



# The Stewardship Journal

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**From My Desk  
to Your Inbox**



**The 4th of July  
Giving Coach**



**The Case for  
Special Offerings**



**Half Time  
for Giving**

# THE STEWARDSHIP JOURNAL

## From My Desk to Your Inbox

This week we are taking a break from the capital campaign focus with hopes of helping you avoid the traditional July 4th giving decline.

Mark Brooks, the Stewardship Coach, begins the issue with a post titled ***The 4th of July Giving Coach***. Mark provides a step-by-step plan of action to boost giving during this seasonal opportunity. In the bonus section, ***The Case for Special Offerings***, he lays out reasons to plan for holiday giving challenges.

Finally, in ***Half Time for Giving***, you'll find some advice to help reset your year if you are falling behind in your budget.

There will be no Stewardship Journal issue next week, but remember: if you have missed any issues, you can access them at [stewardshipjournal.com](http://stewardshipjournal.com) or visit [LouisianaBaptists.org/Stewardship](http://LouisianaBaptists.org/Stewardship).

We pray you and your family have a happy and safe July 4th holiday.

Keep Looking Up,



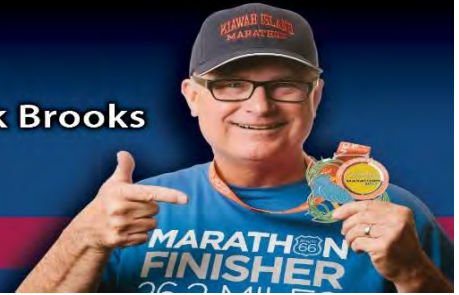
*Dr. Steve Howie*

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**Mark Brooks**



## The 4<sup>th</sup> of July Giving Coach



**July 4<sup>th</sup> is days away, and in this Coach, I will help you devise a plan to increase giving!** I'm taking a break from my series on capital campaigns to focus on this issue, entitled ***The 4<sup>th</sup> of July Giving Coach***. If you have followed me for any length of time you know that I utilize a seasonal strategy for my giving plans. I believe that every holiday gives us an opportunity to communicate a compelling message that will lead people to give to your church. One of the great seasonal opportunities is the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. However, if you don't have a plan, the 4<sup>th</sup> can be disastrous for your offering.

This year, the 4<sup>th</sup> falls on a Thursday. How will that impact that week's offering? Not as bad as if the 4<sup>th</sup> created a three-day holiday weekend. But falling on a Thursday, how full will the "house" be on Sunday, July 7th, or for that matter, on Sunday, June 30th? You could be looking at a challenging two weeks for the offering. This alone is one reason why you must have a plan of action. You don't want to jeopardize your momentum. For some churches, a two-week decline in giving is worse.

**How is giving going halfway through the year?** That is the question that I always ask a pastor at some point in our conversation. What is your answer to that question? Your answer sets the stage for whatever plan you devise. If you are way ahead of budget, your message is entirely different than a church already challenged to pay its bills. For the typical church, it is right about now that they are running out of money in the bank. So, pretty much every church should have some type of strategy to head off a decline in giving.

**Let's make lemonade!** It's the same every year, so let's put a plan together to make lemonade out of the lemon of the 4<sup>th</sup>. Why not hold a special offering push around the 4<sup>th</sup>? This could be a great opportunity to not only maintain but also increase your church's giving, providing a much-needed boost to your finances.

**What are the keys to a special offering?** Here are some keys to a successful special offering.

- **Planning!** You can't decide on Saturday night to hold a special offering on Sunday and expect great results. The more you plan out the special offering, the better your chance for success. Now, our planning must include both in-person and online audiences and provide multiple options by which people can give. By planning early, you can ensure a smooth and successful special offering, giving you control over the outcome.
- **Vision!** The more appealing the appeal, the better the results. Take the time to craft a compelling vision, and you will see greater success.
- **Execution!** Having a plan is not enough! You must implement that plan across all existing platforms and tell your story.

### What a 4<sup>th</sup> of July Plan Looks Like

Start by crafting a compelling message of *why* people should give. Successful offerings always have a message that drives donors to *want* to give. Here are some key points to think about in crafting your offering message:

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- Don't make it about you. Make it about reaching others with the love of Christ. Make it about fulfilling the vision God has given your church.
- Be positive, not negative.
- It's not about making a budget; it is about changing lives!
- So, appeal to missions and ministry not making a budget!
- Focus on what you have done and what you have yet to do.

All of the above will take time and planning, but the results will be worth the time you invest. Here is a sample from a paragraph I once wrote for a church's 4<sup>th</sup> of July.

**"We are halfway through summer with still many more exciting things to accomplish, so we must not stop now.** Please prayerfully consider continuing to give to **The Summer of Excelling Grace.** Every gift goes to continue our work of sharing grace not only to our community but literally around the world. Our desire is to see many more experience the grace we have as a result of being in Christ. Thanks for your consideration and faithfulness in giving. Your gifts are making a difference."

Here is a practical step-by-step plan that will help you communicate the vision behind your special offering. In each step, you want to make it easy for people to respond to your appeal. For regular mail, always include a postage-paid, self-addressed envelope so people can mail you checks. Then, in all your communications, make sure you provide a link to your online giving page, allowing readers to click through to the site. Here is my recommendation for a quick plan for the 4<sup>th</sup>.

**Step One: On all your social media accounts, begin telling the story that motivates people to give.**

**Step Two: Mail a snail mail/email letter on Wednesday, June 26<sup>th</sup>.**

**Step Three: Text your donors on Saturday, June 29<sup>th</sup>, reminding them of the importance of giving.**

**Step Four: Email your donors on Monday, July 1<sup>st</sup>, encouraging them to give while away.**

**Step Five: A Happy 4<sup>th</sup> of July text/email blast from Sr. Pastor on the 4<sup>th</sup> of July.**

**Step Six: Email one last reminder to give on Sunday morning, July 7<sup>th</sup>.**

**Step Seven: Send a thank you to all who gave on Monday, July 8<sup>th</sup>.**

All of the above takes time and effort. Yet that effort will not only help reverse any declines in giving it will also set you up to finish the summer strong. So, put some effort into your offering time for the next couple of weeks and you will be blessed. We are halfway through the year, and what you do now *will* greatly impact the rest of your year. Let's get your summer fully funded!

**Speaking of the 4<sup>th</sup> of July, I'm taking next week off. The next Coach will be on July 8<sup>th</sup>. Have a great 4<sup>th</sup>!**



Mark Brooks – The Stewardship Coach  
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OnlineGiving.org, the leading online giving processor in America, sponsors my writing. Find out more about their services at <https://www.onlinegiving.org/>.

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## Bonus Section

### The Case for Special Offerings

In my experience of working with churches of all types and sizes, special offerings work *if* you do them right. Let me make a case for special offerings.

1. **Why hold special offerings?** First and foremost, special offerings give you the ability to recast your vision every time you hold one. And that is important because dollars follow vision. When casting your vision, I advise using the three C's of vision. If you make your appeal clear, concise, and, most of all, compelling, you *will* raise the dollars you need. We should treat every offering moment as an opportunity to cast your vision, but it is especially true for special offerings. Special offerings help you link how a dollar given to your church impacts lives.

Casting a compelling vision for the offering allows a church to use special offerings to attract new donors. One of my primary goals for special offerings is to help new donors see the value of what your church is doing so that they willingly give you money to support that vision. That first gift can be the start of an amazing journey of generosity.

The final reason for a special offering is that, done right, they can help you close any giving gap you might be experiencing. Instead of talking about how badly you need money, talk about what money given in the offering accomplishes. When you emphasize life change instead of a number on a spreadsheet, people will more readily give to support that life change.

2. **What constitutes a special offering?** When I talk about special offerings, I am not necessarily talking about adding another offering on a weekend, though that is sometimes necessary. I am talking about making your regular offering special. Certain times of the year give us the ability to make the offering special.
3. **Which days can be used as special offerings?** The answer is any day you choose! However, certain days and times of the year make sense. The various seasons of the year are perfect for holding a special offering. For instance...
  - Holidays – New Year, Super Bowl Sunday, Valentine's Day, Easter, Mother's Day, Memorial Day, Father's Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Halloween, Thanksgiving, Christmas, etc.
  - Special Needs—Think crisis relief offerings, mission appeals, and appeals to fund specific ministries, like summer camps.
  - Catch-up offerings—These are a last-resort effort and should be used only if you are in a financial crisis. If you do your work every week, your need for a catch-up offering should diminish.

I use the calendar for my clients to write step-by-step guides on improving giving around that time. I call them Playbooks. For every season of the year, I have a strategy in place guiding churches to financial stability.

***So, bottom line...***

Holding a special offering around key events like Easter, Christmas, or the 4<sup>th</sup> of July can give your church a boost in giving to fully fund every month of the year. Your church will reap the many benefits of special offerings with good planning!

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## Half Time for Giving

The following is posted at <https://www.onlinegiving.org/blog> and is used with permission.

We're now halfway through the year, and it's time to assess the state of giving in your church. Are you meeting your budgeted needs, or are you falling behind? Based on my experience, most churches are struggling to meet their budget needs by this point in the year. My general advice is that if you're over two weeks behind in giving, taking immediate action to reverse that decline is crucial. So, what steps can you take? Here are some suggestions...

First, keep abreast of how your giving is doing. When I asked how giving was going at your church, did you know the answer? I find most church leaders don't know the current state of giving. How can you successfully manage any organization if you don't know its financial status? So, my first suggestion is to stay current on how giving is going.

At [OnlineGiving.org](https://www.onlinegiving.org), we provide our clients with a dashboard of up-to-date information about their current giving state. Our clients can then devise strategies to meet the needs the data shows need to be addressed. The key to staying current on giving is never falling behind. We help you know how giving is doing. For more on our ability to track giving, see this post: <https://www.onlinegiving.org/support/the-importance-of-knowing-your-giving-metrics>.

When you find yourself falling behind, it's crucial to take a proactive approach. It could be due to unfavorable weather or an increased budget. However, if you're more than two weeks behind budget, it's unlikely that the weather is the sole reason. Identifying the cause of your shortfall may not immediately solve the problem, but it can prevent a recurrence in the future. This proactive approach is key to maintaining financial stability in your church.

Without a plan of action or a huge influx of money, it is doubtful that you can close a large gap. Most churches see a rise in fourth-quarter giving that ultimately can close a giving gap. However, in my experience, it isn't very likely for most churches to make up more than a 10% shortfall in their budget. If you are more than 10% behind or more than two weeks behind, I advise an immediate action plan to reverse your decline so the gap doesn't become larger and thus impossible to close.

Have a positive plan to bring in as much as possible. In most churches, stewardship is rarely mentioned or focused on. Seldom is there a sermon on giving. Without a plan of action, you are planning on failing. While you might not close the gap at your church, you can still raise significant dollars. Here are some things I would do if you are over two weeks behind budget...

- Consider revising the rest of this year's budget. You will not make it, so why keep it as a mark you cannot hit?
- Preach a positive sermon series on stewardship. Ensure the messages are not guilt-ridden or desperate sounding, but help members see the benefit of their gifts for the church and themselves.
- Use every offering time as a stewardship teaching moment. Here is a post on how to do that: <https://www.onlinegiving.org/support/connecting-the-dots-for-donors>
- Incorporate lay testimonies into your service, showing the positive benefits of giving.
- Focus weekly on a church ministry and tell how members' gifts support that cause.
- Prepare a compelling appeal letter or email focusing on the church's positive activities and asking members to give. Here is a post that talks about how: <https://www.onlinegiving.org/support/how-to-make-appeals-appealing>

Let me end by asking the question I began with, how is giving going at your church? Sitting around wringing your hands will not close the gap. Nor will desperate appeals work. If you are behind, think of a plan of action to allow you to end the year on the best footing possible. Then, start planning for a realistic budget for next year and an aggressive stewardship plan of action.

At [OnlineGiving.org](https://www.onlinegiving.org), we provide the tools to make up for any giving gap you are experiencing. Our platform is perfect for all of the above. To have us show you a demonstration for free, contact us at [\(615\) 206-4000](tel:6152064000) or at [support@onlinegiving.org](mailto:support@onlinegiving.org).