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JUNE 2017

*Continue your offerings through the summer*

We wait all year for those “lazy, hazy, crazy days of summer” (as the old song goes), and then we fill them with vacations at the beach, camping trips in the woods and flying to far-off places. It’s no wonder that church attendance dips in the summer.

But while you are relaxing, your church continues to be busy – with regular worship, social activities, caring for sick and the homebound members, planning weddings, baptisms and funerals, and ministering to the hungry and homeless in your community. And your pastor and church staff still need to be paid, as does the electric company.

So, here’s the problem: The bills continue to roll in even when you’re away, and many congregants have not planned to keep their offerings current when they are on vacation. That’s why so many congregations face a cash crunch in the summer months.

But here are some ideas for how to help your congregation maintain its finances in the summer months.

**Pay it forward:** Your congregation would love to receive your summer offerings – or part of them – in advance. If you know you’re going to be away, plan ahead by offering more in the weeks in advance of your time away from church.

**Make it up:** Alternatively, when you get back from your time away, give a little more in the weeks that follow in order to make up for the lost weeks.

**Use your envelopes:** Are you a check-writing person? Then simply fill in advance your offering envelopes with your weekly gift. If you have a check in every envelope, then on any given Sunday you need only to bring that day’s envelope and whatever earlier Sunday envelopes are there.

**Use banking bill pay:** Lots of people find online banking services a convenient way to pay their monthly car loan, mortgage, light bill and other routine expenses. Why not your church offering, too? Many online banking services will cut a check and send it to the church for you.

**Enroll in electronic giving:** If your congregation subscribes to an electronic giving service, such as Vanco, you can help by enrolling. Your offerings will go right to the church in the amount and according to the timeframe you specify. If your church does not subscribe to electronic giving, ask your leaders to explore some options.

**Adjust your weekly offering:** To calculate a weekly offering amount, most people take their annual donation amount and divide it by 52, since there are 52 Sundays in a year. The problem comes when they miss a Sunday and have to play “catch up.” To get around this, instead, estimate the minimum number of those 52 Sundays a year you are likely to be in church and divide your annual amount accordingly.

Of course, these methods are beneficial not only for the summer months, but also for the whole year through. Those who embrace giving as a spiritual discipline often find that their lives of faith are enriched and their sense of joy and fulfillment is deepened. Choosing a regular-giving strategy can help you to discover the joys of generosity.

*--Rob Blezard*

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