

The Stewardship Journal

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**From My Desk
to Your Inbox**



**How to Make
Appeals Appealing**



**The Coach's Appeal
Tip Page**



**Reengagement with CP Expands
Impact, Brings Churches Out of Isolation**

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From My Desk to Your Inbox

I hope you're finding the Stewardship Journal informative and helpful as you lead your people to become fully devoted followers of Christ in every area of their lives, including stewardship. Again, thank you for your faithful giving through the Cooperative Program that makes this resource available to all Louisiana Baptist churches.

This week:

- Mark Brooks, The Stewardship Coach, continues his series on the various lanes you need to build out strategies to enhance stewardship at your church. This week his focus is on ***How to Make Appeals Appealing***.
- In the Bonus Section, Mark shares his 3 C's of vision and top 10 writing tips for appeals.
- This week's final post is a repost of a Baptist Press article by Michael Cabell from Kentucky. The article, "Reengagement with CP Expands Impact, Brings Churches out of Isolation" highlights the positive benefits of giving through the Cooperative Program. I think most Louisiana Baptists would agree that we are better together.

As always, you can access past issues of the journal at stewardshipjournal.com.

For additional resources, visit: LouisianaBaptists.org/Stewardship.

Keep Looking Up,



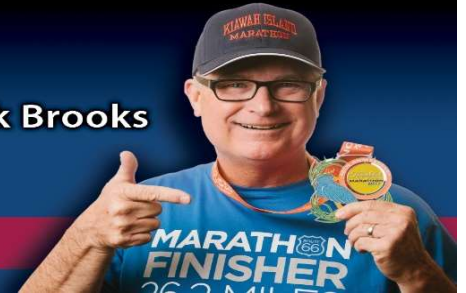
Dr. Steve How

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THE STEWARDSHIP COACH
REVERSING THE DECLINE IN GIVING

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Mark Brooks



How to Use Social Media to Advance Generosity



The typical church in America today seldom, if ever, talks about money for fear of driving people away. Jesus said, “You have not because you ask not.” I realize he was talking about prayer, but people will respond when we ask correctly. It is not that we ask for financial support that drives people away; it is how we typically make appeals. Most appeals are guilt-driven rather than vision-inspired. Many churches fail to meet their budget needs because they fail to ask people to support their cause. They have not because they ask not. Don’t let that happen to you.

This edition of the Coach, ***How to Make Appeals Appealing***, continues my series on the various lanes you need to establish in building a culture of generosity that will sustain your church now and into the future. I’m going to talk about the value of working your Appeal Lane to advance generosity.

One of my major focuses is to get people started on the generosity journey, eventually moving up to being not only a consistent donor but a generous donor. For most people, this doesn’t come naturally. Telling people they *ought* to give won’t motivate them *to* give. Today, you must make a case for *why* they should give. To do that, your appeals must be appealing. So, let’s dive into how you can accomplish this.

Let me start by sharing with you the **three major appeal platforms I focus on for Appeal Lane.** Today’s non-profits focus their time and attention on three major appeal platforms: USPS mail, or as I like to call it, Snail Mail, Email appeals, and now text appeals. What method you choose to use depends upon the makeup of your congregation. At present, I recommend using all three. Let me share the reasons why I still utilize each in the strategies I recommend.

Snail Mail isn’t dead! Yet. Snail mail still works. Phil Cooke, in his book ***Maximize Your Influence: How to Make Digital Media Work for Your Church, Your Ministry, And You***, has a section entitled “Do Donors Like E-Mail Or Snail Mail? Here is a quote:

“You’ve probably had someone on your team tell you that direct mail is over as a fundraising tool. Certainly, there’s a transition happening, but research indicates that most donors see advantages to both e-mail and direct mail communication from the organizations they support, and one study reveals that very few completely reject one form or the other.”¹

I’ll spare you the data Cooke then shares, but the bottom line is that, with few exceptions, nearly everyone in every generation responds to multiple platforms of appeals. Indeed, the study Cooke quotes backs up other studies done on the same subject. I can assure you the non-profit world pays attention to what works and what doesn’t. This is why they continue to use snail mail and why you should also use snail mail.

Email is still widely used and read! In the last few years, I have read several articles trumpeting the demise of email usage. A recent study contradicted that as they found the following:

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- **56%** of respondents said they have at least three email addresses.
- **88%** said they use email every day.
- **39%** check their inboxes three to five times a day.²

So, don't give up on sending out email appeals! The key is writing them in a way that will cause your audience to open and read the important message you are attempting to communicate. See the Bonus Section.

Text appeals are gaining ground. When I started in the stewardship ministry, texts were non-existent. Now consider that according to a recent study, **70% of people say texting is the fastest way to reach them.**³ As you know, I write for OnlineGiving.org. One of our client churches sees as much as 60% of their giving come via text! With over 90% of Americans owning a smartphone, you must consider using text appeals, particularly if you want to reach younger generations.

Here are five key mistakes I find most churches make when it comes to making appeals for giving.

Mistake number one: they are not well thought out and planned. Take the time to do it right! Spend the time not only to think through what to write but also to pray over your appeal. The time you spend will be worth it with the results you see.

Mistake number two: they come off as sounding desperate. Reading most church appeal letters makes me feel like I'm reading a message from someone who is about to drown. Desperate appeals cause donors to ask questions that can lead to a lack of confidence in the institution.

Mistake number three: they are dull and boring. That is how I would describe the typical appeal. I fall asleep after about a sentence or two. Or, at best, I start skimming. Charities are sending your members summer giving appeals that are professionally written and thus anything but boring and dull.

Mistake number four: we make it all about us. I had a pastor once send me his appeal letter. In the first paragraph, he used the personal pronoun, I, five times. Five times in one paragraph! I remembered thinking, is this about you or the appeal you're making for the offering?

Mistake number five: we fail to connect vision to giving. Dollars follow vision. Big visions get big dollars. Do you know what else follows vision? People. The more people you have, the more dollars you can raise. The more dollars you raise, the easier ministry is. Since dollars follow vision, it is vital that the story and message connect with people.

Your mission is too important not to be fully funded. By avoiding these mistakes, you can make your appeals appealing. And doing so will position you better to attract and keep new donors.



Mark Brooks – The Stewardship Coach
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OnlineGiving.org, the leading online giving processor in America, sponsors my writing. OG is owned and operated by committed Christians active in their local church. Find out more about their services at <https://www.onlinegiving.org/>. You can also read the blog post I wrote for them at <https://www.onlinegiving.org/blog>.

1. Cooke, Phil. **Maximize Your Influence: How to Make Digital Media Work for Your Church, Your Ministry, And You.** Cooke Media Group, 2020.
2. <https://zerobounce.net/email-statistics-report/>
3. <https://textrequest.com/ebooks/state-of-business-texting-2023>

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Bonus Section

The Coach's Appeal Tip Page

Appeals, written correctly, are one of the best ways to increase giving at your church. **The key is writing them well.** Here is my one-page summary of tips for making your appeals appealing.

First, we must understand that vision drives dollars. The reason most direct appeals fail for churches is not that they are not written well but that the message is not appealing. Every appeal MUST touch the heart of the donor before they will send you any money. What is the vision driving the appeal?

We teach what we call the 3 C's of vision. Make the vision of your appeal...

- **Clear** – If I can't make sense of what my gift will accomplish, I will not give it.
- **Concise** – Get to the point. Shorter is better as people quickly skim any appeal.
- **Compelling** – The more compelling the message, the more effective the results.

My top 10 writing tips for church appeals – Since I am an advocate of writing concise appeal letters, let me list out my top 10 writing tips.

1. **Write and send them!** You won't know if appeals work or not if you don't first send them. So, get your appeals out!
2. **Don't be boring.** I always try to tell a story of real-life change that will make my appeals interesting.
3. **Start with a bang!** If you don't grab their attention in the first few lines, they won't read the appeal, and you won't get any money.
4. **Get in and get out.** The second C of the vision is concise. So, get to the point!
5. **Personalize it.** Dear Mark is much better than Dear Church member.
6. **Use bold and underlined text.** Just as your eye was drawn to the bold in my text, so will your readers be drawn to your bold and underlined text.
7. **Use bullet points.** People skim, so make it easy for them to get the facts quickly.
8. **Use multiple links to your giving page.** Again, since people skim, you need to put your giving link in more than one place. Consider putting a link early in the text and another somewhere further into the text. Then, put another link in the PS. Speaking of which ...
9. **Always include a PS.** Studies show people almost always read a PS. I do this in both emails and snail mail letters. I also put one bonus sentence in my texts.
10. **Always include an easy way to respond.** Make it easy for people to respond, and they will be more likely to respond. Snail mail should include a self-addressed envelope. Emails and text appeals should have clickable links to your giving portal.

Reengagement With CP Expands Impact, Brings Churches Out of Isolation

By Scott Barkley



LOUISVILLE, Ky. (BP) — Michael Cabell’s position is heavily tied to helping churches reengage with the Cooperative Program. However, giving through CP isn’t the first thing he preaches to those congregations.

“Southern Baptists are a family, and there are various aspects to that,” said Cabell, assistant to the executive director for Convention Relations with the Kentucky Baptist Convention. “There are things you do together. There are ways you help each other out.

Michael Cabell speaks to a group of pastors about the Cooperative Program. Photo courtesy of KBC.

“And like a family, we’re able to accomplish more together than apart. None of us has to be isolated.”

Churches want to be effective. They want to make an impact beyond their walls, he explained.

“I want to help them see the value in being involved in our Southern Baptist family,” said Cabell, himself a pastor before joining the KBC in February 2022. “The Kingdom benefits through 728,000 Gospel conversations by the IMB last year. The church benefits because of incredible resources available to them. Pastors benefit because of seminary education at a discounted price.

“People give to things they value. And if they see the value of our Southern Baptist cooperative work, they will see the value in funding it.”

Before Cabell’s arrival, KBC Executive Director Todd Gray had already initiated a plan in May 2021 to reach approximately 600 churches that had disengaged from the Cooperative Program.

“Our goal is to have 100 percent Cooperative Program engagement with our Kentucky Baptist churches,” Gray said. “We believe it is the most effective way known to fund ministry and mission work and want every church to have an opportunity to be involved.

“Michael believes in our cooperative work at his core so when he is interacting with churches it is not just about their finances but about them being part of something much larger than themselves – an intentional strategy to impact our state, our nation and the world for Christ.”

Through extensive research and discussions with pastors, associational mission strategists and other church leaders, four prominent factors in church disengagement stood out:

- Financial struggles
- The hiring of a non-Southern Baptist pastor
- Understanding CP but not seeing the value in it
- Lack of understanding

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“In many cases, churches don’t have a lot of discretionary income lying around,” Cabell said of the first category. “So, saying yes to giving through CP means saying no to something else. We don’t want them to pull out of a commitment, but we still want to serve that church and help them be a part of the Kentucky Baptist family.”

Due to a [well-chronicled shortage](#), more churches are hiring a non-Southern Baptist pastor. As that pastor is unfamiliar with CP, it makes sense the church would soon become disengaged.

The final two categories address strategy. Most all churches give independently toward a separate ministry such as a local pregnancy resource center or funding a missionary. In addition to those, CP gives an option that is much more efficient than many may think.

“There was a [research study](#) done several years ago of thousands of missionaries,” Cabell said. “It found that 43 percent of independent missionaries will leave the field prematurely. The IMB reports that only 7 percent of their missionaries don’t fulfill their term. So, when a church gives to the Cooperative Program, their missionary is six times more likely to remain on the field.”

Last year, 67 Kentucky Baptist churches reengaged with the Cooperative Program. On average, it had been 7.5 years since the last time they had been involved, Cabell said.

“These churches have contributed \$102,197 in additional CP giving since their reengagement,” he added.

In other cases, an established church may have gradually disengaged. A younger church may not be aware of the CP missions strategy. It can even happen because a new church treasurer simply wasn’t told about how to give finances through CP.

Post-reengagement reactions are positive.

“They’re surprised at the breadth of ministry being done by their Cooperative Program giving,” Cabell said. “Many are thankful that they have a missionary impact and went from supporting one or two missionaries to thousands. Reengaging with CP also typically coincides with reengaging with their state convention, which leads to them attending more events and taking advantage of resources such as our consultants. They often have no idea what the Southern Baptist Convention family can do for them and what is available to them.

“Believing that we are Better Together, we desire for every church to be an engaged partner in Gospel ministry fueled by the Cooperative Program.”

By SCOTT BARKLEY - Scott Barkley is national correspondent for Baptist Press.

[Read All](#) by Scott Barkley

The following was used by permission and can be found at <https://www.baptistpress.com/resource-library/news/reengagement-with-cp-expands-impact-brings-churches-out-of-isolation-kentucky-leader-says/>