

# COVID economy: Stunning turnaround in church giving

## New Survey Reveals Turnaround in Church Giving

'State of the Plate' research offers encouragement as National Association of Evangelicals launches second annual Bless Your Pastor Campaign

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- A [new survey](#) of churches across America reveals a turnaround for church financial health — halting a downward trend in offerings caused by COVID-19.

The findings are welcome news for churches as the National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) launches the second annual Bless Your Pastor ([BlessYourPastor.org](#)) campaign to equip churches for October Pastor Appreciation Month.

The [State of the Plate survey of over 1,000 churches across 50 states](#) in late August reveals almost two-thirds (64 percent) report giving is steady or has increased. When the same State of the Plate question was asked in April, 65 percent of churches reported a drop in giving as COVID-19 hit.

“This is encouraging news for churches across America,” said Brian Kluth, a former pastor and now national spokesperson for the Bless Your Pastor movement and NAE Financial Health. “These new findings show that most churches and their families are figuring out ways to survive and even thrive in the midst of all the challenges that the pandemic has thrown their way.”

Despite the good news for churches, Kluth cautioned that many pastors are still feeling financial pressure — as well as emotional drain — from COVID-19 and its fallout, especially in smaller churches that struggled to provide appropriate compensation for their pastor prior to COVID-19 disruptions.

### **Pastor Appreciation: ‘Need Never Been Greater’**

“Even as finances stabilize for many churches, our research prior to the pandemic showed that 90 percent of pastors feel some level of financial stress in their family and church work,” Kluth said. “This has been an especially stressful year for pastors and church staff. Let’s find ways to bless them.”

More than 500 churches have already signed up for grant-funded materials to participate in Bless Your Pastor this year, with Pastor Appreciation Month coming up in October.

Churches can sign up on the [Bless Your Pastor](#) website, distribute the “50 Creative Ways to Bless Your Pastor” ideas list, and take up a special offering for their pastor. After churches complete a brief online form, the NAE will send a \$250 Amazon gift card to the senior pastor. Bless Your Pastor is funded with a grant from Lilly Endowment Inc.

through its National Initiative to Address Economic Challenges Facing Pastors.

The new State of the Plate survey also reveals the following:

- Nearly one in four churches (22 percent) has seen giving increase.
- Four out of 10 churches (42 percent) report offerings are stable.
- Just over a third (36 percent) say giving has decreased.
- Almost one in every three churches (32.5 percent) received support from the Paycheck Protection Program (PPP).
- 87 percent of churches now hold in-person worship services.
- More than half of churches (58 percent) report in-person attendance is half or less of pre-pandemic levels.
- 6 percent of churches have seen an increase in attendance.

“We see our pastors and church staff working tirelessly to bless us and others week after week,” Kluth said. “Now it’s time for us to bless them.”

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#### ***About Lilly Endowment Inc.***

*Lilly Endowment Inc. is an Indianapolis-based private philanthropic foundation created in 1937 by three members of the Lilly family — J.K. Lilly, Sr., and sons, J.K., Jr., and Eli — through gifts of stock in their pharmaceutical business, Eli Lilly & Company. The Endowment exists to support the causes of religion, education and community development. Lilly Endowment’s religion grant-making is designed to deepen and enrich the religious lives of American Christians. It does this largely through initiatives to enhance and sustain the quality of ministry in American congregations and parishes.*

#### ***About National Association of Evangelicals (NAE)***

*The mission of the National Association of Evangelicals is to honor God by connecting and representing evangelical Christians. The NAE includes more than 45,000 churches from 40 denominations and serves a constituency of millions. Founded in 1942, the NAE is currently led by president Walter Kim.*

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