

# Boost Year-End Giving:

A Strategy Guide

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## Introduction

For churches and nonprofits, year-end giving is an increasingly important and competitive season of giving. This guide outlines key steps in developing a Year-End Giving Strategy to ensure you have an effective and efficient plan to cultivate your donor base during this critical time.

**The challenge:** Americans report that over two-thirds of their giving is religiously or spiritually focused; according to Giving USA, only 27 percent of those gifts are received by religious organizations. It's not a giving problem, as America's giving has remained amazingly consistent at around 2% of Gross Domestic Product and disposable (after-tax) income. It's a giving to churches and faith-based nonprofit problem; year-end is the season's peak.

Secular nonprofits are tapping into their donors' desire to make a difference in people's lives based upon their religious and spiritual convictions, and making the case that their organization is more effective in bringing about the world God is seeking than the church and faith-based nonprofits.

As leaders in churches and faith-based nonprofits, we are responsible.

Effective year-end giving strategies are vital in maximizing generosity and ending the year in a strong position. As the year draws to a close, donors are often more inclined to give, making it an opportune time for churches and ministries to make a significant impact. However, to capture the attention and support of potential donors, it is essential to have a well-thought plan that aligns with your [Integrated Funding Strategy](#).

This guide outlines key steps to inform your strategy and help boost generosity during this critical time. By implementing these strategies, you can engage donors, inspire giving, and achieve your funding goals.

Take the guesswork out of your year-end generosity planning. Each step includes actionable strategies to inform and enhance your year-end fundraising results. By implementing these strategies, you can engage donors, inspire giving, and advance your ministry goals.



## 10 Steps to Fully Funding Your Ministry Plan at Year-End



### Step One

## REFLECT ON PAST YEAR-END EXPERIENCES

- **Evaluate your previous year-end funding plan outcomes:** Assess the success of your previous year-end funding strategy, including the total raised and the missional impact, to identify areas of improvement and set benchmarks for the current year.
- **Use data analysis to gain insights into donor behavior and preferences:** Leveraging data from past funding efforts, analyze donor behavior, such as preferred giving channels and donation amounts, to gain valuable insights that can inform your funding strategy and help tailor your messaging and approach accordingly.



### Step Two

## SET CLEAR GOALS

- **Keep it Spiritual:** *“Want something for your giver, not just something from them.”* The difference between fundraising and growing generous disciples is our primary desire to want our donors to experience the joy of joining God in bringing about the world God desires and in doing so to experience a closer relationship with our creator verses simply prying from the donor financial resources.
- **Define specific and measurable fundraising targets for the year-end period:** Set clear, quantifiable goals for the amount of funds you aim to raise during the year-end period, ensuring that they are specific and measurable to provide focus and clarity for your strategy.
- **Break down your goals into smaller milestones to track progress:** Divide your year-end targets into smaller, achievable milestones or benchmarks that can be tracked and monitored throughout the campaign, allowing you to assess your progress and make necessary adjustments.



- **Establish donor engagement goals:** While it is important to set financial objectives for your year-end fundraising, it is equally important to establish goals related to donor engagement, such as increasing the number of new donors acquired, improving donor retention rates, or enhancing the overall donor experience. Balancing financial engagement goals and spiritual goals will help create a holistic approach to your funding strategy.



- **Develop a compelling narrative that resonates with your donors:** Craft a captivating and emotionally resonant story that effectively communicates your organization's mission, values, and impact. This narrative should connect with your donors on a deeper level, inspiring them to become engaged and motivated to support your year-end funding efforts.
- **Emphasize the urgency and importance of year-end giving through storytelling:** Utilize storytelling techniques to convey a sense of urgency and the potential impact of their gift. By weaving narratives highlighting pressing needs or time-sensitive opportunities, you can motivate donors to take action and make a difference before the year ends.
- **Communicate how each gift will make a difference and why their support is crucial:** Articulate a clear and compelling message that explains how each donor's contribution directly contributes to achieving your organization's impact. Communicate tangible outcomes that their giving will bring forth, inspiring confidence in their decision to give.
- **Both the story and the numbers are important:** The story of an individual touches the heart and addresses the question, "*Why be generous?*". When you support a well told story of life change with measurable data points that demonstrate many more lives can be changed if the donor invests in God's work through your organization, you address the question "*Why give to you?*".





## *Step Four* **SEGMENT DONOR COMMUNICATION**

- **Divide your donor base into segments based on giving history, demographics, or interests:** Segmenting your donor base allows you to categorize donors into groups based on their past giving behavior, demographic information, or specific interests, enabling you to create more targeted and personalized strategies.
- **Tailor communication strategies to each segment to increase personalization:** Once you have segmented your donor base, customize your communication strategies to cater to each group's unique characteristics, preferences, and spiritual needs. This personalization can include tailored messaging, content, and communication channels, improving donor engagement and connection.
- **Use targeted messaging to highlight the impact of their support on specific programs or initiatives:** Craft targeted messages that emphasize the direct impact of donors' support on specific programs, initiatives, or beneficiaries. By illustrating how their contributions make a tangible difference, you can inspire donors and strengthen their connection to your cause, increasing the likelihood of continued support.



## *Step Five* **FOCUS ON ONE STORY**

- **Focus on sharing the story of a single life that was changed:** When sharing stories of impact, your most powerful tool is to share the story of a single life that was changed. Just moving from a single person, to sharing the story of the family that person is a part of, significantly reduces the likelihood a donor will be moved to take action to give. Instead of leading with facts and figures, use these data points to reinforce and multiply the impact of the story of a life that was changed.



### Step Six

## SUPPORT STORIES WITH MEASURABLE DATA

- **Combine stories with numbers – both the story and the numbers are important:** The story of an individual touches the heart and addresses the question, “*Why be generous?*”. When you support a well-told story of life change with measurable data points that demonstrate many more lives can be changed if the donor invests in God’s work through your organization, you address the question, “*Why give to you?*”.
- **Establish systems to measure the impact of an investment in your church or faith-based nonprofit:** Increasingly, donors seek a clear and measurable connection between their giving and the transformation promised in your mission statement. To have a compelling appeal, it is critical to effectively communicate the return on investment of a donor’s gift. For this reason, it is important to establish systems to measure ministry investments and outcomes. A ministry activity funded by a donation is an investment. An outcome is the change that occurred because of the investment.
- **Prioritize outcomes in your storytelling and not just activities:** Far too often, organizations fail to create compelling appeals by measuring only activities (people trained or children fed) and not the outcome (people employed or children performing better in school).



### Step Seven

## UTILIZE MULTIPLE CHANNELS TO COMMUNICATE

- **Leverage all your communication channels such as email, social media, direct mail, and website:** Utilizing a diverse range of communication channels will reach your audience where they are most actively engaging, ensuring that your year-end funding messages are effectively distributed and have a wide reach.
- **Ensure consistent messaging across all platforms:** Maintain a cohesive and unified message across all communication channels, ensuring that your year-end campaign is consistent in its tone, branding, and core messaging. This consistency helps to reinforce your organization’s identity and purpose.



- **Use engaging content like videos, testimonials, and infographics to capture attention:** Incorporate visually appealing and engaging content formats, such as videos, testimonials, and infographics to capture the attention of your audience. These interactive and compelling elements can effectively convey your message, evoke emotions, and drive donor engagement.



## Create a Matching Gift Campaign

- **Seek financial leaders willing to match donations:** Consistently building authentic relationships with your financial leaders and high-capacity donors will give you permission to invite individuals with the capacity and willingness to match donations made by your donors. This strategy encourages increased giving by leveraging the power of matching funds.
- **Promote the matching gift opportunity to donors:** Raise awareness among your donors about the availability of matching gifts by actively promoting this opportunity through various communication channels. Ensure that your donors understand the potential impact of doubled contributions through matching gift programs.

## Implement Peer-to-Peer Funding

*Consider this strategy if you are a faith-based nonprofit or are raising impact funding to be used for beyond the walls of the church.*

- **Encourage supporters to champion your cause:** Motivate your existing supporters to take an active role in engaging their networks. This empowers individuals to become and create new advocates for your cause.
- **Provide them with tools and resources to create their own campaigns:** Equip your supporters with the necessary tools and resources, such as customizable templates, guides, and social media assets, to help them easily create and manage their own campaigns. This support streamlines the process and ensures consistency in messaging and branding.
- **Foster a sense of community and healthy competition among peer fundraisers:** Cultivate a supportive and collaborative environment among your peer fundraisers by fostering a sense of community through shared goals, progress updates, and recognition. Encourage healthy competition by recognizing top fundraisers or facilitating friendly challenges, motivating participants to excel and exceed their funding targets.



## Leverage Year-End Events

- **Organize special events or virtual gatherings during the year-end period:** Plan and host special events or virtual gatherings tailored to the year-end period. These events allow donors to unite, celebrate accomplishments, and strengthen their connection to your cause.
- **Use these events to engage donors, share success stories, and inspire generosity:** Leverage these special events as platforms to actively engage donors by sharing success stories of how their contributions have made a difference. Highlight the impact of their support and inspire continued generosity during the year-end period.
- **Incorporate fun activities and opportunities for donors to connect with your cause:** Infuse these events with fun and interactive activities that allow participants to connect and engage with your cause meaningfully. This could include games, challenges, or interactive sessions that create memorable experiences and deepen donor involvement.



- **Show genuine appreciation for givers' support at year-end:** Express sincere gratitude for their support during the year-end period. Let them know that their contributions have made a tangible impact and that their generosity is deeply valued.
- **Send personalized thank-you notes or emails:** Take the time to send personalized thank-you notes or emails to each donor, acknowledging their specific contribution and expressing gratitude for the impact their gift made. This personal touch shows that you value their support and fosters a deeper connection with your organization.
- **Where appropriate, nonprofit organizations can acknowledge individual giving participation through social media or newsletters:** Highlight the generosity of your donors by acknowledging them through social media posts, newsletters, or other communication channels. Share their stories, accomplishments, and the impact they have made, not only showing appreciation but also inspiring others to support your cause. *For churches, publicly acknowledging individual donors, especially sharing gift amounts, is usually inappropriate.* You can share total gifts or the percentage of participation from groups like your church leadership team, students, etc. This can be a powerful tool to inspire generosity as demonstrated by King David in 1st Chronicles chapter 29.





- **Provide updates on how donor contributions are making an impact:** Keep donors informed about the tangible outcomes and impact of their contributions. Regularly share updates, such as the number of individuals or communities benefited, projects completed, or milestones achieved. This level of transparency reinforces the value of their support and helps them feel connected to the progress being made.
- **Share success stories and progress reports:** Showcase success stories that highlight the real-life impact of your organization's work. By sharing stories of individuals or communities positively affected by donor contributions, you demonstrate the direct connection between their support and positive change. Providing progress reports that detail measurable achievements, challenges overcome, and future plans keeps donors engaged and informed.
- **Continue to engage donors beyond the year-end period to foster long-term relationships:** Nurture relationships with donors beyond the year-end period to build lasting connections. Maintain regular communication through newsletters, personalized updates, or invitations to events. Offer opportunities for ongoing involvement, such as volunteering, attending workshops, or participating in advocacy efforts. Keeping donors engaged year-round fosters a sense of shared purpose and commitment to your cause.

## Year-End Generosity Planning

By implementing these ideas, you can boost generosity during the year-end period and fully fund your ministry plan. With a well-planned and executed strategy, you can inspire generosity and make a lasting impact on your organization's mission.

Consider working with an experienced ministry strategist, trained coach, and proven fundraiser to craft a custom year-end giving strategy for your church or ministry. Horizons has partnered with thousands of churches and ministries to raise billions of dollars for impact for over 30 years.

We can help you craft a custom year-end giving strategy that aligns with your unique needs and goals. Our team brings a wealth of knowledge and expertise in navigating the complexities of funding and donor engagement.

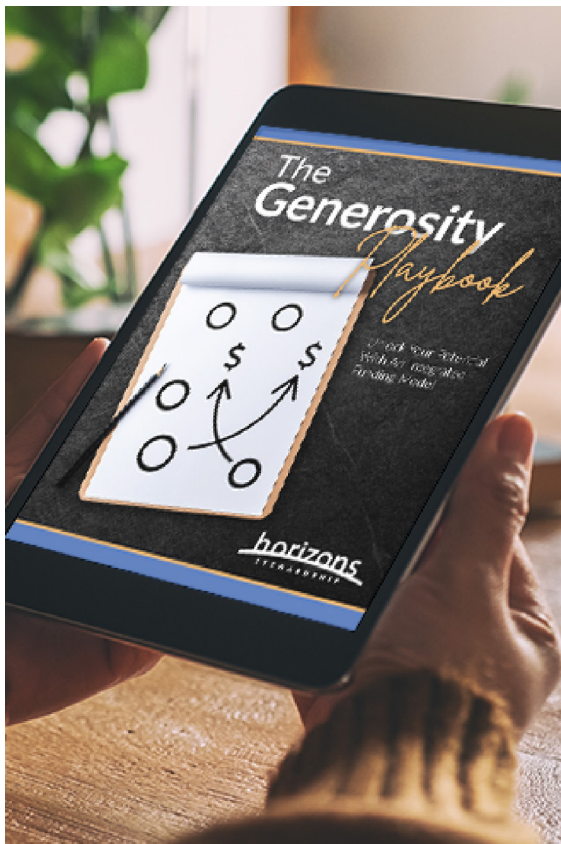


A **ministry strategist** can help you tap into their insights and tailored guidance to develop a comprehensive plan that maximizes your year-end giving efforts. They can help you identify your unique strengths, uncover potential growth areas, and devise creative approaches to engage donors during this critical period.

A **trained coach** can provide valuable support and accountability as you implement your year-end giving strategy. Coaches can help you stay on track, refine your messaging, and overcome any challenges that may arise along the way. Their expertise will empower you to effectively communicate your mission, engage donors authentically, and cultivate a culture of generosity within your community.

A **proven fundraiser** can be instrumental in helping you achieve your year-end giving goals. Fundraisers possess the skills and experience to develop compelling campaigns, leverage donor relationships, and optimize funding initiatives. Their strategic guidance can significantly enhance your organization's funding potential and help you achieve greater impact.

Together, we can create a meaningful and impactful approach that fosters generosity, strengthens donor relationships, and fuels discipleship and growth through generosity in your church or ministry.



## Minimize Risk, Maximize Impact, and Unleash Ministry Potential

Funding ministry in today's reality requires an **integrated funding strategy** that ensures you minimize risk while maximizing impact.

Our specialty is creating an **integrated, measurable strategy that fits your ministry's needs. On average, Horizons' clients experience a double-digit increase in giving commitments within the first year.**

### The Generosity Playbook

- **Integrated Funding Strategy:** A roadmap for ministry funding, identifying opportunities for expansion and improvement
- **Data-Driven Assessments:** Actionable insights for more informed decisions
- **Guided Planning:** Align leadership and eliminate risk for any expansion initiative
- **Campaign Strategy & Implementation:** A trusted guide to lead you through every step

Your success is our purpose. We're committed to giving you the tools, knowledge, and support to reach your ministry goals to make an even bigger impact in your community.



The Generosity Playbook



Horizons.net



## About the Author



Joe Park leads the Horizons Stewardship team of 34 Ministry Strategists, ICF trained coaches, and support staff in their mission of helping churches and faith-based nonprofits grow disciples and fund ministry. The Horizons team has guided raising more than 10 billion in capital funding and uncountable annual and planned giving. Joe is a former bank CEO who frequently speaks on subjects impacting generosity. His weekly blog is followed by over 45,000 church leaders.

## About Horizons Stewardship

Horizons Stewardship helps church and faith-based nonprofit leaders grow disciples and fund ministry through a collaborative framework that is tailored to the unique culture of the church, aligned with leadership's vision, and implemented through coaching, planning, technology, and analytics to ensure the church lives into its full ministry potential and impact.

After more than three decades of working with thousands of churches to raise billions of dollars for ministry projects, Horizons has refined a deeply integrated, spiritually-focused approach that consistently results in more ministry funding and more effective disciple-making strategies.

Horizons' ministry team of International Coaching Federation (ICF) trained coaches are ready to help you discover a proven, effective process that will empower you to move forward with clarity and confidence. On average, churches that partner with Horizons experience a double-digit increase in giving within the first twelve months.

# Your 8-Week Checklist to Maximize Year-End Generosity



## WEEK 1

### Reflect on past performance:

- Analyze data from previous year-end fundraising campaigns.
- Identify strengths and weaknesses.

### Set clear fundraising goals:

- Define specific financial and donor engagement objectives for the year-end period.



## WEEK 2

### Segment donor communication:

- Divide your donor base into segments based on giving history, demographics, and/or interests.

### Tailor communication strategies to each segment:

- Draft personalized messages for different donor segments.
- Highlight the impact of their support on specific programs or initiatives.



## WEEK 3

### Craft compelling appeals:

- Develop a narrative that resonates with donors.
- Emphasize the urgency and importance of year-end giving through storytelling.



## WEEK 4

### Utilize multiple channels:

- Plan and schedule email campaigns.
- Create social media content related to year-end fundraising.
- Prepare direct mail materials if applicable.



## WEEK 5

### Create a matching gift campaign:

- Seek financial leaders willing to match donations.
- Design promotional materials for the matching gift opportunity.

### Launch the matching gift campaign:

- Communicate the impact of donations doubling through matching gifts.



# Your 8-Week Checklist to Maximize Year-End Generosity



## WEEK 6

### Consider peer-to-peer fundraising:

- Utilize social media to enable donors to create their own personal fundraising campaigns for your ministry.
- Promote peer-to-peer fundraising opportunities.
- Foster a sense of community and competition among peer fundraisers.



## WEEK 7

### Leverage year-end events:

- Organize special events or virtual gatherings.
- Plan engaging activities to connect donors with your cause.
- Prepare event materials and marketing collateral.



## WEEK 8

### Express gratitude and recognition:

- Draft personalized thank-you notes or emails.
- Publicly recognize and acknowledge donors through social media or newsletters.

### Follow up and stewardship:

- Provide updates on how contributions are making an impact.
- Share success stories and progress reports.



## THROUGHOUT THE 8 WEEKS

- Monitor progress toward fundraising goals.
- Make adjustments to strategies based on donor response and engagement.
- Continuously evaluate and refine your approach.

