



# HOW GIVING WORKS AT SPARK

February, 2025

Dear Spark,

Spark exists through the generous financial support of its members. This document is intended to clearly explain how giving works at Spark, 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 most 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, and our Executive Board has 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 Spark. 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 recognized as having equal value and are avenues for one’s spiritual act of giving.

## **CONTRIBUTE**

These “three T’s” are expressed as Sparkers pray, prepare food, lead music, participate in a small group, move furniture, and attend services. They all express a spiritual posture of generosity toward God and one another. This is why we use the word “contribute,” a word that describes an “offering” or “gift” given to God and to the people.

## **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.


## **SPARK GIVES**

Spark continuously strives to reflect our core values in how we spend, how we ask for support, and how we allocate our resources. As part of our budget, Spark has designated a minimum of 10% of our general income to support partner organizations through our “Rescue” efforts. A representative group of Sparkers on our Rescue Team, in partnership with our pastors, carefully consider the organizations and efforts to which we donate. It is our way of

exemplifying that very same generosity of spirit, and Kingdom-minded heart and attitude. An updated list of organizations that Spark supports can be found at our website.

## 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	\$15 <sup>1</sup>	
Type	Credit/Debit Card	EFT
Cost per transaction	2.15% + \$0.30	\$0.30
If you give \$100, Spark receives:	\$97.65	\$99.70
If you give \$100 and opt to pay for the fees, Spark receives:	\$100	\$100

[A brief “per transaction” math note. The numbers above reflect one donation. If Spark 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.]

## 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 Spark transaction.

## ADDITIONAL SERVICES

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

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<sup>1</sup> 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.](#)

Allows giver to pay for the fees.	✓	Donors can setup giving to be automatic.	✓
Provides a “spark 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.	✓		



## STRIPE CLIMATE



Spark is participating Stripe’s Climate Product, a direct allocation of 1.5% of all transactions to their portfolio comprised of companies with missions focused on removing and storing CO2 from the atmosphere. To find out more about this program and Spark’s engagement with #CreationCare, visit <https://climate.stripe.com/ucAK0F>

## WHAT IS BEST

Paying for the services of Planning Center helps Spark 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 (\$0.30 / 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

Stock donations have particular nuances that need to be considered when managing, and the following policies and practices are designed to ensure that our management of these funds accords with our values and our overall philosophy.

- 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 and will state the value of the stock donated by averaging the stock's high and low values on the day of the transaction to Spark's custody. (If the value of the stock donated had a day high of \$5, and a day low of \$1, the donation receipt will state "X# of shares at \$3/share" and will include the high and low values as reference. Each donor is responsible for their own reporting).

- Management.

Spark's management of invested assets takes into consideration market trajectories, Spark's financial health and budget outlooks, and our overall fiscal philosophies. We make no commitments for the holding or selling of donated stocks.

- Spark seeks to maintain a balanced and socially responsible portfolio.

As we balance between capital growth and preservation we will seek to align our investments with socially responsible investment guidelines, excluding investments in adult entertainment, alcohol and tobacco, fossil fuels, gambling, nuclear power, oil and gas, and weapons.

- Spark's portfolio is managed by a financial sub-committee and approved by the Board.

In addition to the Senior Pastor and Executive Director, financial sub-committee members are the arbiters for all decisions regarding Spark's investments and policies.

## **REAL PROPERTY GIFTS**

Gifts of property to Spark Church shall be sold within a reasonable period of time and the proceeds used for either operating needs or invested according to the recommended asset allocation. Exceptions could be made if the Senior

Pastors and Board determine that the property is strategically important to the Church.

## **HOW TO DONATE STOCK OR PROPERTY**

Please send an email to [debby@spark.church](mailto:debby@spark.church) to inquire about property donations and/or to receive a letter with all the account credentials for stock transfers.

## **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.



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