

Generosity in Unprecedented Times

As communities of faith, we find ourselves unable to gather in person due to the Covid-19 pandemic. These days, when we aren't able to meet physically, are challenging but also heartening as our church has come together to help each other offer new ways of worshiping and reaching out to those in need. Our ministry continues; especially online.

Often when we worship together, we share our gifts by passing the offering plate. Now that we can't lean on this traditional way of giving, it's important to promote and use other ways to give whether we are streaming live video, watching pre-recorded sermons, listening on the telephone, or quietly reading emailed materials.

As the church, we need to take seriously the reality that some of our participants are facing new financial hardships due to lay-offs, store closures, sickness, and/or caring for family members. Our first priority is providing pastoral care and maintaining the relationships that exist within the community of faith. Inviting people to new ways of giving should always take into account their personal situation. Some will have to reduce their level of giving. Some will be able to increase their giving. Remember, within the community of Jesus, ALL gifts are a sign of faith and an act of generosity to be celebrated.

Fortunately, the principles at work now are the same as before the pandemic, and will be the same afterwards. The key practices of Inspire, Invite & Thank underpin all we do. Telling inspiring stories of how your congregation is making a difference in peoples' lives may be even easier now as we focus on connecting and protecting the most vulnerable.

The invitation to generosity is an antidote to fear which not just helps to support your ministry, but is also an important spiritual practice for all people of faith. We do not invite those who can share more to do so grudgingly in order to "make up" for those who must unwillingly reduce their giving. We invite them to share more cheerfully, because this is how the community of Jesus cares for each other and those around them.

Please include a time during on-line worship for an offering invitation, which reminds people of the ways they can give to share and support your congregation, and a thankful offering dedication. Such an invitation can also be included when your community gathers on-line at other times, such as Bible studies or meetings.

Timely, personal and sincere thanking completes the Inspire, Invite & Thank circle and reminds people that you appreciate them and that you care. A solid ministry of appreciation is crucial when people are facing financial hardship themselves. Their gifts mean that much more.

So in these unprecedented times, to help make giving accessible and easy, here are some practical, recommended, tools you can use to invite an ongoing commitment to God through the continued support of important ministries in your community of faith and the ministry we do together through Mission & Service:

Post-Dated Cheques

Good old post-dated cheques are a familiar way for people to give. Place them in an envelope, sealed with a wet sponge not licked, and mail them to the church office. Alternatively, if it adheres to the most current self-isolation regulations to do so, drop them off at a location designated by your church; keeping personal contact to a minimum.

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

PAR (Pre-Authorized Remittance)

Ensure stable, reliable support by signing up for PAR and encouraging participants in your community of faith to do the same. PAR allows you to give to what matters most to you, through an automatic monthly withdrawal from your bank account. It's really easy.

Those already on PAR can easily update the amount of their gift by contacting your congregation's PAR coordinator or the national PAR administrator at par@united-church.ca. Just remember to include the name, city and province of your congregation or your PAR number. You can get your PAR number from your local PAR coordinator.

New PAR donors are asked to fill out the [PAR authorization form](#) indicating how much they want to give to their community of faith and how much they would like to donate to people in need and programs that matter through Mission & Service. Normally, they would hand it, along with a voided cheque, or credit card information, to the local PAR coordinator who would then mail the information to the PAR administrator at the General Council Office.

However, with General Council Office staff working from home, please DO NOT mail them to the address on the PAR form. Instead, mail them to the PAR administrator using this special address:

Rose Cambourne
The United Church of Canada
8 Switzer Street
New Lowell, ON
L0M 1N0

There is also an option available to forward the forms and void cheque by **fax**. Please send them to the General Council Office fax at **416-232-6003**. Staff have remote access so forms can be processed in a timely manner.

Please take all necessary security precautions with personal banking information. Please DO NOT send scanned or photographed images by email because email is not secure and there is sensitive financial info on the form.

Congregations are encouraged to provide as much help as possible to new PAR donors to make the sign-up process easy. Please remember to thank new PAR donors for the commitment they are making to your congregation’s ministries and mission.

Canada Helps (www.canadahelps.org)

Encourage people to give by credit card on-line through Canada Helps. Unlike some other on-line credit card giving options, Canada Helps is a Canadian registered charity which exists purely to enable other charities to receive online gifts. Canada Helps is not a for-profit business.

As a registered charity in Canada, your congregation can already be found on Canada Helps, and RIGHT NOW people can go there and make a gift to your congregation. Canada Helps will immediately email the donor a tax-receipt. Every 7-8 weeks Canada Helps will send your church a cheque in the mail with your gifts.

However, we recommend that you “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 web-site and gather the required information first. Your congregation’s leadership should decide who will register and be your Canada Helps administrator. This may, or may not, be your treasurer.

You can find a list of the different account features here: <https://www.canadahelps.org/en/at-a-glance/> We recommend the Full Fundraising account for the most information, tools, and results. The Full Fundraising account gives you the ability to create a custom **donation form** as part of your congregation’s web-site, and a Donate button for your web-site. Using these properly gives you a reduction in fees.

We recommend placing a donate button powered by Canada Helps on the front page of your congregation’s website. Best practices are to put it as visibly as possible and to have the button coloured green. This will make it very easy for for you to direct your members to a giving opportunity during a worship service or a meeting.

The following table 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 all sound complex, the steps are quite easy. Instructions are found throughout canadahelps.org and they have a super help 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/>

E-Transfers

E-Transfers are from an individual to an individual, not directly into your congregation's bank account, therefore your governing body will need 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 Steward 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. Because this is a deposit into your congregation's account, the rules are different than if it was a withdrawal. Please speak with your bank.

You are not alone!

The Philanthropy Unit is here to help! Please send us your questions or contact us to talk about how you will be encouraging generosity in your context in these unprecedented times.

Roger Janes - 709-486-3239 - rjanes@united-church.ca

- First Dawn Eastern Edge Region, Region 15, Fundy-St. Lawrence Dawning Waters Region

Trisha Elliott - 613-299-8960 - telliott@united-church.ca

- East Central Ontario Region, Eastern Ontario Outaouais Region, Nakonha:ka Region

Karen Seunarine - 416-779-7745 - kseunarine@united-church.ca

- Shining Waters Region

Dave Jagger - 519-570-6892 - djagger@united-church.ca

- Antler River Watershed Region, Western Ontario Waterways Region, Horseshoe Falls Region

Melody Duncanson Hales - 705-618-3032 - mduncanson-hales@united-church.ca

- Canadian Shield Region

Jane Harding - Office: 778-574-0423 - Mobile: 604-761-1677 - jharding@united-church.ca

- Pacific Mountain Region, Northern Spirit Region, Chinook Winds Region, Living Skies Region, Prairie to Pine Region

Mission & Service – 1-800-268-3781 x 3050
ms@united-church.ca

Gifts with Vision – 1-800-268-3781 x 4029
info@giftswithvision.ca

PAR – 1-800-268-3781 x 3152
par@united-church.ca

Legacy Giving – 1-800-268-3781 x 2021
legacy@united-church.ca