

Responding to a Shortfall in Revenue During the Coronavirus Crisis

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If there is one thing we know about times of crisis, giving increases, sometimes exponentially. People want to help during times of great need; it makes them feel alive, fulfilled, that they are making a difference. That's why I am concerned when I hear that a number of our churches, in response to this crisis, are preemptively cutting expenses rather than giving their members an opportunity to increase their giving. By doing this, not only do we risk damaging the mission of the congregation, but we deny our members the opportunity to experience the joy of sacrificing for something larger than themselves.

I'm assuming that every one of our congregations has put in place an ongoing calling plan to keep in touch with members during this time. While email communication is a good way to disseminate information, it doesn't connect in the way that a pastoral call by phone does. These calls not only tell us how each member is doing physically, emotionally and psychically, but they also offer an opportunity to share how the congregation is doing, including sharing its financial situation. The steps below, suggested by Gail Perry, one of the stewardship consultants I follow, suggests the following.

Create a short list of your strongest financial givers (they may not always be your biggest givers). These people are your true partners. They deeply believe in you and your work. They are committed to your mission and have demonstrated that commitment over and over. Clearly, they will want to know what is going on and how they can help.

a. Reach out in a caring and compassionate way. You have a relationship with them. You want to know how THEY are doing.

b. Then acknowledge their partnership and how much you value it.

c. Ask for permission: "I wanted to share with you how things are going. Would you like to know the details?"

d. Be transparent. Share your status as honestly as you can.

e. Ask for the help that you really need. Tell them, frankly, what it will take to get through this.

f. You can say, "Is this something you'd be interested in helping with?"¹

It is times like the present that we are confronted by the fact that, "We are all in this together." It will be remembered as a time when the Church united to take care of one another and the community around it. It is a time to invite people to live deeply into their faith and their commitment and experience the joy of making a difference for the Kingdom.

Don't cut back the mission of your congregation until you give people a chance to respond to your call for increased giving!

¹ www.gailperry.com/fundraising-action-plan-for-crisis-response