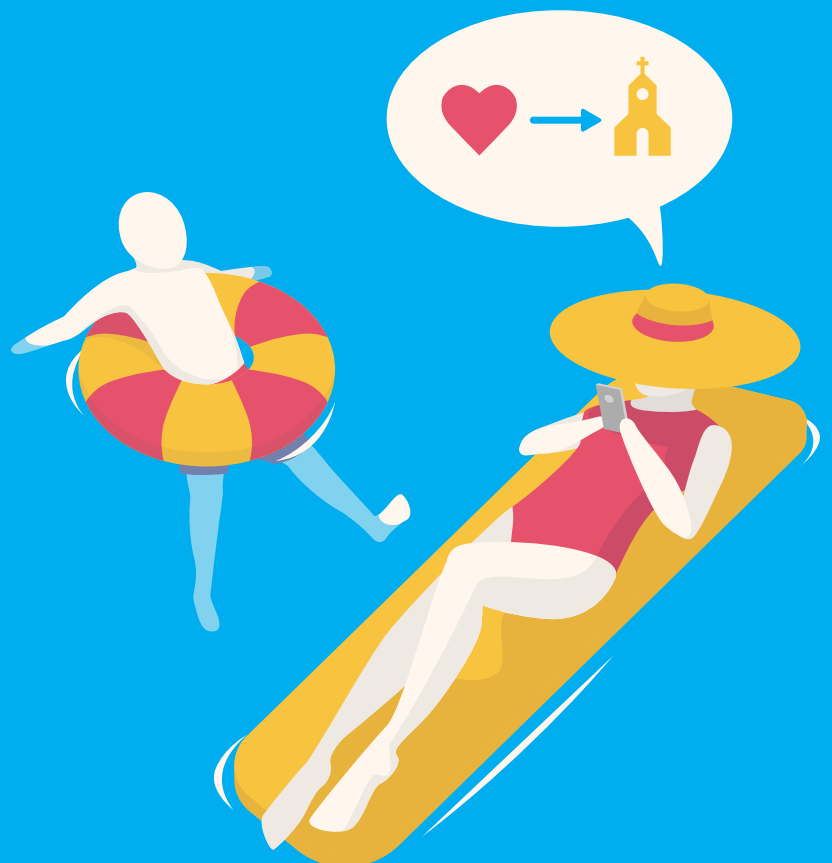


Beating

THE SUMMER SLUMP

your ministry's complete plan





There's an energy in the air during summertime.

With kids out of school, vacations nearing, and home improvement projects calling our names, it's easy to stay busy this time of year. On top of everything else, we're entering a season filled with spectacular weather. Even at its hottest, summer is the ideal time to cool off poolside or throw a family cookout.

While summer is a blast for kids, families, and people of all ages, it's a challenge for many churches. Not only are you competing with vacations, you're competing with hectic schedules, local activities, and a multitude of distractions.

As summer hits its peak, churches see their largest number of empty seats. In fact, during July alone, there's an average 34% drop in attendance¹. These smaller services often lead to a decrease in giving.

That doesn't mean you should throw in the towel! There are a lot of ways to avoid the dip in attendance and giving to have your best summer yet. As a way of helping you achieve just that, we designed Your Ministry's Complete Plan to Beat the Summer Slump.

The summertime plan is broken down into 4 stages. Whether you have less than a hundred attendees at your church or you manage multiple campuses that serve thousands, you'll find these stages are effective and easy to apply.

[So, let's begin!](#)

The 4 Stages of Your Summer Plan

Before we dive headfirst into the 4 stages of beating the Summer Slump, let's quickly review them to get a better understanding of why each one is important.



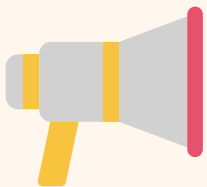
Stage 1 focuses on recurring giving. Why? Because there's no better way to beat the summer slump! In 2017, monthly giving grew 32% overall for nonprofits, showing givers notice and prefer the convenience of recurring giving².



Stage 2 explores how online giving platforms can further your church. Last year, June and July averaged an 8.9% growth in online giving³. By having the right technology in place, you can increase giving--even in the summer!



Stage 3 places the spotlight on planning your summer event calendar to grow attendance. Planned events often rank the 4th highest day of church attendance⁴. When planned strategically, events draw the unchurched and community to visit, as well as bring back active members distracted by summer activities.



Stage 4 is all about reaching churchgoers far and near. Just because members of your church family are going to be away more often in the summer season doesn't mean you can't connect with them. There are a lot of ways to expand your reach, and we'll go over them here!

Now that you have a better idea of what each stage is, and why it's important, let's dig deeper.



Stage 1: Avoid the Summer Slump with Recurring Giving

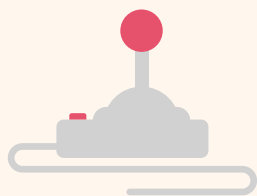
In 2012, a church stewardship consultancy surveyed 1,078 churches with questions about their finances. This survey found that 14% of churches exceeded their annual budget.

They then analyzed the high-performing churches to identify the factors contributing to their financial success. They identified 5 key “giving practices” that these financially secure churches shared. Item number one on their list? The ability to accept automatic, recurring gifts⁵.

Plain and simple: recurring giving works. Especially when it comes to avoiding the summer slump. Here are 3 simple ways to get it right.



1. Make it pretty. Blank and boring forms belong at the DMV, not your church’s website. Take advantage of branded giving pages when setting up the recurring giving program. On average, recurring gifts created on branded giving pages were 43% larger than gifts created on generic giving pages⁵. And that makes sense, right? Would you be comfortable giving through a page that looked totally different than the rest of your church’s website?



2. Make it easy. Give people flexibility with when, where (that means making Bank Giving easy!), and how often their recurring gifts are drawn. Equip them with the ability to manage, modify, or even cancel the gifts after they’re created.



3. Talk about it! If you want people to take recurring giving seriously, you need to lead them in that direction! And then do it again (and again, and again). Consistency is key, especially in the beginning. The goal is to ensure that every attendee at your church knows exactly where and how to give whenever the opportunity presents itself.

When people sign up for recurring giving, remember to welcome them to the program with a heartfelt email or note. Also, create something special to show continued appreciation like a monthly newsletter or annual luncheon.

As the recurring giving program expands, you'll be better able to forecast giving and avoid seasons like the summer slump altogether!



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Stage 2: Increase Your Ministry with a Church Giving Platform

Technology keeps us connected in ways we never imagined possible. While it can be distracting at times, it serves a purpose for the ministry. Websites, online giving tools, emails, and more can further your church's mission by allowing you to stay engaged with members and grow more connected with the community, regardless of where they're located.

Church giving platforms play a significant role in the how technology can enable your mission. It's an affordable solution for churches of all sizes that want to expand their reach, share their mission, and increase giving.

And it's no secret that people of all ages have grown comfortable doing everything online, from making dinner reservations to paying bills. In fact, people spend an average of 87 hours a month browsing on smartphones⁶, not to mention the time spent on computers and tablets. With everyone on the go during the summer months, now is the ideal time to connect with people using a Church giving platform.

Let's take a moment to look at the top benefits of online giving platforms that churchgoers and admin experience.

Top benefits of online giving for churchgoers:

- Online giving tools are flexible, allowing churchgoers to give instantly.
- The church's information like location, giving options, and service times are easy to accessible from any device.
- Your people can stay connected when they are away.

Top benefits of online giving for church administration members:

- Tracking and reporting is simplified.
- Spreading the word about your church is easier.
- Online giving tools are cost-effective and increase giving.

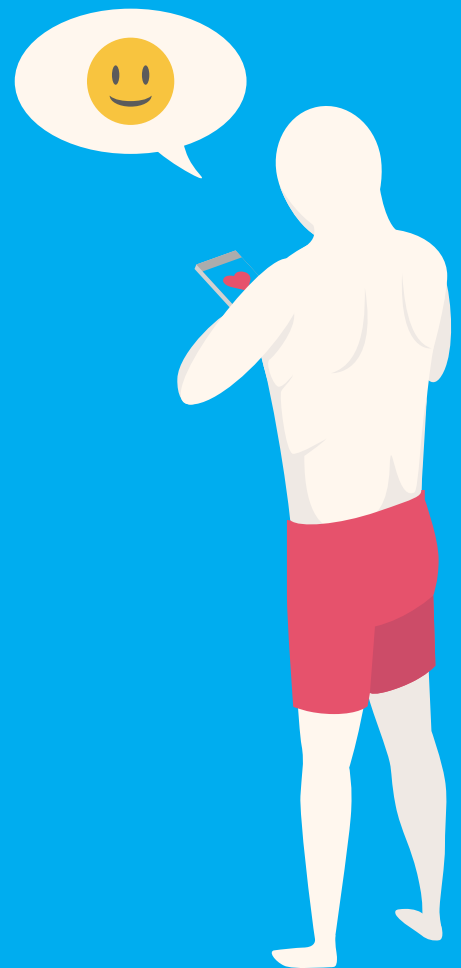
Between the increase in online gifts and the many benefits (beyond what's listed above), you can see why an online giving platform is essential to further the Church. Now, the question isn't whether you need to incorporate a giving platform in the church -- it's how to incorporate it successfully.

The first step is joining an online giving platform. When setting everything up, remember to use branded giving pages since people are 7X more likely to give on branded donation pages than unbranded ones⁸.

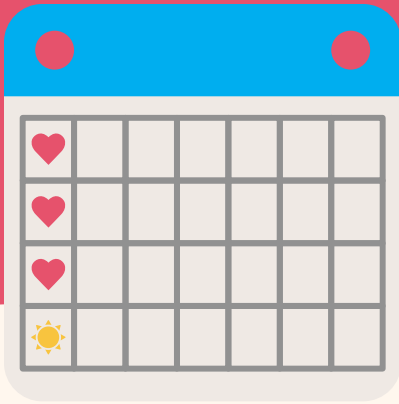
Next, share the multiple ways to give with your ministry, so they can choose the one that's most convenient for them. Some may love the ease of on-the-go text giving while others prefer to give from desktops in the comfort of their own homes. In fact, studies show churches that provide multiple ways to give average a 33% increase in gifts¹.

Always keep your website up-to-date, and don't be afraid to try new things! Technology opens multiple avenues to communicate with your ministry. There's a range of online channels you can use to further the church like videos, podcasts, and social media.

While some people might resist the idea of digital giving tools in the church, trust that most will be happy because they'll feel even more connected. After all, we're living in a digital age!



It's also important to note that in 2017, online giving grew 12.1%, and faith-based organizations experienced the highest growth of online giving last year compared to other nonprofits⁷.



Stage 3: Organize Your Summer Event Calendar to Grow Attendance

If you want to boost summer attendance and grow membership, strategically organizing your summer event calendar is essential! Through special events, you connect with the unchurched, young families, new community members, and active churchgoers.

A recent study focused on special events sponsored by the church, found participants felt 70% more connected to the local church after attending the event. The same study also found that these special events greatly appealed to people ages 18-45⁹. You can choose to do one big event in the summer, or you can pepper smaller events throughout the season.

Whatever frequency you choose, here are a few popular ideas that will bring your church family and members of the community together:

- Invite a popular guest speaker or musician from your community
- Hold a fundraiser highlighting a special cause
- Plan an outdoor event like a cookout or church field day
- Host a homecoming
- Organize a retreat

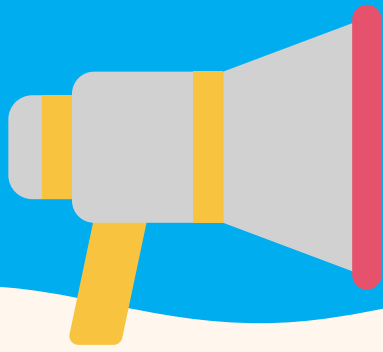
Make your summer special event even more engaging by following this quick checklist.

- Enlist volunteers
- Get the word out on your website and social media
- Send personal invitations
- Place giving kiosks at sign up booths and welcome centers
- Include instructions for text giving
- Incorporate food and beverages
- Have something to do for all age groups

Stepping outside of your normal routine is a natural part of summer, and your church's calendar should reflect that. But, it's crucial that you organize your calendar in a way that makes sense for your church based on size and resources.

Mindfully consider elements like timeframes, budget, and volunteers to ensure you aren't spread too thin. And remember, 1 or 2 thoughtfully planned events in the summer will further the church more than 10 rushed-through events.





Stage 4: Reach Churchgoers Far and Near

In the final stage of your summer plan, we focus on reaching churchgoers far and near. Sure, it can feel like everyone is on vacation, but that's not the only reason for the summer slump. Many people are simply spending time at home or out in the community. You can still reach them even if they aren't in attendance at service. Let's explore a few ways to do this.

Record sermons (or stream them live). Post these on your website so anyone can join whether they're at home right down the road from the church or on vacation hundreds of miles away. In fact, 64% of churchgoers say the most important part of your website is downloading and listening to sermons¹⁰. Link to your branded giving page so they can give during the service, just like they would if they were there.

Send an email or text. It's okay to send an email or text letting your church family know the church misses them and hopes they're enjoying summer! You can also include a save-the-date for upcoming calendar events. Once again, include a link leading them back to your giving page.

Engage and share on social media. Don't let your church's Facebook page grow stale in the summer. Trust that people are spending time scrolling through their feeds and use that to your advantage. Spread the word about upcoming church activities on social. If you haven't added a giving button to your Facebook page, summer is an excellent time to make it happen! This way, people can give directly from your Facebook page to the church.

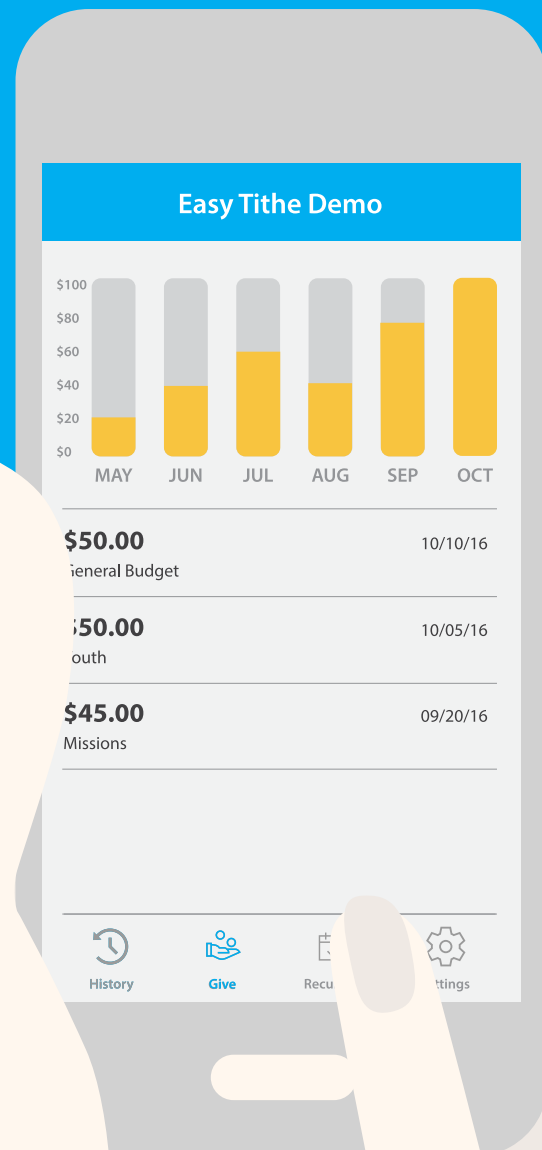
Embrace those that are coming to church. Spend extra time with those that do attend actively throughout the summer, and encourage them to bring friends, neighbors, and family. This can also be a good time to recruit volunteers or create a small summertime group that meets for activities like Bible study or exercise classes.

A final note

Keep track of your progress as you make your way through the summer. Use your giving platform's reporting tools, personal notes, and feedback from your church family to measure your efforts. Next year, you can refer back to these results to refine your summertime plan even more.

Summer doesn't have to be defined as the slump season for attendance and giving. By sticking to the 4 stages of a summertime plan, you can ignite generosity and grow attendance this year!

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