EPISCOPAL PARISH NETWORK · A GUIDE FOR CHURCH LEADERS

The Church **Stewardship & Giving** Growth Guide

Practical Strategies for Year-Round Engagement



Presented by ACST

What We'll Cover

1. Start With Mission, Not Need
2. Help People Recognize What They Have to Offer
3. Move Stewardship Beyond a Season
4. Remove Friction From Participation
5. Discover the Story in Your Data
6. Understand Where Financial Generosity Fits
7. Close the Loop With Impact
8. Identify Your Giving Growth Opportunity

OVERVIEW

Introduction: Beyond the Season

For many churches, stewardship belongs to a particular time of year: pledge cards, budget presentations, and sermons on generosity.

When it's discussed primarily when the church needs financial support, stewardship starts to sound like another word for fundraising.

Stewardship is much larger. It is recognizing what has been entrusted to us — our time, abilities, relationships, influence, and financial resources — and using them faithfully and meaningfully.

> “
>
> **How can we help people participate in the mission?**
>
> A shift in perspective

Mission	Participation	Impact	Data	Trust

SECTION ONE

1 Start With Mission, Not Need

Every church has real needs. But need alone is rarely the most compelling invitation to participate. Imagine a church needs twenty more volunteers for children's ministry.

EXAMPLE

“We need twenty volunteers. Please sign up.”

The need is clear. The purpose isn't.

A RICHER INVITATION

More families are attending, the children's ministry is growing, and additional volunteers will allow every child who walks through the doors to be welcomed, known, and supported.

The church still needs twenty volunteers. What changed is the context.

SECTION ONE · CONTINUED

1 The Same Principle Applies to Giving

A budget shortfall communicates an organizational need. A story about a ministry changing lives communicates a reason to care.

Healthy stewardship connects the two. Before asking people to contribute, help them understand:

01
What are we trying to accomplish?

02
Why does it matter?

03
Who will be impacted?

04
How can someone help make it possible?

The foundation of giving growth isn't simply a better ask. It's a stronger connection between mission, participation, impact, and trust.

SECTION TWO

2 Help People Recognize What They Have to Offer



FROM

“Here's what we need from you.”

TO

“Here's how you can make a meaningful contribution.”

3

SECTION THREE

Move Stewardship Beyond a Season

A year-round approach doesn't require twelve months of fundraising campaigns. It requires a healthier rhythm of communication: **Inspire → Invite → Celebrate → Thank.**

01 INSPIRE

Reconnect people with the mission.

Why does your church exist? Where do you believe God is leading your congregation? What are you working toward together?

02 INVITE

Give people clear and meaningful opportunities to participate.

Serve, lead, mentor, join a ministry, contribute expertise, or practice financial generosity.

03 CELEBRATE

Show people what you've accomplished together.

Share milestones, changed lives, community impact, answered prayers, and progress toward goals.

04 THANK

Recognize the people whose participation made the work possible.

Thank people for their time, service, and generosity — without always attaching another request.

SECTION FOUR

4 Remove Friction From Participation

A compelling invitation loses its power if the next step is difficult to take.

Every unnecessary step creates another opportunity for someone to stop. Periodically experience your church's processes the way someone in your congregation would.

Try to:

- Find a volunteer opportunity
- Register for an event
- Make a gift from your phone
- Find info about a ministry
- Submit an interest form
- Find who to contact

Don't test only whether it technically works. Ask whether it feels simple, clear, and welcoming.



SECTION FOUR · FROM THE RESEARCH

Digital givers tend to give more consistently and are more likely to cover processing fees.

Digital giving isn't simply a preference of younger generations. Digital givers span age groups — so offer convenient options alongside the methods your congregation already uses.

When someone is ready to give, the experience shouldn't get in the way.

Source: Vanco Churchgoer Giving Study 2025



SECTION FIVE

5 Discover the Story in Your Data

Giving data tells you more than the total amount received. Over time, giving patterns help leaders understand participation and ask more meaningful questions.

01 How many households are giving?

02 How many people are giving for the first time?

03 How many have established recurring gifts?

04 Are first-time givers continuing to give?

05 Are occasional givers becoming more consistent?

06 Are long-term givers remaining engaged?

07 Are there meaningful changes in established patterns?

These aren't merely financial questions. They're ministry questions.

SECTION FIVE · CONTINUED

5 What a Pattern Might Mean

A FIRST-TIME GIFT

May represent a new step in someone's relationship with the church.

A CHANGED PATTERN

A significant change in someone's established giving may coincide with a life transition.

RECURRING GROWTH

May provide greater financial predictability and help leaders plan ministry more confidently.

Data can't tell leaders *why* something happened, and it should never replace personal relationships or pastoral judgment. It helps leaders recognize patterns and know which questions are worth asking.

The goal isn't simply to know more about people.

The goal is to use information responsibly to serve people and ministry more thoughtfully.

SECTION SIX

6 Understand Where Financial Generosity Fits

Giving matters enormously. Financial resources make ministry possible — staff, facilities, outreach, missions, programs, technology, and community initiatives. Developing generosity is part of stewardship and discipleship.

But the order of the conversation matters.

INSTEAD OF BEGINNING WITH:

“How can we get people to give more?”

CONSIDER BEGINNING WITH:

“How can we help people understand what their generosity makes possible and make it easier for them to participate?”

SECTION SIX · CONTINUED

6 The Levers of Giving Growth

Giving growth doesn't have to mean asking the same people to give more.

Help More People Begin Giving

Make a first gift easy to understand, and connect the invitation with the mission it supports.

Help Occasional Givers Build Consistency

Make recurring giving easy to find, without suggesting it's the only meaningful way to give.

Strengthen Giver Retention

A change in pattern may be an opportunity for pastoral care, not another financial request.

Remove Giving Friction

Review the experience on mobile. The mechanics should be the easiest part of giving.

Communicate Impact

Connect financial results with ministry outcomes, people, stories, and progress toward the mission.

Strengthen Trust

Show how resources are used and what they make possible. Transparency sustains generosity.

6

SECTION SIX · CONTINUED

Build Trust Through Transparency

Financial communication shouldn't appear only when the church is behind budget. Transparency doesn't mean overwhelming people with spreadsheets. It means enough clarity for people to understand:

01
Where resources are going

02
Why particular priorities matter

03
What ministry those resources support

04
What has been accomplished

05
Where opportunities or challenges remain

When churches demonstrate responsible stewardship of the resources entrusted to them, they strengthen trust. And when people can see the impact their generosity has made, the church closes an important part of the stewardship loop.

7

SECTION SEVEN

Close the Loop With Impact

IMPACT ANSWERS AN IMPORTANT QUESTION:

“Did what I contributed actually matter?”

Churches have countless opportunities to answer it:

- A family shares how a ministry helped them.
- A ministry leader explains what volunteers made possible.
- A short update celebrates a milestone.
- Photos or video show a project becoming reality.
- A financial update shows how resources were put to work.
- A simple thank-you shows a contribution was seen and valued.

NOT EVERY STORY NEEDS TO END WITH ANOTHER REQUEST. SOMETIMES THE ENTIRE MESSAGE CAN SIMPLY BE:

“Look at what you helped make possible.”

SECTION SEVEN · CONTINUED

7 Make Storytelling a Rhythm

Don't save your best ministry stories for an annual report or giving campaign. Tell large and small stories all year: Sunday services, email, newsletters, social media, video, and personal conversation.

Instead of reporting only that a program served 200 people…

introduce one person whose experience shows why the ministry matters.

Instead of communicating only the amount raised…

show what became possible because the congregation responded.

Understand the Mission → **See an Opportunity** → **Participate** → **See the Impact** → **Deepen the Connection**

Participation isn't simply something the church asks from people. It is something they accomplish together.

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SECTION EIGHT

Identify Your Giving Growth Opportunity

GIVING GROWTH RARELY COMES FROM ONE TACTIC. START BY ASKING:

“What is the biggest barrier to stronger giving participation at our church today?”

01 Perhaps people don't understand the impact of their gifts.

02 Perhaps the giving experience is unnecessarily complicated.

03 Perhaps recurring giving isn't well understood.

04 Perhaps first-time givers receive no follow-up or acknowledgment.

05 Perhaps financial communication happens mainly when the church needs money.

06 Or perhaps there isn't enough visibility into giving patterns to know.

CONCLUSION

From Campaigns to Consistency

Healthy stewardship isn't defined by a successful campaign.

It's built through the consistent ways a church helps people understand the mission, recognize what they have to offer, participate meaningfully, and see the impact of their contributions.

The goal isn't to stop asking. It's to make sure the ask is part of a larger relationship built on mission, participation, impact, gratitude, and trust.

Small changes, meaningful difference:

- Make one next step easier.
- Tell one story that demonstrates impact.
- Thank people without asking for something in return.
- Share financial information before there's a problem.
- Help someone recognize a way they can contribute.
- Look at your giving data and ask a better question.

NEXT STEPS

Ready to Put It Into Practice?

Understanding healthy stewardship is the first step. The next is identifying where your church is today and deciding what to improve.

The companion Stewardship Resource Kit: Practical Tools for Engagement helps your leadership team:

- Assess your church's stewardship health
- Build a year-round communication rhythm
- Identify friction in giving and participation
- Create clearer opportunities to participate
- Choose practical priorities for the next 90 days
- Strengthen how you communicate impact and appreciation



Start with one area. Make one meaningful improvement. Then build from there.

INTRODUCING REALM

Your Church, Connected

Tools to help your parish put these stewardship practices into action.

ABOUT REALM

Realm: Your Church, Connected

Realm brings your whole church together (pastors, staff, and congregation) to create real ministry opportunities that help your church thrive.

Ministries

Equip your staff and leaders to succeed in all areas of ministry, including stewardship.

Tools

Build a thriving ministry with a broad range of integrated, user-friendly tools.

Services

Fine-tune your ministry with instruction, advice, training, and support.

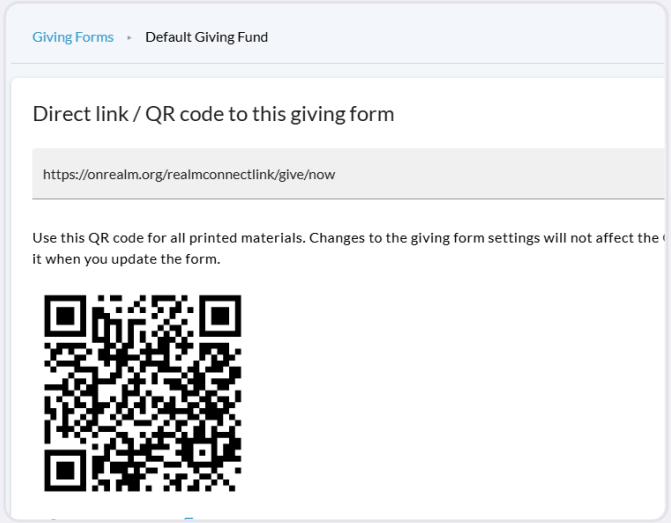
Tools that support the practices in this guide:

Giving	Accounting	Dashboards & Reporting	Communications
Groups	Mobile Apps	Volunteer Management	Profiles & Directories

REALM · GIVING

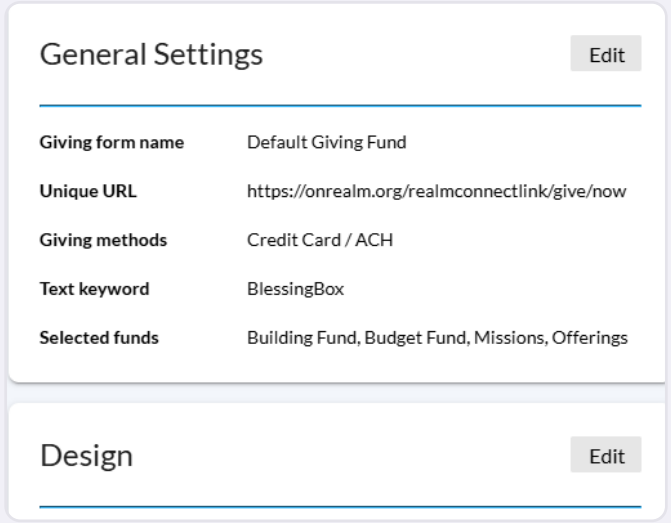
Giving Made Simple, Recorded Once

More ways to give, and every gift lands in one giving history with no re-keying.



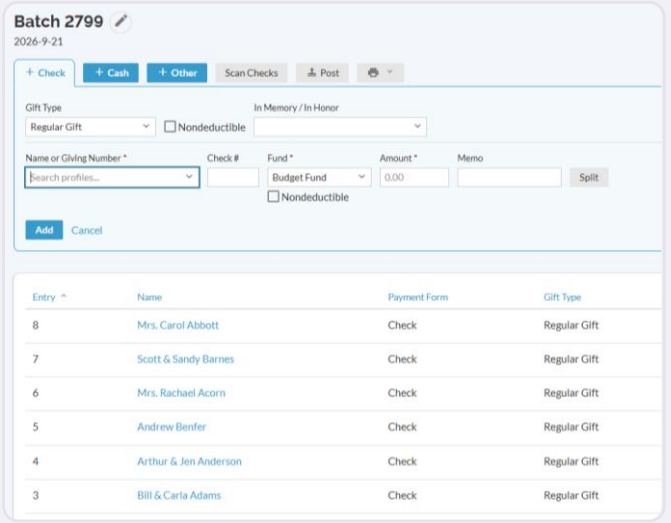
QR Codes & Direct Links

One giving link for print, screens, and bulletins.



Online & Text Giving

Card, ACH, or a text keyword, one-time or recurring.



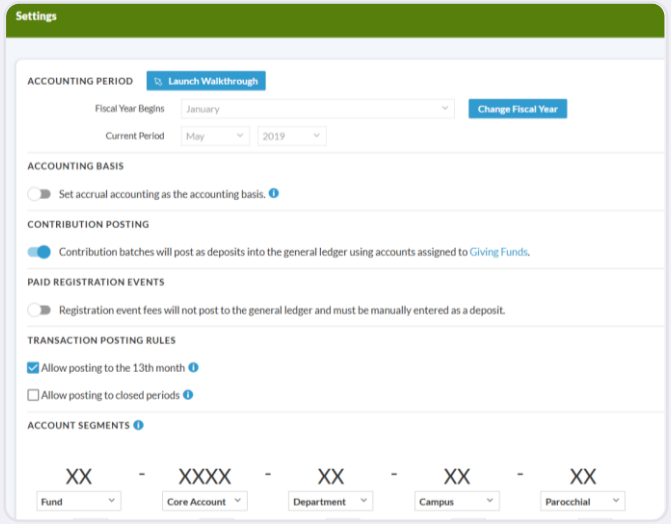
Cash & Check Batches

Enter or scan offline gifts and auto-match donors.

REALM · ACCOUNTING & BUDGETS

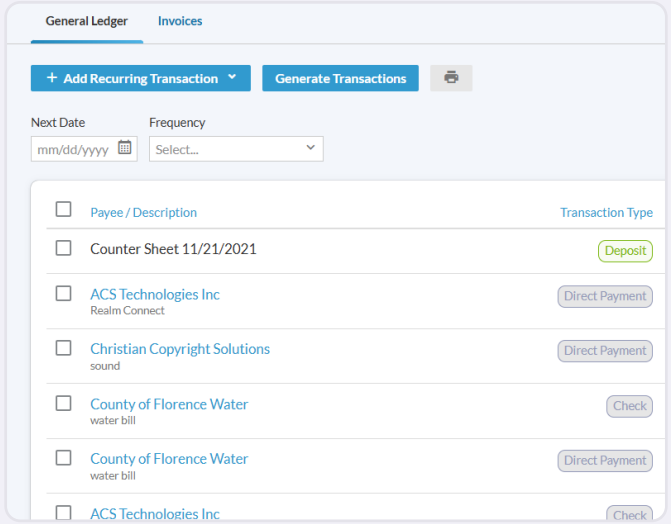
Finances Your Leaders Can Trust

True fund accounting shows exactly how money is used, from gift to budget report.



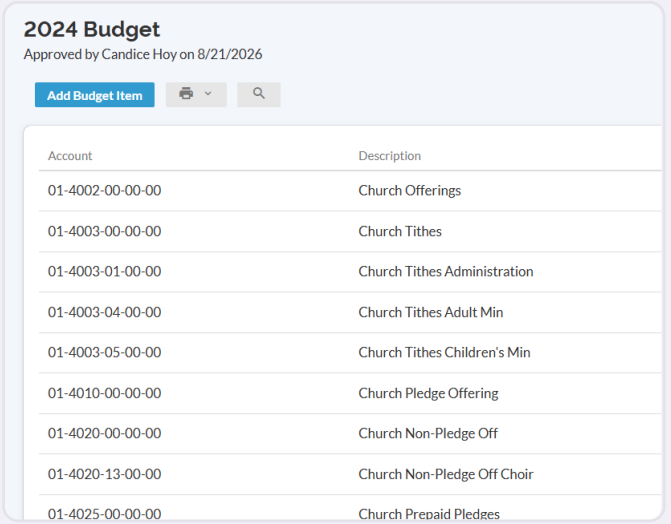
True Fund Accounting

Batches post to the ledger as deposits, by fund.



Bills & Reconciliation

Track invoices, print checks, and reconcile accounts.



Budget vs. Actual

Budget by fund and share reports with leadership.

EXCLUSIVE EPN PRICING

Choose the Plan That Fits Your Parish

Preferred Start

Best for smaller parishes that want a very low monthly fee.

$5 / month

MS rates	**2.75% + $0.45**
ACH rates	**1.00% + $0.45**

Preferred Sustain

Best for larger parishes with more online giving: lower rates on every gift.

$25 / month

MS rates	**2.25% + $0.30**
ACH rates	**0.50% + $0.30**

Rates are per transaction. Available to Episcopal Parish Network and TENS churches, including the Episcopal Diocese of Southern Virginia.

EPISCOPAL PARISH NETWORK

Thank You

