

DIGITAL GIVING IN THE FAITH SECTOR

A benchmark
report presented
by Douglas Shaw
& Associates in
collaboration with
Fundraise Up

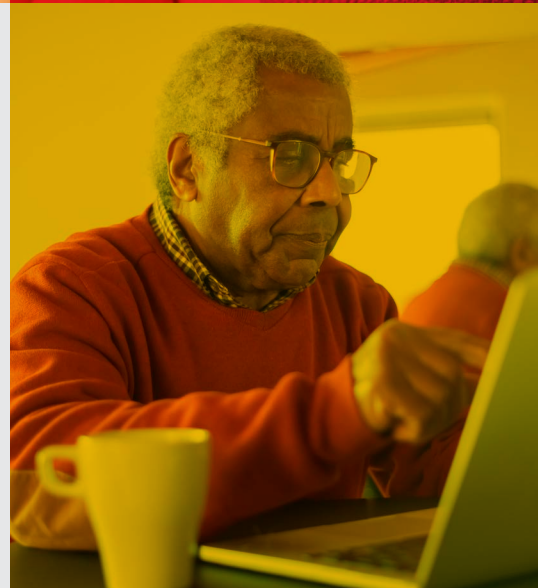
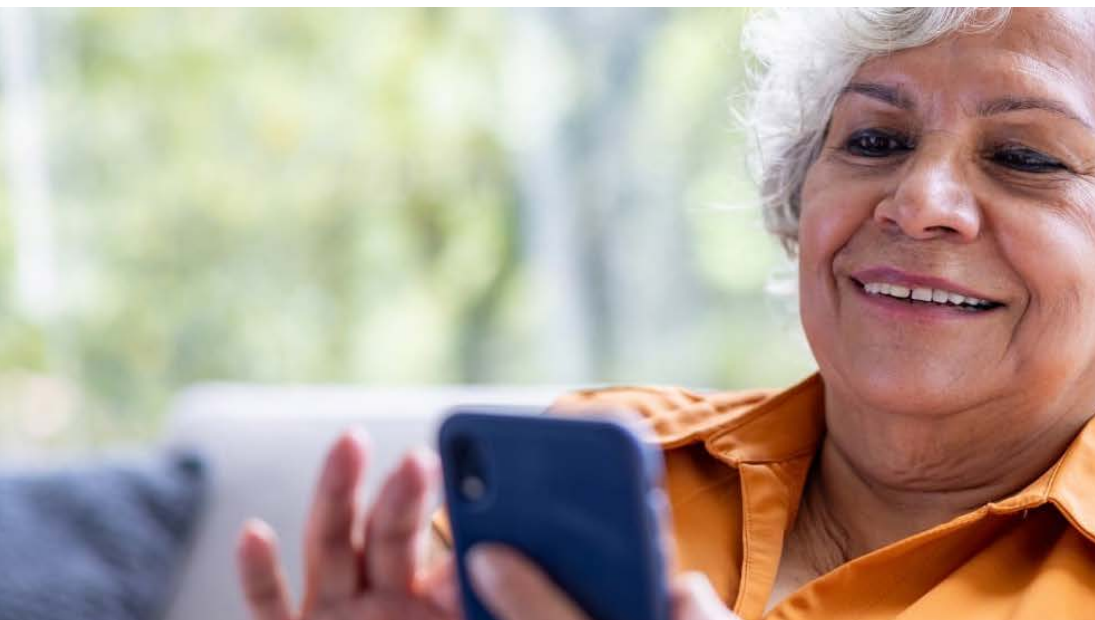


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INTRODUCTION

Online giving isn't simply growing—it's rapidly gaining momentum.

M+R reported that nonprofits across sectors experienced an average **15% increase in online giving in 2025**. But in the 12-month period ending June 30, 2026, our research shows even stronger growth among faith-based organizations: **online giving increased 23.2% overall**.

And one area stands out above the rest.

**Monthly giving grew
an extraordinary 42%**



That kind of growth raises an important question: **What's driving it—and how can faith-based organizations turn these shifts in donor behavior into sustainable generosity?**

There is no single explanation. Several factors are reshaping the way donors choose to give:



Economic factors

Tighter household budgets may cause donors to support fewer organizations while giving more generously to the causes and ministries with which they feel most closely aligned.



Changing donor preferences

Giving is increasingly a cross-channel experience. According to recent research from the Giving USA Foundation (*Donor Confidence and Giving Behavior: A 2026 Report*), donors who receive a piece of fundraising mail are now twice as likely to make their gift online as they are to return the reply device.



Donation form optimization

Small improvements to the online giving experience can make a big improvement in revenue and, more importantly, an organization's impact. Regular testing can identify and remove points of friction that cause prospective donors to abandon a gift. And among organizations investing in optimization, we're seeing some of the strongest growth.

Of course, organizations cannot control the economy. And while consistent, integrated communication across channels remains essential, you cannot dictate how a donor ultimately chooses to give.

But you can control what happens when a donor decides to give online.

Every click, field, payment method, suggested amount, and step in the donation process can either make generosity easier—or introduce unnecessary friction at the exact moment someone is ready to support your ministry.

That is why this research is so important.

Douglas Shaw & Associates partnered with Fundraise Up to give faith-based nonprofits practical, data-driven insight into online fundraising performance. By combining Fundraise Up's industry-leading donation platform and robust dataset with Douglas Shaw & Associates' decades of strategic fundraising expertise, we set out to answer a practical question:

What can faith-based organizations do today to create a better giving experience and inspire greater generosity tomorrow?

OUR GOAL IS THREEFOLD:

1

Build confidence by grounding fundraising decisions in research and real-world performance data.

2

Identify the tools and strategies that work specifically for nonprofits in the faith-based sector.

3

Help move the needle by turning those insights into practical improvements that can strengthen fundraising performance.

The opportunity is significant. As more donors move online—and more of them choose recurring relationships with the organizations they support—the quality of the digital giving experience matters more than ever.

We hope this report helps you make wise, tactical decisions that reduce friction, deepen donor relationships, and invite more people to participate generously in your mission.

METHODOLOGY

This report uses anonymous, non-personally identifiable information (PII) data from faith-based organizations on the Fundraise Up platform, along with transaction insights from Douglas Shaw & Associates' clients. It provides benchmark metrics to help similar organizations identify effective optimization strategies.

To show performance trends over time, we focused on nonprofits with at least two full years of data. Data included in this report looks at a 12-month time period ending on 6/30/2026.



WHAT SETS DIGITAL GIVING IN THE FAITH SECTOR APART

A **23.2% increase in online giving** is impressive. **42% growth in monthly giving** is even more impressive.

But the real story emerges when we look beyond those headline numbers.

The data reveals several distinct patterns in how donors engage with faith-based organizations online—patterns that can help ministries make smarter decisions about **who they communicate with, how donors experience giving, and when they are most likely to respond.**

Three findings in particular stand out.

1 RETENTION **Recurring Donors Are Remarkably Loyal**



Acquiring a donor is important. **Keeping that donor is where long-term fundraising value is built.**

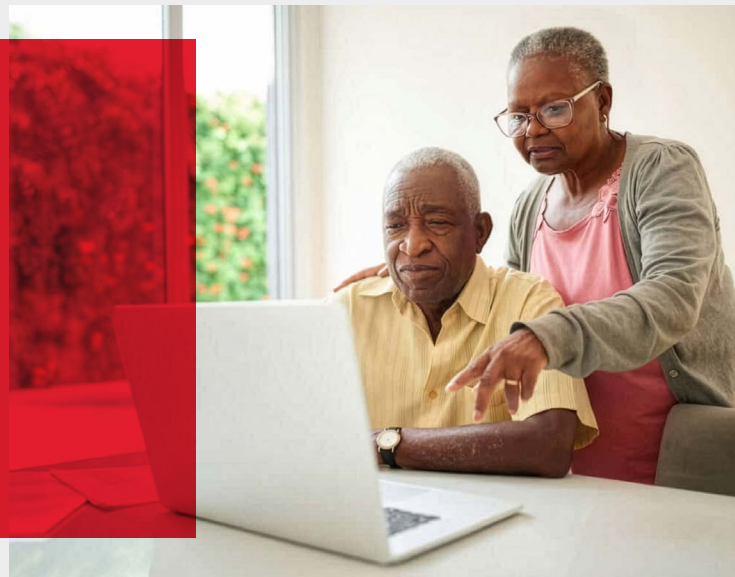
This is where faith-based organizations have an advantage.

The overall donor retention rate for **faith-based organizations was 37.1%**, compared with **33.7% for non-faith-based organizations.**

But when we look at recurring donors, the difference becomes even more significant:

73.3% of recurring donors to faith-based organizations were retained year over year.

Donors who made **both recurring and single gifts** demonstrated an extraordinary **80.8% retention rate**.



That 80.8% figure deserves attention.

These donors aren't simply making transactions. Their giving behavior suggests a deeper and more sustained relationship with the organizations they support.

THE TAKEAWAY

Monthly giving isn't only a strategy for generating predictable revenue. It can also be a powerful pathway toward stronger donor relationships and long-term retention. And when recurring donors are inspired to make additional single gifts, that relationship becomes even stronger.

2 MOBILE GIVING

Small Screen, Big Opportunity



For faith-based organizations, mobile giving has crossed an important threshold: **Most online giving now happens on mobile devices.**

Our research found that **52.6% of all online donations to faith-based organizations came from mobile devices**, compared with just **35.3% for non-faith-based organizations.**

Additionally, **55.5% of online revenue** for faith-based organizations came through mobile devices.

In other words, mobile isn't a secondary giving experience anymore. **For many ministries, it is *the* giving experience.**

That makes every second—and every tap—important.

Mobile donors are navigating smaller screens, variable internet speeds, shorter attention spans, and countless potential distractions. A slow-loading page, unnecessary form fields, confusing buttons, or a cumbersome checkout process can introduce friction at the precise moment someone has decided to give.

THE TAKEAWAY

Designing for mobile devices should no longer mean simply making sure your donation form *works* on a phone. The goal should be to make giving on a phone exceptionally fast, intuitive, and easy.

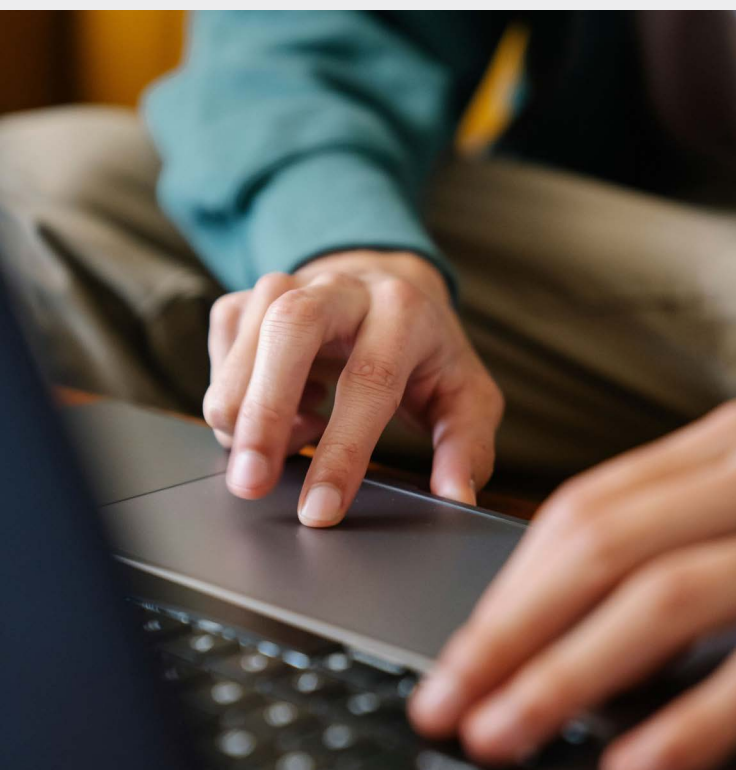
3 TIMING

Donors May Be Giving When You Least Expect It



For years, fundraisers have relied on conventional wisdom about the “best” days and times to send emails.

Our data suggests it may be time to challenge some of those assumptions.



Among faith-based organizations, **Friday generated the highest percentage of donations at 17.2%**—a notable finding because Friday has not historically been considered a prime day for fundraising email appeals.

Tuesday, traditionally one of the most recommended send days, came in close behind at **16.1% of donations**.

But the picture changes when we look at dollars instead of donations.

Wednesday generated the greatest share of revenue at 17.7%, with Tuesday close behind at 17.5%. Because Tuesday shows strong results across both number of donations and total revenue, the data reinforces its position as a particularly strong day for fundraising communication.

Then there is the question of time.

Early morning—particularly **6 a.m. to 8 a.m.**, when many donors are beginning their day and checking their phones or inboxes—remains a strong window for sending email messages.

But here's the interesting part: **The largest share of actual giving happens later.**



Between 12 p.m. and 2 p.m., donors made 18.8% of gifts, representing 24% of total revenue.



That distinction matters. The best time to *send* a message isn't necessarily the same as the most common time to *give*.

Donors may see a message in the morning, think about it, and then act later when they have a moment of downtime. Or lunchtime itself may simply create a natural window for engagement.

Don't Change Your Calendar Just Yet—Test It

Do these findings mean every faith-based organization should immediately move its appeals to Tuesday at lunch?

Not necessarily.

Benchmarks tell you what's happening across the sector. Testing tells you what's happening with **your own donors**.



Use these findings as hypotheses worth testing. Experiment with send days and times, measure both response and revenue, and look for patterns within your own donor file.

You may discover that your audience follows the broader trends. Or you may uncover something even more valuable: **a behavior unique to your donors that allows your organization to communicate when others aren't—and still generate a strong response.**

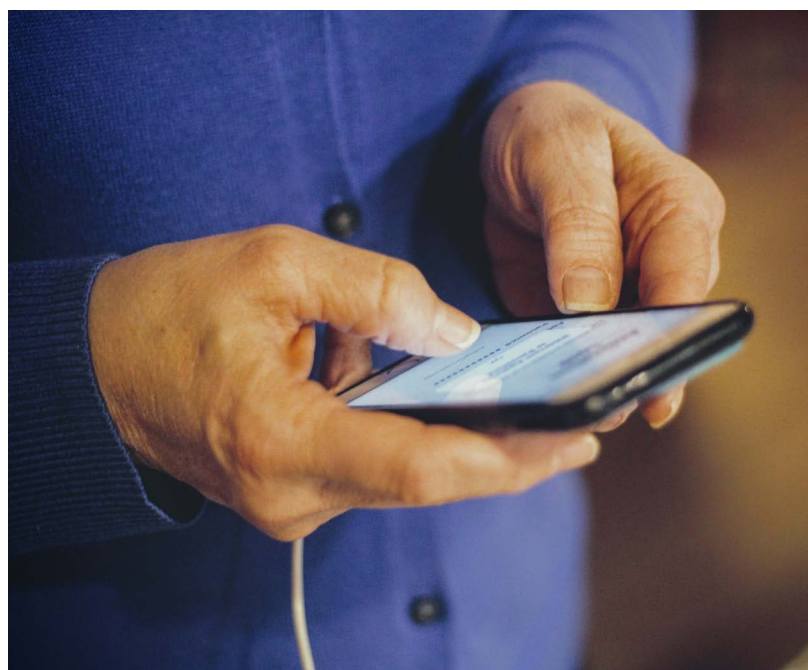
FROM BENCHMARKS TO BETTER FUNDRAISING

Taken together, these findings point to a compelling opportunity for faith-based organizations.

Recurring donors are staying. Mobile donors are leading. And giving behavior is challenging some long-held assumptions about timing.

Faith-based organizations have distinct strengths in digital fundraising—but those strengths become even more valuable when you understand the donor behavior behind them.

Use these benchmarks as a starting point. Compare them with your own donor data. Test and keep refining based on what you learn.



Because the more you understand **how, when, and why your donors choose to give**, the better equipped you'll be to remove barriers, deepen relationships, and build the kind of trust that sustains generosity for years to come.

TURNING DIGITAL MOMENTUM INTO SUSTAINABLE GROWTH

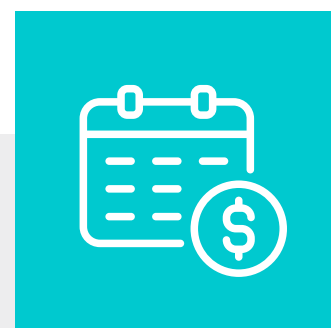
Once you understand how donors are behaving—and begin testing and refining your digital fundraising—you can turn those insights into strategies that increase donor value, strengthen retention, improve conversion, and deepen relationships.

And growth doesn't necessarily require reinventing your fundraising program.

In many cases, the greatest opportunities come from something much simpler: **making it easier for donors to give more, give consistently, and give in the ways they already prefer.**

Our research points to four areas with particularly strong potential.

1 MONTHLY GIVING Turn a Gift Into an Ongoing Commitment



We've already seen how powerful recurring donors can be when it comes to retention. But their importance to faith-based organizations extends beyond that.

For the ministries in our research, approximately **61.5% of online donations are recurring gifts**, accounting for **36.7% of online revenue**.

That means monthly giving isn't a niche fundraising program. For many faith-based organizations, **it's a core component of digital fundraising**.

The opportunity, then, is to make recurring giving a natural and compelling choice.

One way organizations are doing that is through strategically timed recurring-gift prompts:

Pre-donation upsells have a **3.4% conversion rate** compared to 2.4% for non-faith-based organizations.

Post-donation upsells have a **1.9% conversion rate** compared to 1.6% for non-faith based organizations.

What are donation upsells?

A dedicated step before a donor hits submit on the donation form or immediately after their donation is made that prompts donors to consider making their one-time gift a monthly gift.

Those percentages may look modest at first glance. But across hundreds or thousands of donors, small improvements in the number of donors choosing to commit to giving monthly can create significant long-term value—especially when paired with the strong retention rates of monthly donors.

2 MODERN PAYMENT METHODS

Fewer Steps, Less Friction



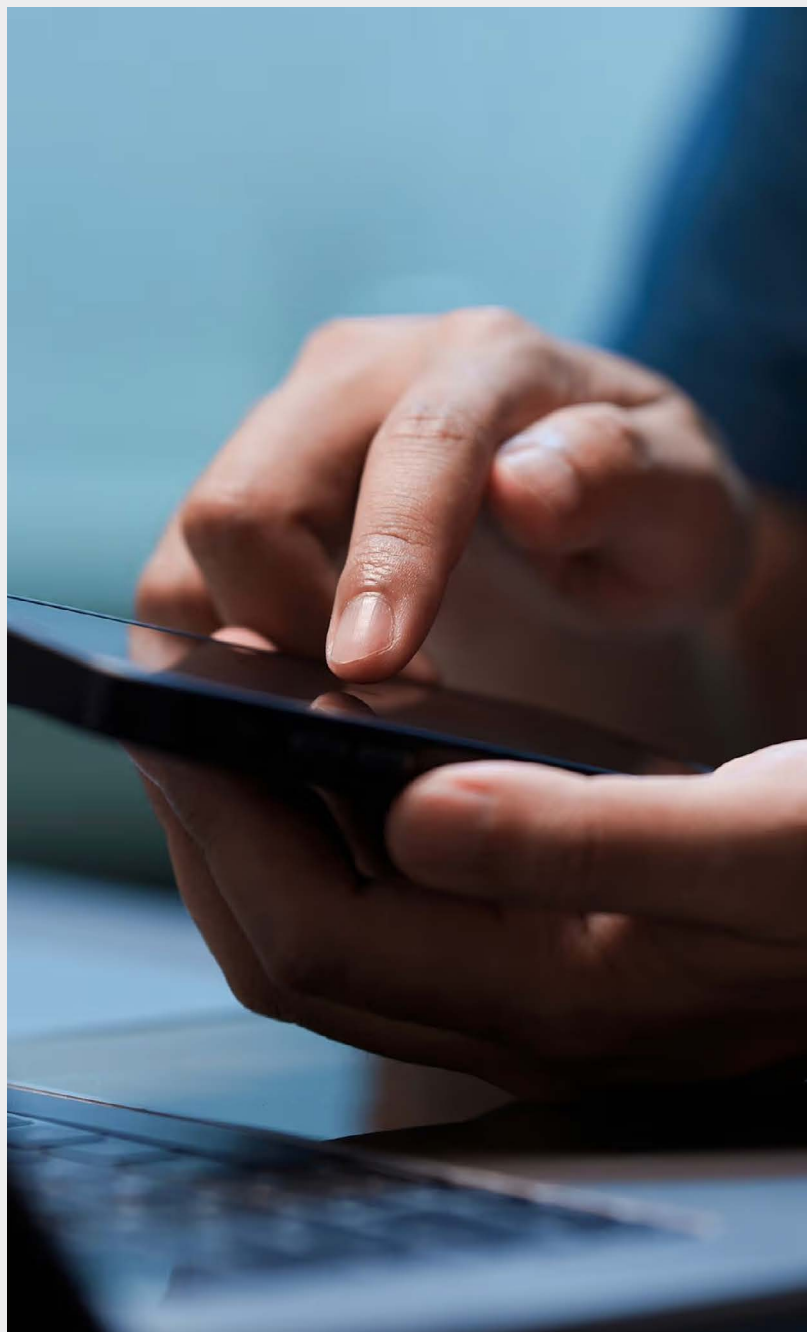
Think about the last time you made a purchase from your phone.

If you could complete it with Face ID and a tap, you probably did. If you had to find your wallet, enter a 16-digit card number, expiration date, security code, billing address, and other information, you may have thought twice.

Your donors experience the same friction.

And with mobile devices now accounting for most online giving to faith-based organizations, convenient payment methods have become increasingly important.

Modern payment options can allow a donor to complete a gift in just a few taps, reducing opportunities for distraction, frustration, or abandonment.



Our research shows that when these payment methods are available, faith-based donors are using them:



Apple Pay alone accounts for roughly **one in five donations** in the data analyzed.

That's an important signal: Convenience isn't merely a nice feature. **It's an expectation.**

And for recurring donors, convenient payment methods can offer an additional advantage by creating a smoother giving experience from the very beginning of the relationship.

THE TAKEAWAY

Every unnecessary field, click, and step creates another opportunity for a donor to not complete their gift. Meet donors with the payment methods they already know and trust.

3 FEE COVERAGE

A Small Ask with Significant Potential



A processing fee of a few percentage points may not seem significant on a single donation.

Multiply it across thousands of transactions, however, and the impact becomes much easier to see.

The good news? **Many donors are willing to help.**

When donors to faith-based organizations can choose to cover the processing costs associated with their gift, **78.3% do.**

That percentage is slightly below the **82.3% observed among non-faith-based organizations**, but it still represents a substantial opportunity to retain more of every dollar contributed.

More importantly, fee coverage doesn't require a new campaign, acquisition strategy, or donor segment. It's a simple opportunity presented at the moment someone has already decided to give.

THE TAKEAWAY

Sometimes fundraising growth isn't about generating another gift. It's about retaining more value from the gifts you're already receiving.

4 DAFpay Bring a Growing Giving Channel Onto Your Donation Form



Donor-advised funds (DAFs) represent a significant and growing source of charitable dollars.



According to the DAF Research Collaborative, **nearly 2 million Americans use donor-advised funds** to support the organizations and causes they care about.

Yet historically, giving from a DAF hasn't exactly been frictionless.

A donor might need to leave your organization's website, navigate to their DAF sponsor, log in, search for your organization, enter grant information, and submit a recommendation. The nonprofit may then have limited visibility into who initiated the gift.

DAFpay changes that experience.

By integrating DAF giving directly into the online donation experience alongside other payment methods, donors can initiate a DAF grant without navigating through a cumbersome off-site process. This can reduce friction while also helping organizations receive donor information more consistently.

That's especially important because money held in a DAF has already been set aside for charitable purposes.

For these donors, the fundamental question is often no longer **whether** they will give. It's **where and when** they will give.

Fundraise Up now enables nonprofits to accept donor-advised fund gifts directly within its checkout through DAFpay, powered by Chariot. This type of giving opportunity being easily available on your donation form is particularly important at year-end, when charitable giving is already top of mind. Making DAF giving prominent and easy to access before the holiday giving season can help position your organization to receive those funds when donors are ready to act.

THE TAKEAWAY

Don't make motivated donors work harder to give you money they've already designated for charity. Put DAF giving where donors can see it and make the process as simple as possible.

The Growth Principle Behind All Four Opportunities

Monthly giving. Modern payment methods. Fee coverage. DAF Pay.

They may appear to be four separate tactics, but they share one fundamental principle:

Make it easier for donors to give in the ways they already want to give.

Growth doesn't always require a dramatic new strategy or a major new campaign. Sometimes it comes from removing one unnecessary field. Adding one convenient payment option. Presenting one well-timed recurring-gift opportunity. Or making donors aware of a giving method they didn't realize was available.

Individually, these changes can feel incremental.



At scale, incremental improvements compound.

Pay attention to how donors respond. Identify where friction exists. Look for opportunities within your own donor file. Then use what you learn to continually improve both the giving experience and the donor relationship.

The best digital fundraising doesn't simply make it easier to complete a transaction. **It makes it easier to be generous.**

WHY ALL THIS MATTERS

Digital giving is no longer simply another fundraising channel.

It's increasingly where donor relationships are being formed, strengthened, and sustained.



For faith-based organizations, that shift creates tremendous opportunity. Donors are demonstrating loyalty. They're embracing recurring giving. They're giving from their phones. And they're adopting faster, more convenient ways to support the missions they care about.

But continued growth isn't automatic.

The organizations best positioned to benefit will be those that stay curious about changing donor behavior and continually adapt the giving experience in response.

That means using benchmarks like those in this report to understand what's happening across the sector while recognizing that **your own donors are the ultimate benchmark for your organization.**

Test. Learn. Refine. Repeat.

And remember what digital optimization is ultimately designed to accomplish.

It's about removing barriers between a donor's desire to make a difference and their ability to act on it.



When that happens, technology becomes more than a fundraising tool. It becomes a way to facilitate generosity, strengthen engagement, and build donor relationships that can endure for years.

KEY TAKEAWAYS: WHERE TO FOCUS NEXT

After decades of helping nonprofits raise billions of dollars and studying what works in digital fundraising today, the Douglas Shaw & Associates team has learned that sustainable growth rarely comes from finding one “perfect” tactic.

It comes from **understanding donor behavior, earning donor trust, removing friction, and continually improving the giving experience.**

Based on the findings in this report, here are six priorities we believe deserve your attention.



1 Make Recurring Giving a Priority

Monthly donors are among your most loyal and valuable supporters.

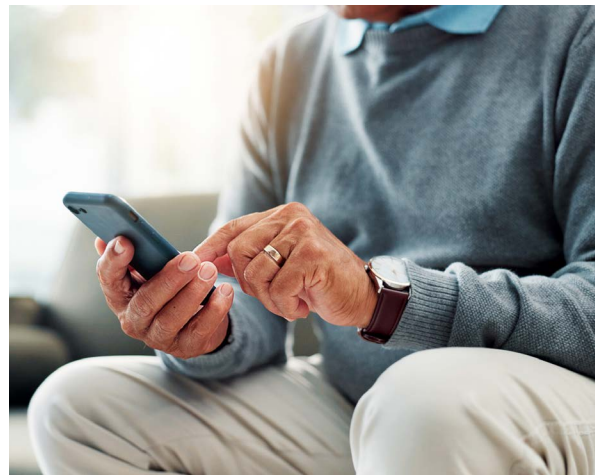
Don't treat recurring giving as an option donors have to seek out. Make it prominent. Communicate the ongoing impact. And create natural opportunities for one-time donors to deepen their commitment.

The opportunity: Turn moments of generosity into lasting relationships.

2 Design for the Device in Your Donor's Hand

More than half of online gifts to faith-based organizations now come through mobile devices.

Your mobile donation experience shouldn't simply be a smaller version of your desktop experience. It should be designed around how people actually use their phones: quickly, intuitively, and often while doing something else.



The opportunity: Make giving feel effortless, wherever donors happen to be.

3 Remove Every Unnecessary Barrier

Apple Pay. PayPal. ACH. Google Pay. DAF Pay.

These aren't bells and whistles. They're ways for donors to act on their generosity using payment methods they already know and trust.

Review your donation process from the donor's perspective. How many fields are required? How many clicks does it take? Where might someone hesitate, get frustrated, or leave?

The opportunity: Make "yes" as easy as possible.

4 Test Rather Than Assume

Benchmarks can tell you where to look, **but your donors tell you what works.**

Test send days and times. Test messaging. Test donation forms. Test suggested gift amounts, recurring-gift prompts, and payment options.

Then allow the results to guide your next decision.

The opportunity:

Turn your donor file into one of your most valuable sources of fundraising intelligence.

5 Don't Underestimate Incremental Gains

A recurring-gift upsell. Fee coverage. One fewer form field. An additional payment option.

Individually, these improvements may seem small.

Across thousands of donor interactions, **small gains can become significant growth.**



Digital optimization is rarely about finding one change that transforms everything overnight. More often, it's about identifying multiple opportunities to improve performance a little and letting those improvements compound.

The opportunity:

Look for the 1%, 2%, and 3% improvements that can add up to something much bigger.

6

Never Optimize the Transaction at the Expense of the Relationship

This may be the most important takeaway of all.

After decades of fundraising experience, we've learned that **excellent fundraising is ultimately about people, not platforms.**

Technology can help you understand donor behavior. It can reduce friction. It can make giving faster, easier, and more convenient. But technology isn't the relationship.

Use digital tools to make generosity easier. Then use what you learn about your donors to communicate more meaningfully, demonstrate impact, earn trust, and invite them into a deeper relationship with your mission.

The ultimate goal isn't a better donation form. It's a stronger connection between a donor and the difference they want to make.

And when organizations get both sides of that equation right—a **seamless giving experience and a meaningful donor relationship**—digital fundraising becomes a **pathway to lasting generosity.**



CONCLUSION

You are a part of what's right with the world.

As a faith-based organization, you're serving, helping, ministering, inspiring—and ultimately pointing people to a loving God who accomplishes His will through ministries like yours. Along the way, you're helping donors steward their resources for the good of others and for His glory.

Finding the right synergy of approaches, communications, and strategies is key to surrounding your donors with the messages that encourage them to take action for your cause.

By making the online giving process easier for current and potential donors, you can welcome more people into the work you're doing. And the payoff is evident: **Every investment you make now in technology and strategy helps transform more lives around the world.**

We hope this research increases your impact and gives you confidence as you navigate the ins and outs of digital giving in the faith sector. Thank you for your ministry—and thank you for striving to lean into your calling in the most effective ways possible!

About Douglas Shaw & Associates

Douglas Shaw & Associates is a team of dedicated direct response fundraising professionals who want to help organizations like yours be a part of what's right with the world.

Serving nonprofits for over 32 years with robust data and analytics, compelling creative, disciplined execution, and an innovative team, we help identify, attract, and retain donors to support the life-changing work you do and fulfill your mission.

Our omnichannel fundraising strategies are created and executed just for you, utilizing a custom mix of print, online, and media channels for donor acquisition, retention, and reactivation. We help dozens of organizations across a variety of platforms and technologies, coming alongside them as tried-and-true partners to optimize their donor experience and improve fundraising performance.



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If you are looking for a fundraising partner who listens, walks with you, and delivers results, contact us today.



About Fundraise Up

Fundraise Up is the world's leading platform for digital giving. Built for enterprise nonprofits, our technology transforms the donor experience—making giving faster, smarter, and more personal.

Trusted by organizations like UNICEF USA, the Salvation Army UK, and the Canadian Red Cross, Fundraise Up helps nonprofits raise more by removing friction from the giving journey. Using machine learning, the platform personalizes donation amounts, optimizes conversion across channels, and supports 135+ currencies in more than 20 languages.

Every detail is engineered for performance and reliability. With Fundraise Up, nonprofits see higher conversion rates, larger gifts, and more recurring donors—all while maintaining enterprise-grade compliance and security.

We believe giving should feel effortless—for donors and for the teams who inspire them. That's why we're building the future of online fundraising: intelligent, global, and designed for the next generation of giving.



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