



## The New Offering Basket

We live in the age of the internet. This is why large retail stores like Macy's and Wal-Mart are closing physical locations and investing more resources into their e-commerce departments. They know they have to do this in order to compete with internet based companies like Amazon. If they don't they'll be obsolete within a generation. E-commerce isn't a fad. It's here to stay, and it's creating a culture that's increasingly paperless.

That's why companies are constantly looking for ways to make payment transactions quick, easy, and safe with just the click of a button. According to the Denver Business Journal 40% of Americans no longer use paper checks. That percentage shoots up to 61% for young adults ages 18-24. So how are churches to encourage giving in an increasingly paperless world? Give your church the opportunity to support its ministry through online giving.

Due to the growth of e-commerce in the United States a plethora of companies have developed software to help churches create an online giving platforms that are simple, secure, and fast. If your church already has contact management software (i.e. Elexio, Church Community Builder, The City, etc.) consult their recommendations for online giving solutions. They'll help you set up an online giving pathway that's connected to your church database.

Online giving solutions come in many different shapes and sizes designed to meet the needs of all kinds of churches. Each solution has positive and negative aspects. For instance, some are expensive, but offer wonderful customer service; while others are cheap, but are limited in their customization features. Here is a list of popular solutions starting with the most inexpensive ones.



**PayPal Donations:** This is a viable solution for new churches that don't have a large number of financial supporters giving via the internet. With PayPal Donations there are no setup, monthly or cancellation fees. Transactions fees are as low as 2.2% plus \$0.30 per transaction. A negative

aspect of this solution is that it giving must be done on PayPal's website and away from your church's website, but gifts can be entered without creating an account. PayPal Donations also isn't set up to accept recurring gifts or gifts via ACH (echecks, more on ACH later). Churches looking for an easy and inexpensive giving solution should consider PayPal Donations. More info here: <http://ow.ly/p9qe304i6hl>



**EasyTithe:** Offers a customizable and yet still inexpensive online giving solution. The company will help your church create an app for giving solutions on mobile devices. They offer various plans that will cater to your church's needs. The fees associated with this solution aren't as low as PayPal Donations, but they're close making it another inexpensive option. It's a perfect solution for churches which have a low volume of online transactions, and yet desire a platform that corresponds to their branding. More info here: <https://www.easytithe.com>



**Stripe:** Like EasyTithe, this solution only charges transaction fees, so no worries about setup or monthly charges. The fees are 2.9% for credit cards plus \$0.30 per transaction. Customizing this solution will require some software expertise, however, as this solution was designed so software developers could customize the platform to fit the church's online presence. Since the transaction fees of Stripe are higher than most solutions it's not a good solution for churches with a high volume of online donations. It a good solution for churches that have a willing and capable software developer and a low number of online givers. More info here: <https://stripe.com>

#### ***More Expensive and Extensive Options***



**Kindrid:** Kindrid exists to equip 100% of your church to give. They seek to encourage generosity by empowering churches with their Smart Giving technology, a simple system designed to engage new givers. According to their research when churches roll out Smart Giving 25% of people who use Smart Giving are first time givers, and 70% of those people will give again. Kindrid was developed by Life.Church the same people that brought us the YouVersion Bible app. Their primary focus is serving the local church. However, at \$45 per month and transaction fees for credit cards starting at 2.5% Kindrid may be too expensive for a new church. More info here: <https://kindrid.com>



**Pushpay:** This solution prides itself on offering the fastest giving process. Gifts can be made in about 10 seconds. They offer various plans to fit a church's needs. They will set your church up with an app that includes a place for mobile giving, video sermon, event registration, podcasts, and more options in development. PayPal charges a monthly fee, but its transaction fees are fairly low making it a preferred solution for churches that process a large number of transactions monthly. Giving options include mobile, text, kiosk, and online. More info here: <https://pushpay.com>



**SecureGive:** Like PushPay this solution offers mobile, text, kiosk, and online giving options, but SecureGive emphasizes security over speed. At \$29/month its monthly charges are lower than PushPay, but its 3.9% transaction fee rate will catch up with churches that have a large number of online givers. Do the math to figure out which solution make more sense for your church. Most new churches aren't large enough to justify using either PushPay or SecureGive from day one. More info here: <http://www.securegive.com>



**Authorize.net:** This solution claimed to be the most affordable and customizable online giving software package out there for large churches. This solution empowers churches to process online gifts themselves, which creates a little more work, but saves money. Authorize.net provides a comprehensive solution for churches interested in not only offering online giving, but also looking for bookstore and event registration payment options. Like PushPay and SecureGive, Authorize.net is not an affordable solution for most new churches, who's online giving base is small. More info here: <http://www.authorize.net>

This is not an exhaustive list of online giving solutions. Many more solutions exist to serve your church. Google search "online giving for churches" and you'll find many more helpful articles on the subject as well as companies that can help you find the best solution for your church.

One common objection church leaders give for not offering online giving is the cost of transaction fees. This is a reasonable objection. However, if offering online giving gets people giving for the first time, which research validates, perhaps these transaction fees are worth their cost. Plus, churches can decrease transaction fees by asking their financial supporters to give through ACH ("Automatic Clearing House," essential an electronic check transferred from a checking account). Fees for ACH are typically around \$.50/gift. The bottom line is if you're concerned about your church losing transaction fees to credit card companies and banks,

encourage your people to give via ACH. It is the most cost effective online giving conduit out there.

Doing business in today's world costs money and time. Unless your church decides to be a cash only business, you're going to incur banking fees. Plus, think about all the time your church finance team will spend counting offerings, recording gifts, and sending out giving statements (not to mention the financial scandals that could be avoided when less people have access to church offerings). Free up their time by offering your church an online giving solutions, which will do all of that for them.

Is online giving right for your church? If increasing the number of people who give at your church is a priority for you, then the answer to that question is probably yes. Online giving isn't for every church, but most churches will benefit from offering it. If you think it's right for your church, research which solution works best for your church, set up your giving platform, and then encourage people to utilize it.