

The **POWER** of the

PARISHIONER EMAIL





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More and more, parishes are adding an additional line to their new member registration form: email address. For the parishes that rely on postal mail and the weekly bulletin to inform and inspire their parishioners, it may seem a little unclear as to why they should maintain an email list of their parish members. But there are so many advantages to using this electronic form of communication — in terms of reach, cost effectiveness, and creativity.

According to a 2020 study conducted by Statista, in 2019 global email users amounted to 3.9 billion users and is expected to balloon to 4.3 billion users in 2023. In other words, more than half of the entire planet uses email right now. If your parish has yet to collect parishioner emails, or are doing it half-heartedly, now is the time to jump into it. Read on for some compelling points of view on the many benefits of collecting and maintaining your email list.



More and more, email and direct messages are replacing phone calls and postal mail. By having your parishioners' emails readily available, the possibilities truly become endless.

THE COST SAVING FACTOR: SUBSTANTIAL

Parishes need to solicit regular funding from members and large donors in order to keep doors open and ministries running. However, the way that fundraising works changes on a daily basis. The goal to maximizing all monetary gifts is to keep the administration costs down, in order to allocate as many funds as possible to the needs of the church. That's one reason why using email systems such as

Constant Contact or MailChimp is so valuable. Most of these systems allow for a free account, or for a basic one for as little as \$10 a month. By sending out broadcast emails to your contacts, you can send out a professional message to hundreds, if not thousands, of people.

And these messages don't need to be just for capital campaigns or requests to sign up for recurring online giving. Sending parishioner pledge statements and year-end donation reports as email attachments also allows parishes to greatly reduce mailing costs and reallocate those funds to more essential areas.



The easier we make it for parishioners to share their gifts, the more likely they'll feel compelled to give when the opportunity arises.



THE LABOR FACTOR: WORTH IT

If your parish needs to update your member list, or if you haven't started one yet, there will be a lot of data entry involved. Not only do you need to find a way to get emails from your parishioners, but you need to find a way to store these for easy access later.

An easy way to start collecting this essential information is simply by asking for them. Slip a form inside your next bulletin asking that all members update their contact information, and have them bring the form back next Sunday, or email it to the parish office. Make a quick announcement before or after Mass, letting them know how this information will help the parish. There may need to be some follow up to a good number of parishioners who forget to bring the form back.

Once you start getting the forms back, it's time to add the information to your contact list using a data management system. Even a Google document that can be accessed by multiple people can work. Just make sure that it's safe, secure, and backed up on a regular basis.



THE POSSIBILITY FACTOR: LIMITLESS

Think of how people communicate these days. More and more, email and direct messages are replacing phone calls and postal mail. By having your parishioners' emails readily available, the possibilities truly become endless. Your pastoral associate could email essential funeral information to grieving families or let the St. Vincent de Paul volunteers know that five more meals are still needed for tomorrow night. Or let's say that a pipe burst in the rectory and Sunday Mass needs to be postponed for a short time while they get things cleaned up — send out an urgent email to avoid confusion.

And then, there are the creative ways to use email, such as a capital campaign that includes a link to a video message from the pastor or a small clip of the church choir preparing for Christmas Eve Mass. If your parishioners need a reminder that the food pantry is getting low on mac and cheese or that they need one or two volunteers to help clean the sacristy, a quick email is the perfect vehicle. Maybe the parent of a parishioner family just lost his or her job and resources are needed to help them remain on their feet. Perhaps an elderly member is having trouble shoveling his or her walkway this winter and is looking for a few people to come over to help when it snows. Whatever the reason you need to reach out to people in a timely manner, having their email address is key to getting a fast response.

Another creative use of email is the use of direct links. When someone gets a letter in the mail with an invitation to give online, followed by a URL to visit, it's just one more step to do in the system. They read the message, then need to go to a computer or their smartphone, type in the URL, grab their credit card or banking information, and THEN donate. Kind of a long, and tiring, process.

When you send that same message in email form including a link to your parish's online giving platform, all it takes is a simple click of the mouse in order to give. The easier we make it for parishioners to share their gifts, the more likely they'll feel compelled to give when the opportunity arises.

Looking for new ways to tell the story of your vibrant parish? Check out our resource, "Inspire Parish Giving" for tips and tricks to follow.

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