strategies for Boosting Offertory and Parishioner Participation During COVID-19

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Outreach by Phone / Phone-a-thon

It is important for pastors, parish staff, and parish volunteers to check-in on their most vulnerable parishioners during this difficult time. Most parishes have already carried out their own effort to reach out by phone to their parishioners in some capacity, but for the purpose of staying connected to parishioners and reminding them of the needs of the parish, conducting a phone-a-thon is typically the quickest and most effective form of communication.

By recruiting at least 5 volunteers and splitting up the parish roster for outreach, a parish can contact most of its parishioners in one afternoon/evening. Attached is a template script to help guide volunteers with their conversation. A majority of these calls will likely go to voicemail, but the purpose is to check-in on each parishioner's status and encourage their continued participation (only if they are capable – this isn't meant to pressure anyone who is facing financial uncertainty).

If your parish is having trouble recruiting volunteers, I would recommend starting small and contacting only the parishioners who have been consistently generous with their offertory. If they have not made a contribution in several weeks, it is likely because they are unsure how they can. Additionally, if a pastor is comfortable recording an audio message, there are robo-call services that can automatically dial and play the pastor's message. Of course, this is entirely up to the pastor.

E-mail Blasts (FlockNote, Constant Contact, etc.)

The easiest way to direct parishioners to the parish website and online giving link is through an e-mail. Not all parishioners have an e-mail address, however sending a message from the pastor/parish via e-mail with links on how they can continue participating has proven effective. With programs like FlockNote or Constant Contact, an e-mail blast to all registered parishioners with the latest bulletin, giving links, and other parish information can easily be carried out. If your parish does not have one of these programs, it is possible to send an e-mail to a large group through a Microsoft Outlook or Gmail account, however I'd recommend putting the parishioner e-mail addresses in the BCC line to avoid making each individual e-mail address visible to others.

The Bicentennial Campaign has a Constant Contact account that we can use to craft, customize, and send on behalf of a parish. I am happy to help if you think you may need to go this route.

Attached is template language for an e-mail update from the pastor, instructing folks on how they can contribute to the parish and stay connected.

Social Media/Website/App Updates

Frequently updating a parish's Facebook page or other social media account with a personalized message from their pastor is a great way for parishioners to feel connected. During Holy Week, more parishioners will log onto their parish's website than normal, so it is important to take advantage of having them visit the site and putting the avenues in which they can participate front-and-center. For reference, [Christ Our King](#) in Mount Pleasant is regularly updating their main page with a message from their pastor and their previous week's financials. Additionally, [St. Isidore](#), a parish in Michigan, has done this really well on their parish site (scroll about halfway down the page to "HOW DOES NOT HAVING MASS AFFECT ST. ISIDORE?")

If your parish does not already have an app, [myParishApp](#) is a popular service to help maintain communication with your parishioners.

Livestreaming

While more and more parishes are turning to livestreaming their own Masses, it is important to remember that parishioners tuning into a livestream is an opportunity to remind them of the needs of the parish. If your parish is livestreaming on Facebook and YouTube, consider adding in a link to the video's description that takes them to the online giving portal, as well as a sign-up sheet for the parish's e-mail service.

As a reminder, the Diocese of Charleston has set up an easy [online giving portal](#) that all parishes in the Diocese can use. Attached is an FAQ document that should help answer any questions you have about this portal.

Holding Parish Activity on Zoom/Google Meetings

The emergence of Zoom during the COVID-19 crisis has given parishes a platform to conduct their regular meetings. Attached is a virtual communication guide on how to set up a Zoom/video conference. This platform is useful for liturgical use, praying the Rosary, Bible Study, or Town Halls with the pastor.

Setting Up a Drop-Off Box

Since most parishes are still open for private prayer, parishioners should be made aware that they can drop off their offering while physically present. If your parish does not currently have a mail slot for parishioners to use to drop off their envelopes, it might be worthwhile to consider installing/setting up a temporary drop off box that you can direct parishioner to utilize while Masses are suspended.