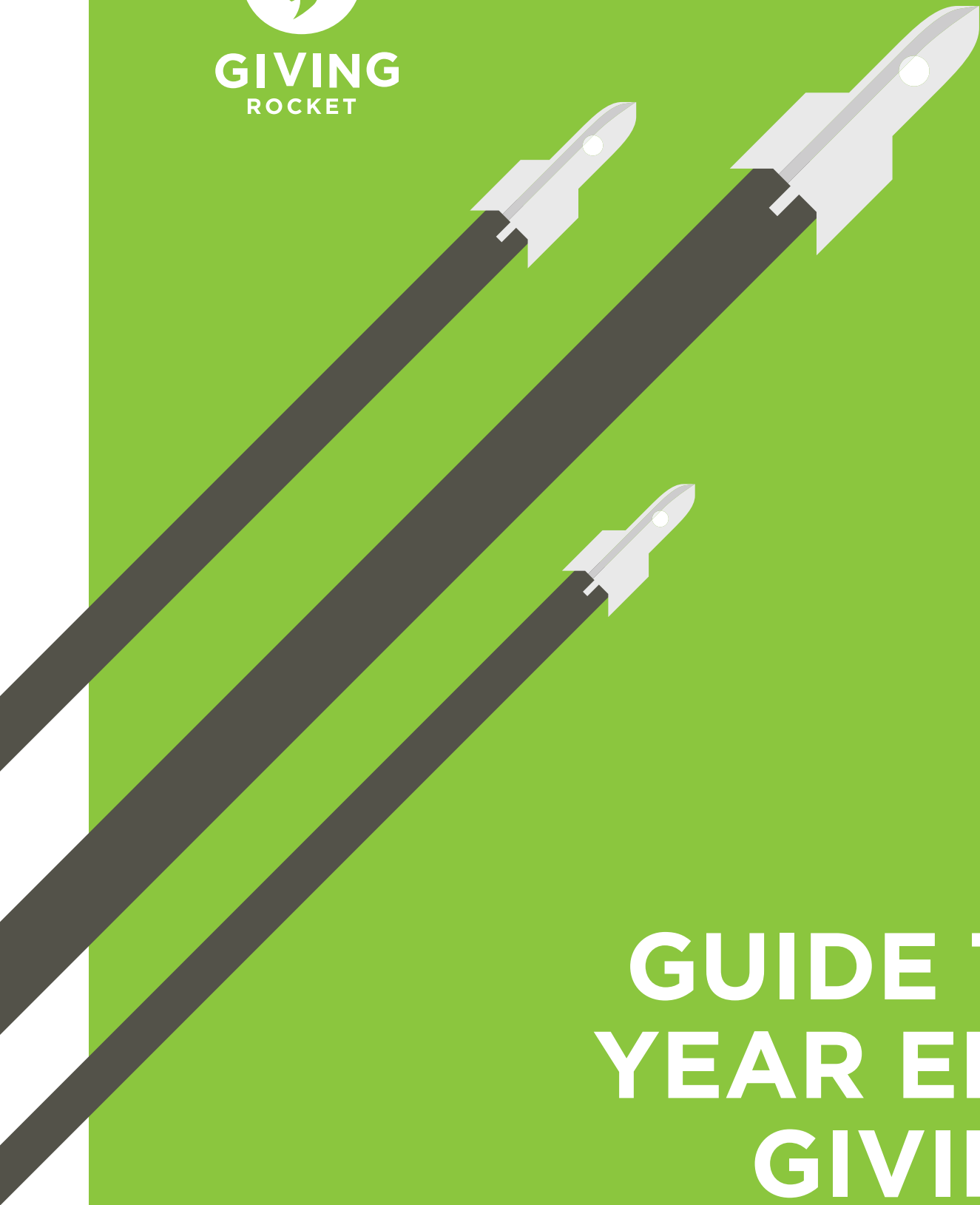




GIVING
ROCKET



GUIDE TO YEAR END GIVING

WHAT IF YOU HAD ANOTHER WEEK'S WORTH OF OFFERINGS TO FUND YOUR CHURCH'S MISSION?

What if you were able to fund specific ministries and projects that you weren't able to address in your annual budget? What if your church caught up on giving and made up the annual deficit in one weekend?

What if you had 53 weeks worth of income to cover 52 weeks worth of expenses, or what if you really knocked it out of the park and had 13 months of offerings to cover 12 months of expenses?

These questions could all be answered with a year-end giving initiative, a special opportunity for you to lead your church in the area of generosity.

A year-end giving initiative is a strategic, branded, short-term giving campaign that you prepare during the month of November and execute during the month of December. Some call it a Christmas Offering; Some call it a year-end giving initiative. And it's one of the most powerful ways to end your year and launch into the next year of ministry.

Here are FIVE BIG REASONS to do a Year-End Giving Initiative.

REASON #1: PEOPLE ARE NATURALLY GENEROUS DURING THE HOLIDAYS

People are intrinsically a little more generous in November and December, and that's fueled by the Christmas spirit. Some non-profit organizations receive more than 40% of their annual contributions during the month of December.

According to Charity Navigator, 33% of all online donations are made during the month of December.

In other words, this is an important time to engage your donors.

"It's one of the most powerful ways to end your year and launch into the next year of ministry"

REASON #2 NON-PROFITS ARE COMPETING FOR PEOPLE'S DOLLARS

Food Drives and Toy Drives probably happen in your community, and there are dozens and dozens of other organizations vying for people's charitable contributions. Companies often highlight specific causes to their employees, and Facebook causes are spread around the Internet. As a pastor, you've given your life to Christ and you're passionate about advancing the Gospel, and while there are lots of great causes, you believe the local church is more important than a dog shelter. Challenge your people to give to something that has eternal ramifications, not just something that makes them feel better.

REASON #3 DECEMBER 31 IS THE ULTIMATE DEADLINE

Deadlines are extremely motivating, and the last day of the year is the ultimate deadline. People that have been thinking about donating something to someone will generally pull the trigger by the end of the year.

There are obvious tax benefits for people who contribute to charity, so a year-end offering is a great way to encourage people to offset some personal tax implications. As you communicate, be sure to remind people you will send a year-end statement that includes all contributions given by December 31.

REASON #4 YOU CAN FUND SPECIAL PROJECTS

Maybe you need new chairs in your worship center or want to start a second campus. Maybe you have a unique mission opportunity before you. There are churches that are able to pull certain things out of their annual budget, because they are routinely funded through a Christmas offering.

For example, one church in New York funds church planting and campus expansion entirely through a year-end offering. Another church designates their year-end offering for benevolence ministry in the community. They are able to help people all year with groceries and utilities, and those expenses aren't a part of their regular budget.

SIX THINGS YOU COULD FUND WITH A YEAR END OFFERING

1. New Playground Equipment for a local elementary school
2. A new church start in your community
3. Benevolence ministry for the coming year
4. Facility Improvements
5. A major outreach program or event
6. A new staff hire

A year end offering is a great way to fund special projects in your church. Talk with your team and pray about what God would have you do if you had an extra month's worth of income. Just making the list can open your mind to a world of ministry possibilities.

REASON #5 YOU WILL REACH NEW GIVERS

Some people are more likely to give to a special initiative than the regular budget, and this is especially true of new givers. When you do a Year End Giving Campaign or Christmas offering, you will reach new givers and re-engage those who haven't given to your church in a long time.

If you execute it properly, you'll reach NEW donors. An initiative like this can become a regular fixture in your annual calendar. Think of your Year End Initiative like a mini-financial campaign. Give it some personality and create an identity.

Here are a couple of examples of year end giving brands.



Reaching new givers is a key to your financial health. Engaging new givers, following up with them, and keeping them connected to the mission of your church is a big focus of the Giving Rocket membership program. A Year End offering can help you create a 13th month of income, but we want to help you be wise and increase revenue during the entire year. A one-month trial membership is just \$1 - you'll have plenty of time for us to prove that the system works.

TEN STEPS TO A 53RD WEEK

Year end offerings work, and engaging your people in generosity during the final month of the year makes sense. But you've got to do more than print some envelopes, send an email, and make an announcement in your service. You can see a financial increase during the month of December if you follow these ten steps.

STEP ONE: CLARIFY OBJECTIVES

Before you send an email or make an announcement, you must clarify your objectives. What's the purpose for your offering? We recommend that you have three or four specific projects, programs or ministries. Look for internal projects (things that primarily affect your church) and external projects (things that primarily affect your community). Choose projects that impact multiple generations.

Internal Needs - Do you need new chairs? Do you want to purchase Bibles for every seat? Do you need a new AC unit? It's okay to raise money for something that will directly benefit your regular attenders.

Community Ministry - Is there a big need in your community that you can address? Is there another non-profit organization that has a need? Consider letting a portion of your offering help something locally. If you partner with someone on this, you might have a different pool of people who can give.

World Missions - Is there a place you want to serve around the world? Do you want to build a well to provide clean water to a community? Could you do some work with an international organization like Compassion International?

As you build your communication for your initiative, you're going to let people know where the money goes. You may or may not be specific in communicating allocations – many churches raise money for three or four things without breaking it down into dollar amounts.

STEP TWO: NAME THE ENTIRE INITIATIVE

You should create a name, logo and brand for your Year-End Giving Initiative. Don't just call it "the Christmas offering" and mention it in passing. Intentionally create a brand. Make it generic so you can use it year after year.

STEP THREE: CREATE A GOAL

Not all churches communicate a goal publicly, but you'd be wise to set a goal, at least internally. If you know what you're trying to accomplish, you'll have a better chance of hitting the target.

A helpful goal might be an average week's income. If your church typically receives \$10,000 a week, then a \$10,000 year-end offering would be a great starting point.

Think of it like this:

- A Single....One weeks offering
- A Double...Two weeks offering
- A Triple...Three weeks offering
- A homerun...Four weeks offering

Yes...some churches we work with receive a month's worth of offerings in this special year-end giving initiative!

STEP FOUR: SET A DATE

While people should be able to give early and late, you want to set a specific date to receive your offering. Encourage people to bring their offering on this specific day. You're going to communicate this day and build towards it. On that day, you're going to make the offering a meaningful part of your service. Set a date that's before Christmas, because people tend to be very busy with holiday activities. Mid-December is usually a good time. Build towards this date during the month of November and early December, and you'll still allow a week or so for and you'll still allow a week or so for follow up and post-event giving.

STEP FIVE: SEND A LETTER

Once you have the details of your initiative set, communicate the plan to your people. Write a letter that clearly outlines your plans and conveys all of the important information. Let them know what to expect and exactly what you want them to do. Your letter should contain all the basic information: Why, what, when, who, and where. . Some churches create flyers or pamphlets describing their initiative.

STEP SIX: CREATE AN EMAIL SEQUENCE

Follow up the letter with an email. This email will have much of the same information, but you're going to include links with additional information. If your initiative is working with Compassion International, you can direct people to appropriate websites. Most importantly, point people to a simple page on your own website where they can get more information and give online. You need to send more than one email. In fact, most times you email your church, you should think "sequences" instead of "stand alone emails." [Here is a link](#) to a cut and paste email template.

STEP SEVEN: USE ENVELOPES

In early December, send a second letter to the same group of people who received your first letter. Highlight the same information, but this time, include a special giving envelope. You might think an envelope is old school, but there's a reason that it's highly effective. In this letter, let people know that if they will be out of town or unavailable on the day you receive your offering, that they can mail their contribution to the

church or give online. Remember that there will be people who miss the actual offering on Sunday, but still want to participate. And there will be people present on Sunday who didn't get an envelope in the mail. When it comes to Christmas offerings, old school envelopes work best.

You can get 1,000 regular printed envelopes from envelopes.com for about \$100. ([Here's the link.](#)) We recommend 6 3/4 Remittance Envelopes ([link here](#)), which you can get for about \$130. Remittance envelopes give you more printing space, and they are easily sealed and mailed.

[Here is a link](#) to a zip file that contains two envelope templates. One template is an Adobe Illustrator file, suitable to customize for a regular envelope. The second template is a Photoshop File of a Remittance Envelope.

STEP EIGHT: TALK ABOUT IT IN YOUR SERVICES

For three weeks leading up to your special offering, build time into your church service to talk about your campaign. Be strategic with this time and let people know what's happening.

Say something like, "In a few weeks, we're going to participate in our annual Simply Christmas Offering. This is when our church really has the

opportunity to love on those in our community who frankly, don't feel much love.

We don't want to just say that we care about people...we want to show it. Now I know there are lots of things vying for your dollars at this time of year, and there are lots of great organizations doing a lot of great things. But what we're doing here at this church has eternal significance. I want to challenge you to give big, because this is a mission that's worth giving to."

The next week, you could highlight the offering and give additional information. Say something like, "Next week, we're going to receive our Gift Offering. This is the once-a-year-offering that goes to several important projects. One of the projects we're funding specifically through this initiative is Compassion International. Our church has been working with Compassion for several years now, and no other organization does a better job helping kids with basic life needs while teaching them about Jesus. Did you know that every compassion project in Africa, Guatemala, South America and all over the world happens exclusively through a local church in that area. When we sponsor a child, like many in our church do, or when we give money, as we're doing through this offering... we're not only meeting basic needs like food and water and medicine...we're working with a local church to teach children and their families about Jesus. So when you give next week to the gift offering, know that a big part of your giving will make a difference around the world."

At least one time during the build-up, the Lead Pastor needs to take 5-10 minutes inside of the sermon to talk about the special offering. Even if it's announced, take a significant amount of time in the context of the Bible message and share the vision behind the offering. The lead pastor needs to talk about this and lead the way.

Here are some other ways you could highlight giving to this special offering in your service.

- Let someone tell a story, on video or in person, about how being generous has impacted their life.
- Talk about what the Bible says about giving and generosity.
- Show pictures and video, because people connect with stories and images

STEP NINE: EXECUTE THE OFFERING

On the day of your special offering, be sure to explain it to everyone one more time. Put special envelopes in every handout or in every seat so people have access and can participate. Ideally, people came prepared to give that day, but you'll still have people who will give at the spur of the moment.

On this day, receive two offerings. Do your regular offering however you normally do it. Let

people know that this is the time of regular giving, not the special offering. That will come later. Then, later in the service, perhaps at the end of the service, pass the plate a second time and receive the gift offering. people, doors will open up for your church. You can absolutely schedule and plan for each of these systems. You can decide in advance what you are going to do and who is going to be responsible.

STEP TEN: FOLLOW UP

Once the offering is complete, your work is not done. Like many decisions or programs, follow up is VERY important. When you are planning your year-end offering, plan your follow up system in advance. Don't wait until you start receiving contributions to think about how you're going to say thanks.

In most cases, an email is sufficient, but you should send it quickly. Your follow up should

happen on two fronts. For those that contributed, send them an email thanking them for their gift. Let them know how much was collectively raised and remind them again where the money is going. Be sure to tell them that they can expect a giving statement soon that will detail all of their contributions, including their year-end gift. Here is an email template:

For those that did not contribute, let them know that they can still participate by visiting your website. Be sure that you have an online giving option, and point people there. Again, remind them of what you're funding and that their donations are tax deductible. Remember, on a Sunday in December, you'll have lots of regulars who are out of town and missed the day. Here is an email template

You might also want to consider sending a hand written thank you note to everyone who participates. Hand written notes are FAR better than emails or form letters, because they are personal. You can write these in advance and write them in bulk. Divide up the responsibility among your team or invite a group of volunteers to come help. Schedule your note-writing day in advance, and be intentional about follow up.

After you follow up with people for their specific contributions to the Year End offering, make them a part of your ongoing donor appreciation program. Communicate with the group of people who has given money to your church

throughout the year, not just in the days following their contribution.

The Federal Government requires you to send annual contribution statements for tax purposes, but why don't you send QUARTERLY contribution statements to engage your donors on a more regular basis. Don't view statements as requirements, view them as opportunities to let people know where their money went.

For example, in April, you could send a quarterly contribution statement letting people know what they have given during previous three months. You could also thank them for their participation and show them pictures of what happen with the Christmas offering.

Continue developing, appreciating and communicating with your people throughout the year. If you're a Giving Rocket member, we'll watch the calendar and help you do this. In fact, we'll often DO IT FOR YOU. All you have to do is cut, paste and send to your congregation.

Learn more about the Giving Rocket Core Coaching Program by visiting givingrocket.com/membership.