

SEQUOIA

HOW GIVING WORKS AT SEQUOIA CHURCH

August, 2020

Sequoia Church exists through the generous financial support of its members. This document is intended to clearly explain how giving works at Sequoia, our philosophies, policies, and the real numbers. We provide this information to be both informative and inspiring.

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TRANSPARENCY

Money is a delicate subject. Many of us have opinions about what money means and how it is to be handled, and some of us have experienced fiduciary mismanagement through unethical, irresponsible, or even abusive behavior. One of the most critical protections an organization can put in place to ensure organizational health and integrity is to be transparent. As such, we make our numbers readily available to our congregation. Our Elders have full access to our accounting. In addition, we believe that by giving our church a full understanding of how donations work, we are not only empowering our members to be well-informed givers, we also increase the faith and trust that givers have with Sequoia. In addition, we hope that our discussion will inspire our entire community towards healthy attitudes and behaviors regarding money in the church.

TIME, TALENTS, TREASURES


While the term “giving” in our culture primarily connotes “money,” we want to make clear that for us, giving money is only one way to give. Popularly summarized by the words, “time,” “talents,” and “treasure,” these “three T’s” are important and recognized as having equal value and are avenues for one’s spiritual act of giving.

GIVING IS WORSHIP

Simply put, we believe giving is spiritual, a true act of worship. Giving is our personal and corporate way of advancing God’s Kingdom, here on earth, and it is each individual’s way of honoring God in the blessings and provisions we have all received. Contributing to a meaningful purpose also transforms us, making us a more generous and compassionate people.

UNDERSTANDING ONLINE TRANSACTIONS

While credit card and online transactions are convenient, virtually all financial exchanges incur fees. The following table is an explanation of those costs with our vendor, Planning Center Online (PCO):

	 Planning Center Online (PCO)	
Monthly service fee	\$14 ¹	
Type	Credit/Debit Card	EFT
Cost per transaction	2.15% + \$0.30	\$0.25
If you give \$100, Sequoia receives:	\$97.65	\$99.75
If you give \$100 and opt to pay for the fees, Sequoia receives:	\$100	\$100

[A brief “per transaction” math note. The numbers above reflect one donation. If Sequoia were to receive \$100 in 5 different online transactions of \$20 each, that would incur the 2.15% charge plus \$1.50 (\$0.30 x 5), rather than the one time + \$0.30.]

¹ Planning Center’s costs increase when the church grows. \$14/month is for up to 100 individual electronic donations/month. The next level is \$29 for up to 250 donations/month, etc. [See more at their website.](#)

UNDERSTANDING VENDORS AND PROCESSORS

Our vendor, PCO, is the “front end gateway” for clients like us, and users like you. PCO uses [Stripe](#) as their “backend” payment processor for doing the actual transaction. Communications about your transactions may come from either PCO or Stripe, and should be identified as a Sequoia Church transaction.

ADDITIONAL SERVICES

Our vendor also provides a different set of services that are helpful and beneficial for the administration of the church.

Allows giver to pay for the fees.	✓	Donors can setup giving to be automatic.	✓
Provides a “Sequoia branded” online web form.	✓	Can track and process cash and checks.	✓
“Text to give” feature from your mobile phone.	✓	Processes “purchases” (such as events, clothing, etc.) in addition to “donations.”	✓
Automatic transfers to our bank account.	✓	Includes a church database of members.	✓
Weekly reporting for budgeting purposes.	✓	Company is a faith-based ministry.	✓
Automatically generates end of year statements.	✓		

WHAT IS BEST

Paying for the services of Planning Center helps our staff focus on the people and the ministry of the church. It is, in our opinion, worth the cost. The most economical options are in the following order:

1. A **bank transfer (EFT/ACH) through PCO provides the overall best value** [lowest fee structure (\$0.25 / transaction) with all the administrative benefits listed above].
2. A physical check or **cash** are the second-best option (minimal administrative work with no fees).
3. **Credit/debit cards** through **PCO** are the third-best option [lowest fees (2.15% + \$0.30 / transaction) with all the administrative benefits listed above].

INVESTMENTS AND STOCK DONATION POLICIES

The following policies govern investment and stock donations.

- **Please notify us when you make a stock donation.**

We do not get automatic notifications from our broker, and stock gifts are not accounted for through our online platforms. Receipts will be manually generated for all stock donations. The value of the stock donated will be determined by the average stock value the day of the transaction to Sequoia's custody. (If the value of the stock donated had a day high of \$5, and a day low of \$1/share, the donation receipt will state "X# of shares at \$3/share" and will include the high and low values as reference. Each donor will be responsible for their own reporting for the personal taxes).

- **All stock donations are sold.**

Our policy is to promptly liquidate all stock donations and convert the funds to operating cash.

- **Sequoia Welcomes Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs).**

Sequoia welcomes Qualified Charitable Distributions (QCDs) directly from IRAs, as a tax-advantaged strategy for donors. According to the IRS, a Qualified Charitable Distribution is an otherwise taxable distribution from an IRA (other than an ongoing SEP or SIMPLE IRA) owned by an individual who is age 70½ or over that is paid directly from the IRA to a qualified charity. Please notify Sequoia when authorizing such a distribution, and you will receive an acknowledgement receipt from us at the end of the year. Please consult with your tax advisor for additional details on these distributions.

THANK YOU!

We cannot thank you enough for partnering with us in this ministry. We hope this document has helped us all become more fully informed and joyful givers.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us.

In Christ's Love & Service,
The Elders of Sequoia Church