

The Stewardship Journal

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**From My Desk
to Your Inbox**



**Navigating the Annual
Great Decline**



**The 15 Offerings of Summer
Playbook Plan**



**7 Reasons to Make
Summer Giving Plans**

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From My Desk to Your Inbox

Summer is dead ahead and it's often a high expense/low offering time of year. This week's issue focuses on the importance of planning for a successful summer of generosity.

According to Mark Brooks, The Stewardship Coach, "The 15 weekends from Memorial Day to Labor Day will determine your financial year. So, start thinking, praying, and planning now for a great summer of giving!"

The Bonus Section feature includes a printable chart that lists each of the 15 summer Sunday's and includes space for planning each one.

A few years ago a church leader reportedly said, "It used to be that attendance dipped after Easter and returned when school started in late August. Now attendance doesn't get back to pre-Easter numbers until October!" This issue's final post, "**7 Reasons to Make Summer Giving Plans,**" provides reasons/ideas to counter the summer slump.

Summer is an exciting time – VBS, camps and more. I pray this newsletter will provide ideas that help provide the needed resources to maximize these opportunities.

Remember, you can find all the past issues at stewardshipjournal.com or visit LouisianaBaptists.org/Stewardship for more resources.

Keep Looking Up,



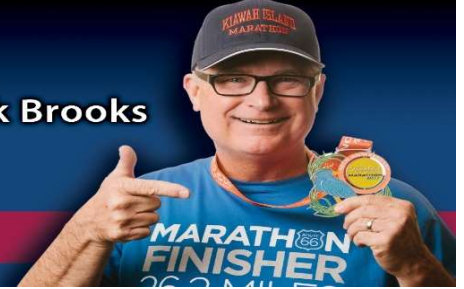
Dr. Steve Ham

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Mark Brooks



Navigating the Annual Great Decline



Get ready for The Annual Great Decline. You are probably still basking in the glow of Easter, a packed house filled with promise and potential. Then, this past Sunday brought you back to reality. The typical church will not see any better attendance and engagement until sometime next fall. I call this the Annual Great Decline. This Coach is entitled *Navigating the Annual Great Decline*.

My mission is to keep pastors, and staff members focused on building a culture of generosity based on biblical stewardship principles. To accomplish this, I operate out of the principle of staying ahead of the curve. Easter represents a curve in the road for churches. You just built attendance and engagement up, and now your members are heading out the door for sporting events, the lake, the beach, the mountains, vacations, etc. Most won't be back fully until well into the fall.

So, immediately after Easter, my focus with clients is getting them started on the major keys for summer planning. Let me break each of them down for you here.

First, get your team on board and engaged. Disconnected pastors and staff are my biggest challenge in building out a culture of generosity. Most ministers feel that discussing finances or money will drive the crowd away. Look around next Sunday. The crowd left after Easter. Move your staff to stop worrying about attracting a crowd and focus on making disciples. Disciples are generous no matter what the season. If your staff or team are not on board with your plans for heading off The Great Decline, you will probably face cutbacks this summer. It might be harsh, but pointing this out will motivate your team.

Secondly, set the vision for your summer giving initiative. Every appeal needs its vision that drives a donor to give you more. Those communicated needs are the "drivers" that will either drive me to my wallet in support of them or cause me to ignore the appeal.

The more compelling the driver, the more likely you will get a response. Tell your donors why giving to this cause is important and impactful; they will be more willing to give.

To accomplish this, your vision has to be **clear, concise**, and, most of all, **compelling**. The same is true for every appeal you make. I call that The Three C's of Vision.

What is the story behind your summer? Each mission and ministry initiative has a story behind it. Telling that story effectively will increase your chance of giving.

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Spend the next few weeks nailing down the vision for your summer giving. Work to make that vision clear, concise, and compelling; you will raise more dollars. **See the Bonus Section.**

After you have your vision, message, and story down, you need to next...

Third, build the infrastructure required for a successful summer giving initiative. For your summer giving plan to succeed, you must ensure you have the Basic Building Blocks of Support. Here is a post where I share with you those basics: <https://www.onlinegiving.org/support/systems-to-tell-your-story>

Fourth, after you have your infrastructure in place, work to elevate your offering time by planning out each of the 15 Sundays of summer. Here are some key elements to think of...

- You want to inform your donors of what you are doing.
- You want to inspire them with what you are doing.
- You want to show them that their generosity makes a difference.
- Share with them about the multiple ways they can give.
- And, most importantly, you want to thank them *for* their generosity.

You can do all of this in 60 seconds or less!

Fifth, communicate your plan with your giving leaders. I encourage clients to communicate early with your giving leaders, laying out the summer giving plan. This builds confidence in your donors that you have a plan to increase giving so that it doesn't all fall upon them to save the day. It also lets them know that the appeals and communications you are putting out are directed to gain new donors, not merely dog your current ones to death. At the same time, reminders like this serve to help consistent donors stay consistent during the inconsistent days of summer. One key way to accomplish this is to encourage your giving leaders to make their gifts automatic. I'll share more on this in later posts.

By following these five steps, you will be better able to navigate The Annual Great Decline. Let me end with this statement to help spur you to start working on your summer giving plan.

The 15 weekends from Memorial Day to Labor Day will determine your financial year. So, start thinking, praying, and planning now for a great summer of giving! As usual, I'll be here every week sharing practical tips and help on how you can have your best summer giving ever. Let's get started!



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>.

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Bonus Section

The 15 Offerings of Summer Playbook Plan

Use the chart to plan out your 15 offerings. The Who, How, What, When, Why column helps you decide the best way to communicate the story you are focusing on. Each offering is about connecting your summer vision to life change!

Date	Focus of Offering	Who, How, What, When, Why?
May 26 th		
June 2 nd		
June 9 th		
June 16 th		
June 23 rd		
June 30 th		
July 7 th		
July 14 th		
July 21 st		
July 28 th		
August 4 th		
August 11 th		
August 18 th		
August 25 th		
September 1 st		

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7 Reasons to Make Summer Giving Plans

By Mark Brooks

As we continue this *Journal* about summer giving plans, we bring you a previously posted article by Mark Brooks. Originally, it was published before Easter. We have changed the first sentence to reflect that we are now post-Easter. You can find the original post linked at the bottom of the article.

As we post this, it is only days after Easter. So, why would we be talking to you about summer giving? We will give you seven reasons. If any applies to you, then keep reading. We recommend summer giving plans for the following reasons:

1. The Post-Easter Slump – A church leader said a few years ago, “It used to be that attendance dipped after Easter and returned when school started in late August. Now, attendance doesn’t get back to pre-Easter numbers until October!” I’ve shared that comment with pastors nationwide, and I find agreement from large to small churches. That huge attendance and engagement you experience on Easter may dip seven days later. If you don’t take action to offset the decline in giving, you may struggle financially this summer.

2. Your past history – A look at your past summers will show how challenging it can be to make your budget in July. On Wall Street, there is a saying that the trend is your friend. They mean that you can make wise investment decisions based on the history of a company and its stock. Investors spend hours poring over spreadsheets and reports looking for trends. The post-Easter slump is not a trend that is our friend but a trend that we ignore to our own peril. Your history is often the best indicator of your future.

3. Increased competition (i.e., Disney, lake, beach, sports, etc.) leading to declining engagement and participation – This is largely the reason for the post-Easter slump in giving. For many of your members, church in summer can be out of sight and out of mind. Less attendance/engagement means fewer dollars given.

4. If you are already behind in giving – If you are more than two to three weeks behind, I strongly recommend you do something to head off the summer slump. Summer won’t magically close the gap; it will only get worse. Hoping next week or next month will improve giving is not an effective strategy. The further you fall behind, the harder it is to catch up.

5. If you don’t have a strong fourth quarter – Some churches can run a week or two behind, knowing their last few months will be strong enough to carry them through their budget year. It’s always better to be ahead.

6. If you want to stay ahead – My hobby is running. While I am now much slower than my younger years, I learned that if I fall behind on my goal pace early in the race, it takes more energy to make up for the lost ground. The harder I must work, the less gas I have for a strong finish. My goal was to always stay ahead of my target time. The same principle works for churches. It takes continual work to ensure your church’s financial stability. Yet, that work assures you stay on pace, which makes hitting your budget numbers easier.

7. If you want to connect your summer vision to giving, moving everyone up the generosity ladder – A compelling vision of life change motivates people to give. For the typical church, summer is the key time for missions and ministry.

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So, pretty much every church should have a summer giving plan! We are excited to support our church partners in their summer giving plans. If your digital giving provider doesn't give you that kind of help, contact us at support@onlinegiving.org or (615) 206-4000.

At OnlineGiving.org, our passion is helping local churches. Through this blog, we give away lots of valuable information and tips that anyone can use. So, here is a tip that we have used successfully with churches of all sizes. Work to move as many of your donors as possible to set up their giving to be recurring. That way, whether they are in attendance or not, their gift shows up in the proverbial offering plate. Recurring giving will help even out your giving, allowing you to better manage your summer finances.

Here are two posts about this:

<https://www.onlinegiving.org/support/three-reasons-to-increase-recurring-giving>

<https://www.onlinegiving.org/support/maximize-gifts-and-reduce-rates-with-ach>

Get ahead of the curve! That is one of what I call my "Brooks Mantras." I've learned that the way to avoid running off the road when church life throws you a curve is to be prepared ahead of time. This post is your warning sign on the road that there are some curves we must navigate up ahead. *Every* year, from the Sunday after Easter until the fall, will present challenges in seeing giving stay at and above the levels needed to fund all God has put on your heart. Planning *now* puts you ahead of what potentially could be a challenging financial year. This is why, days after Easter, we want you to start thinking and planning to avoid the post-Easter slump in giving.

Mark Brooks – The Stewardship Coach

<https://www.onlinegiving.org/support/7-reasons-to-make-summer-giving-plans>