

FINANCIAL GIVING DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Though we have been unable to gather for worship since the early part of Lent, our clergy and congregations have remained active – live-streaming liturgies of the word and prayer offices, carrying on outreach initiatives in new and creative ways, holding meetings and formation opportunities via Zoom or other online forums, and staying in touch with parishioners via telephone, email, and social media.

Again, though we have been unable to meet together for worship, our financial support of the church's ministry continues to be crucial during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although we cannot pass the plate at this time, we can still give, and we can still say thank you. As well as providing pastoral care, it is essential for our church leadership to reach out to parishioners and inform them of options for continuing to contribute to the church's mission and ministry. This can be done by telephone or email, and by offering invitations during online worship and other church communications. Although some people will have to reduce their giving at this time, other people are in a position to continue their level of giving or give more, especially to causes that are closest to their hearts such as their church.



Here are some options to help make giving easy...

1. Electronic Offering Program

The Electronic Offering Program is a service that is offered to you and your parish to assist in giving and receiving donations. In this computerized age where many of us pay our bills online, this service allows people to donate to their church and other ministries electronically.

Donations are withdrawn from each donor's bank account monthly on the 15th of each month. The donation is then deposited into the bank account for each church. You decide how much to give. You may change your donation at any time.

If your congregation is already registered, you simply need to fill out a form and send it in. If your congregation is not, encourage them to participate.

The information for this program and a Synod office contact is found here:

<https://www.dioceseofalgoma.com/about-the-diocese-of-agloma/electronic-offering-programme/>

2. Post-Dated Cheques

Post-dated cheques can be placed in an envelope, sealed with a wet sponge and mailed or dropped off through the mail slot at the church, or at any other location/address designated by the church.

To ensure a way to deposit cheques in case your local bank branch closes during the pandemic, it is recommend that your treasurer contact your local bank in advance to set up making deposits by electronic cheque images using the camera and banking app in a smartphone.



3. CanadaHelps

CanadaHelps makes it easy for churches to continue receiving offerings and donations without the offering plate. It operates at the highest level of security and privacy, and has done so since it was launched in 2000. Every church in Canada which is a registered charity can receive gifts online - either through the CanadaHelps website - or through a donate button powered by CanadaHelps on your church's website.

Churches without a website can also receive online offerings and donations through CanadaHelps.

CanadaHelps is “mobile-friendly, which makes it easy to give anywhere and at any time using a cell phone.

How does your church set up a CanadaHelps account?

Your congregation’s leadership should decide who will register and be your CanadaHelps administrator. It could be your treasurer or another designated person. The administrator can find out if the church has claimed its CanadaHelps account by searching for the church on the CanadaHelps website at <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/>.

An unclaimed account will have a yellow box that says “Represent this charity? Enhance your profile today. Learn more.” The church account then needs to be claimed so that CanadaHelps knows where to send the offerings and donations received. When the church’s banking information is set up, it is recommended that more information should be included about the church such as the logo and photos. The donation page will then be set up to look familiar as well as easy to use.

You can “claim your page” by **registering** your account as either a **Profile** account or a **Full Fundraising** account. Both accounts are free. Registration is done through <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/for-charities/claim-your-charity-profile/> and is easy when you go to the website and gather the required information first.

Lucas Froese, Charity Engagement Manager at CanadaHelps, is available to help with registration (lucasf@canadahelps.org). You can find a list of the different account features here: <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/at-a-glance/>.

The full Fundraising account provides the most information, tools, and results. It gives you the ability to create a custom **donation form** as part of your congregation’s website and a ‘Donate’ button for your website. Using these properly gives you a reduction in fees.

If possible, it is recommended that you place your donate button powered by Canada Helps on the front page of your congregation’s website. Best practice is to have the donate button in green and to make it as visible as possible. This will make it very easy for you to direct your members to a giving opportunity during a worship service or at any other time.

The following describes the differences in fees between your options:

	Fee for one time donation	Fee for monthly recurring donations
No Account	4%	3.5%
Profile Account	4%	3.5%
Full Fundraising Account <i>(when done through canadahelps.org)</i>	4%	3.5%
Full Fundraising Account <i>(when done through your donation form)</i>	3.75%	3.5%

Even though this may sound complex, the steps are quite easy. Instructions are found throughout canadahelps.org and they have an excellent support team. Answers to most of your questions can be found here: <http://charityhelp.canadahelps.org/> and you can contact Canada Helps support here: <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/contact-us/>.



How do you make an offering or donation to your church using CanadaHelps?

Once your church has claimed its CanadaHelps account, it can begin receiving one-time or recurring monthly donations (similar to PAR) in two ways:

1. **Online through CanadaHelps.org.** Your church will have its own webpage on the CanadaHelps site. Your church's treasurer, Incumbent, one of the wardens, or another designated person can email a link to everyone on the parish list and indicate that this donation link is available for offerings during your online Sunday service, or at any other time.
2. **Donate button on your church website.** Upon request, CanadaHelps will send your church the code to set up the button. Depending on the type of website your church has, it might be a connection to the CanadaHelps website, or it

could be a donate button where people can stay on your church's website to make their offering or donation. Again, this link to make a donation should be sent to everyone on your parish list.

How does your church receive the money?

CanadaHelps will either mail your church a cheque or deposit the money right into your church's bank account every week. As well, CanadaHelps issues income tax receipts immediately. Your church can choose to forego this option and issue the receipts as usual. Your treasurer will be able to see reports of all donations received along with all contact information in the church's password-protected account at CanadaHelps.org. With this information, thank you letters, signed by the Incumbent, can be sent.

4. E-Transfers

E-Transfers are from an individual to an individual, not directly into your congregation's bank account. Your congregation's leadership needs to make some decisions in order to make this safe for both donors and the congregation. A good process might look like this:

- Use the official email for the church office, rather than a personal email;
- When an E-Transfer email is received it is forwarded to both the Treasurer for deposit and the Envelope Secretary for recording the gift for receipt.

Having two people involved meets the best practices to safeguard both the assets of the church and the reputation of those involved. Whoever will receive the transfer for deposit must also have an electronic link to the congregation's bank account to complete the deposit. Since this is a deposit into your congregation's account, the rules are different than if it was a withdrawal. Please speak with your bank.

Let's make it easy for people to give!

Communicate the giving options that your church is making available to your parishioners. Although some people will have to reduce their giving during this time, other people will be in a position to give more. Let's make it easy for them to give.

Please don't forget – always thank people! Timely, personal, and sincere thanking is so important, especially when people are facing stress and hardship as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. Their gifts mean that much more. So please say "Thank you!"

Also, please note changes in giving patterns. A change in giving patterns during this time might prompt a pastoral call. The purpose of the call is to provide connection, support and prayer for parishioners who could be facing hardship or struggling with illness.



You are not alone!

If you require more information or additional assistance, please contact Jane Mesich at treasurer@dioceseofalgoma.com or Jennifer Hillstrom-Baron at assttreasurer@dioceseofalgoma.com

Please be patient, though, if you do not hear back from either of them right away. This is a busy time as they keep up not only with payroll and other monthly duties, but also with government legislation and assistance programs.

***“Thank you” to Incumbents, Wardens, and Treasurers
for your faithful work during this time!***

***“Thank you” to all who are able
and continue to financially support the Church!***

***“Thank you” to all who offer pastoral care & connection,
and carry on the many important outreach efforts
across the Diocese!***

***“Thank you” to Jane Scanlon,
Stewardship Development Officer for the Diocese of Ottawa,
who compiled most of the information in this post!***