

stuff you wish they taught in seminary



36 Lessons

WE LEARNED FROM DONATING ONLINE TO 10 CHURCHES

RICH BIRCH

36 LESSONS WE LEARNED FROM DONATING ONLINE TO 10 CHURCHES

Giving through a church's website continues to be a preferred channel and it isn't showing any signs of slowing down. Looking at the broader non-profit sector, it's clear that we're in the midst of a shift toward giving through online channels:

- 2 billion dollars a year is given to non-profits through their websites. [\[ref\]](#)
- Online giving is growing at a rate of 13% a year. [\[ref\]](#)
- Monthly recurring giving grew online by 32% in the last year! [\[ref\]](#)

How does your online giving experience compare to those of leading churches? We ran an experiment here at unSeminary: we set out to make \$10 donations to 10 leading churches so we could learn from what others are doing. Each of these churches is fast growing and influential. We recorded the donation sessions so you can peek inside what it was like to give to them. We've also provided a copy of the giving receipt for you to see.

Here's what we learned from giving to these great churches:

● **Speed Matters** // All things online should be fast. People are used to making quick decisions online and they want your website to be fast and responsive. Think through the steps between landing on your site and making a donation. Are there any "friction" points? Remove unnecessary steps in the process. Watch that you don't require people to enter extraneous information that isn't directly applicable to making a donation. Often, we want to use these interactions to collect information on people that might be helpful for other initiatives ... resist this temptation. Think about it from your donors' point of view. They want to make a donation and move on. Simplify every step to make it as easy as possible.

● **Make It Obvious** // Don't make people hunt for where to give. We learned about this mistake a few years ago when we changed our website and put the "give" option on the top line of every page. Just making that change paid for the entire web redesign project in a few weeks because of the increased giving we received. Your church needs revenue to function and we're convinced that generosity is an important aspect of thriving spiritual life ... so don't make it difficult for people to give to your church.

● **Build Trust** // People are increasingly comfortable with online transactions, but we still need to build trust for donors. Provide easy access to your church's financial statements close to your online giving tool, so people who want to dig deeper can do so. Many of these leading churches show logos of the card processing firms or security agencies they use, which gives a sense of trust. Look for grammar errors or typos ... people will wonder about your ability to manage finances if you can't manage to spell things correctly.

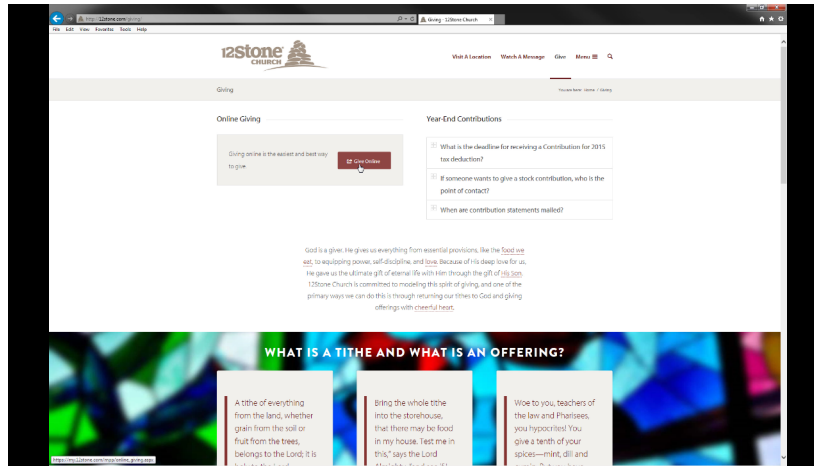
● **User Account vs. No User Account** // Some of these leading churches require people to create an account before making a donation, while the majority don't. This is a decision to consider carefully for your church. By getting people to create an account, you ensure that you can do solid long-term follow up with them because they are in the database. However, this added "friction" slows down one-time donors. People will give you their email and phone number when they donate and you could use that data to drive your long-term follow up. Be cautious if you are going to require an account and ensure that you've counted the cost of limiting donations. From my seat, at the very least you need to provide an option for people to not sign in and just give.



● **Giving Options Considerations** // There are a number of options for how people can give to your church online: credit cards, PayPal, electronic funds transfer, e-check. Tread lightly, my friends! The more options you provide, the more difficult it is for people to navigate giving online. Narrowing the focus to a small number of options is a service that helps people make decisions. However, if you narrow too far down, you'll miss a portion of your audience. For instance, you never see a merchant who only takes VISA because they know some people prefer MasterCard or Amex. They focus on those cards with the widest reach for their market. The same is true of the various online giving options. Someone might want to take advantage of e-check, but the space required to explain it might confuse or distract other people. I've found providing an "other options" tab or link helps with this tremendously!

● **Keep Vision Accessible** // Leading churches keep their vision in front of people constantly. They infuse it into as many different aspects of church life as they can. The online donation process is a great place to remind people of the good things that happen when they give to your church. Take time to thank people and show them how their giving makes a difference. Ensure the emailed receipt communicates why the church exists and thanks people for making a donation that drives the mission forward. Often, the financial department drives these processes and while they are functional, they can miss the opportunity to connect giving with the heart.

12STONE CHURCH // GEORGIA

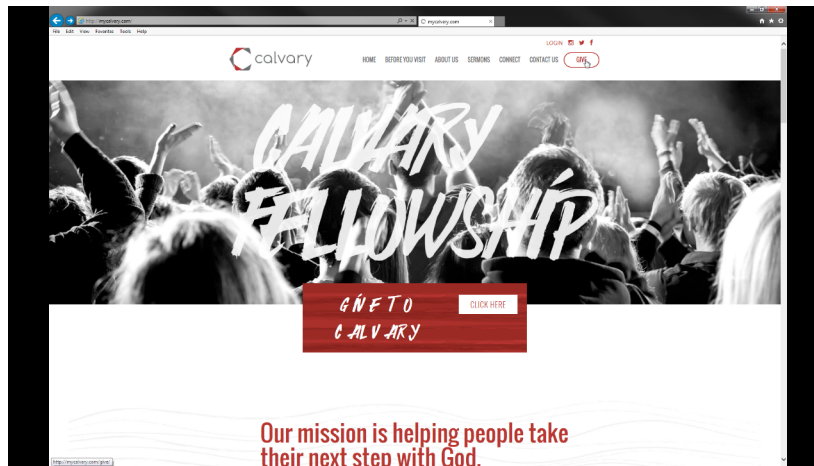


• Time to Complete Donation: 1min 29sec [\[View\]](#)

• Don't Miss: The "landing page" that gives people an option to give is clean and explains about being generous. [\[View\]](#)

• Email Confirmation: Direct contact information for someone in their finance department is a nice touch for such a large church. [\[View\]](#)

CALVARY FELLOWSHIP // FLORIDA

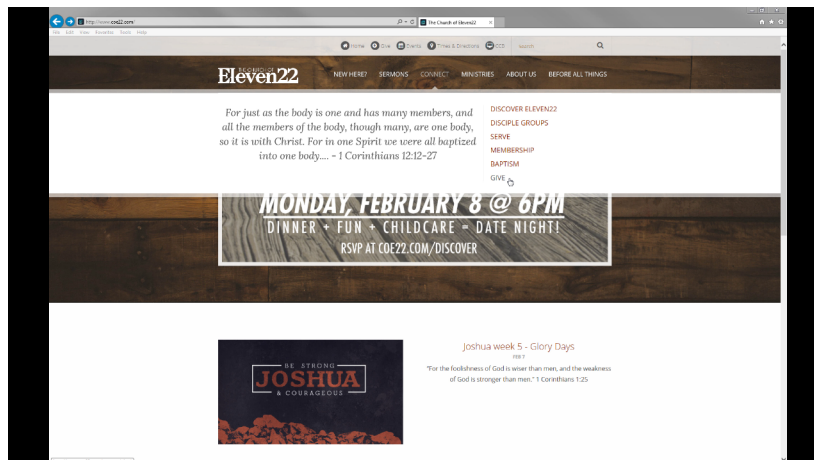


• Time to Complete Donation: 59sec [\[View\]](#)

• Don't Miss: Two super obvious giving buttons on the front page! [\[View\]](#)

• Email Confirmation: The simplest confirmation of all the churches we reviewed. [\[View\]](#)

THE CHURCH OF ELEVEN22 // FLORIDA



• Time to Complete Donation: 1min 32sec [\[View\]](#)

• Don't Miss: The "giving" link isn't listed as a top-line option on the site. [\[View\]](#)

• Email Confirmation: Clean and straightforward giving statement. [\[View\]](#)

CHURCH OF THE HIGHLANDS // ALABAMA

Church of the Highlands online giving form. The form is titled "Hello, Rich" and includes fields for Date of Birth, Gender, Address, Home phone, and Mobile phone. It also has a "Save and create account" button.

• Time to Complete Donation: 3min 39sec [\[View\]](#)

- Don't Miss: Even for a one-time gift, it's required to create a user account and log in. [\[View\]](#)
- Email Confirmation: I like how the text focuses on the fact that together we're making a difference. [\[View\]](#)

ELEVATION CHURCH // NORTH CAROLINA

Elevation Church website. The main banner features a video background with the text "See God's promises fulfilled through your generosity". Below the banner is a "GIVE NOW" button and a section for "Online Giving".

• Time to Complete Donation: 4min 48sec [\[View\]](#)

- Don't Miss: The "video backgrounds" of their current site is an engaging effect. [\[View\]](#)
- Email Confirmation: No email receipt was auto-generated ... I downloaded this statement from my account page. [\[View\]](#)

NEW SONG COMMUNITY CHURCH // CALIFORNIA

New Song Community Church online giving form. The form is titled "Make a one-time or recurring gift" and includes fields for Amount, Repeat this gift, Campus, Giving Fund, Home Address, City/State/Zip, Full name, Email, and Mobile. It also has a "Next" button.

• Time to Complete Donation: 1min 15sec [\[View\]](#)

- Don't Miss: The giving interface is clean and super straightforward. [\[View\]](#)
- Email Confirmation: The bottom of the email drives donors to engage more with the giving processor. [\[View\]](#)

NEXT LEVEL CHURCH // NEW ENGLAND

• Time to Complete Donation: 2min 43sec [\[View\]](#)

• Don't Miss: One-time donations are done through PayPal. [\[View\]](#)

• Email Confirmation: Provides a "next step" for donors to complete their account information online with a direct link to do so. [\[View\]](#)

RIVER VALLEY CHURCH // MINNESOTA

• Time to Complete Donation: 3min 06sec [\[View\]](#)

• Don't Miss: A user account needs to be set up to make a one-time donation. [\[View\]](#)

• Email Confirmation: Technical information is the focus of the opening paragraph, which helps people understand the giving statement. [\[View\]](#)

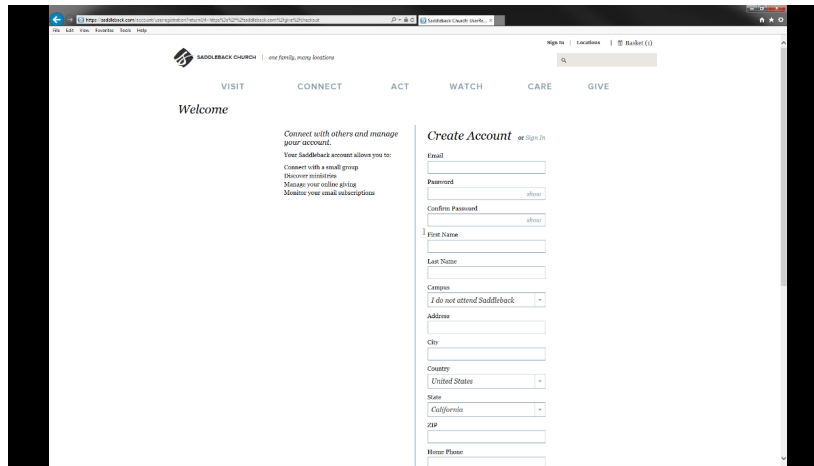
ROCK CITY CHURCH // OHIO

• Time to Complete Donation: 1min 45sec [\[View\]](#)

• Don't Miss: The pop-out menu on the front page is elegant and worth looking into. [\[View\]](#)

• Email Confirmation: Again, this provider has a clean design template for these receipt emails. [\[View\]](#)

SADDLEBACK CHURCH // CALIFORNIA



The screenshot shows the Saddleback Church website's 'Create Account' page. The page has a dark header with the church's logo and navigation links: VISIT, CONNECT, ACT, WATCH, CARE, and GIVE. Below the header, there's a 'Welcome' section on the left and a 'Create Account' form on the right. The form includes fields for Email, Password, Confirm Password, First Name, Last Name, Campus (a dropdown menu with 'I do not attend Saddleback' selected), Address, City, Country (a dropdown menu with 'United States' selected), State (a dropdown menu with 'California' selected), ZIP, and Home Phone. There are also links for 'Sign Up' and 'Log In'.

- Time to Complete Donation: 3min 16sec [[View](#)]

- Don't Miss: A user account is required to make a single donation. [[View](#)]

- Email Confirmation: One of only two churches in this group that uses scripture in their encouragement to donors. [[View](#)]

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[Redacted]

Online Giving Receipt

Thu, Feb 4, 2016 at 8:31 AM

To: RichBirch [Redacted]

Dear Rich,

Thank you for submitting your charitable donation using our online giving system. 12Stone Church is supported completely by generous donations from our members and attenders. Your giving summary is shown below:

Item Type	Item Description	Amount Paid
One-time Donation	10.00 one-time gift to Online - Tithes and Offerings	10.00
	Total Amount Paid:	10.00

*Items marked with an asterisk will be processed in the future according to the recurrence schedule

Should you have any questions regarding your charitable contribution, please contact me directly at [Redacted]

With appreciation,

Lisa Huff
Contributions Specialist
12Stone Church
[Redacted]



[Redacted header information]

Contribution Receipt

Calvary Fellowship

Thu, Feb 4, 2016 at 9:00 AM

To: [Redacted]

Dear Rich Birch,

Thank you for your contribution of \$10.00!

- Calvary Fellowship



[Redacted]

Your receipt from The Church Of Eleven22

The Church Of Eleven22

Thu, Feb 4, 2016 at 8:39 AM

Reply-To: Do Not Reply

To: Rich Birch

Your receipt from The Church Of Eleven22

Thank you for giving to The Church Of Eleven22.

Date: 2/4/2016

Amount: \$10.00

Given to: Baymeadows Location

To: Before All Things \$10.00

Payment Method: [Redacted]

Account: [Redacted]

Account Holder: Rich Birch

Transaction ID: [Redacted]

This message is from The Church Of Eleven22. The Church Of Eleven22 treats your personal information with the utmost care. To report abuse related to this email, please contact our office at [Redacted]

[Unsubscribe](#) or [change your preferences](#) for receiving emails like this one.



CHURCH COMMUNITY BUILDER



[Redacted]

Receipt for Your Contribution to Church of the Highlands

Thu, Feb 4, 2016 at 8:13 AM

Reply-To: [Redacted]

To: [Redacted]

Thank you for your continued support of Church of the Highlands! Your faithfulness is greatly appreciated. Together we're making a difference, The Highlands Staff "But just as you excel in everything--in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us--see that you also excel in this grace of giving." (2 Corinthians 8:7)

Rich Birch

[Redacted]

1. Tithes & Offerings > A. Grants Mill	\$10.00
Total	\$10.00

Please keep this message as a receipt for your contribution.

[Redacted]



Giving Statement

YTD 2016

Elevation Church

Rich Birch

Name	Giving Details	Date	Amount
Rich Birch	Operating	04 Feb 2016	\$10.00
			\$10.00

Giving Summary	YTD
Operating	\$10.00
	\$10.00

There were no goods or services given in exchange for the listed contributions other than intangible religious benefits.



[Redacted]

Gift to New Song Community Church successful (#60048779)

Pushpay
To: Rich Birch

Thu, Feb 4, 2016 at 8:55 AM



New Song Community Church



**Gift to New Song Community Church
successful**

Thank you for your gift! Your generosity allows us to achieve our mission: To help unchurched people become fully devoted followers of Christ.

Hi Rich Birch,

On **Thursday, 4 February 2016** your gift of **USD \$10.00** to **New Song Community Church** was made successfully.

Recipient	New Song Community Church
Amount	USD \$10.00
Date	2/4/2016 5:55 am
Transaction No.	[Redacted]
Full name	Rich Birch
Email	[Redacted]



[Redacted]

Thank you for giving to Next Level Church! on 2/4/2016

Thu, Feb 4, 2016 at 9:34 AM

To: [Redacted]

Dear Rich Birch,

Thanks for giving to Next Level Church! Your sacrifice is changing lives! If you have questions about your donation, you can log in to see your history [here](#) or email [Redacted]

Category	Amount
General	\$10.00
Total Amount	\$10.00

Your account registration is not yet complete. You may complete your registration [here](#). Once complete, you may log in and view your transaction history.

Next Level Church

Please do not respond to this email. If you have any questions please contact [Redacted]



[Redacted]

Online Giving Confirmation

Thu, Feb 4, 2016 at 9:21 AM

Reply-To: [Redacted]

To: [Redacted]



River Valley Church On Line Giving Center

Rich,

This is a confirmation of your recent Online Giving contribution to River Valley Church. If this is a newly created Giving Profile, you will receive 2 email confirmations. One will be simply to confirm the Repeating Payment Profile, the other will be of the actual contribution. Profile adds or changes have a Confirmation number that begins with **RP** and are followed by numbers like (RP000000XXX). An actual contribution will have all. Alpha Numeric values like (DE4GTYURW).

Below are the details of your contribution.

AMOUNT(S):

Tithe & Offering_CC_AV: \$10.00

TOTAL: \$10.00

DETAILS:

Frequency: One Time

First Payment Date: 2/5/2016

Number of Payments to Make: 1

Payment Method: [Redacted]

Account Number: [Redacted]

Confirmation Number: [Redacted]

Your confirmation number is [Redacted]

[Note: This is an automated email. Please do not respond to this email]

Should there be any questions, please contact the accounting Office at River Valley Church by phone at [Redacted] or email [Redacted]



[Redacted]

Your receipt from Rock City Church

Rock City Church
Reply-To: Do Not Reply
To: Rich Birch

Thu, Feb 4, 2016 at 7:54 AM

Your receipt from Rock City Church

Thank you for giving to Rock City Church.

Date: 2/4/2016

Amount: \$10.00

Given to: Rock City Church

To: Tithes and Offerings \$10.00

Payment Method: [Redacted]

Account: [Redacted]

Account Holder: Rich Birch

Transaction ID: [Redacted]

This message is from Rock City Church. Rock City Church treats your personal information with the utmost care. To report abuse related to this email, please contact our office at [Redacted]

[Unsubscribe](#) or [change your preferences](#) for receiving emails like this one.



CHURCH COMMUNITY BUILDER



[Redacted]

Thank you, Rich, for your gift to Saddleback Church

Saddleback Church

Thu, Feb 4, 2016 at 8:46 AM

To: [Redacted]

Thank you for your gift of \$10.00 to Saddleback Church. One of the great promises of the Bible is found in our generosity to God and to others. *The world of the generous gets larger and larger...* Proverbs 11:24 (MSG)

View or make changes to your online giving by clicking [here](#). For questions or assistance, please contact your Giving Operations Team at [Redacted] or [Redacted]

May God bless you for your faithful giving!