

Pandemic Guidelines

For a Successful ShareLife Parish Campaign

Introduction

2020 was certainly a year to remember. It changed the way we did things, the way we communicated and the way we interacted with one another. It changed the way we thought about things and the amount of time we needed to do them – and where we did them.

ShareLife, the annual appeal of the Archdiocese of Toronto, was certainly not immune to the effects brought on by the pandemic. ShareLife is an outreach ministry driven by a parish campaign. It seeks to lessen the burden of those in need, and provide hope to those who have lost it.

There are many moving parts to the campaign: the people and agencies who provide essential services to those in need, the pastors who drive the spiritual messaging of the campaign, the parish staff who support all aspects of the campaign, and much needed volunteers and chancery staff who drive the day to day activities of the campaign year round. All these groups interact with one another on a regular basis to achieve the best possible result for the campaign and ultimately the agencies it supports.

Over the last several years, the ShareLife office has produced an abundance of materials and resources that enable a parish to execute a successful ShareLife campaign. These resources can be found at sharelife.org/resources and are updated every year to reflect the realities and needs of parishes and for those who drive engagement for the parish campaign. Prior to exploring pandemic specific guidelines contained below, please review the standard campaign practices and resources at sharelife.org.

1.1 Our current reality

For the first half of 2021, some level of restrictions resulting from the pandemic are likely to be in effect for at least the first and potentially second ShareLife Sundays.

ShareLife Sundays for 2021 are:

- 1st Collection – April 17/18
- 2nd Collection – June 19/20
- 3rd Collection – October 2/3

Although difficult to predict, we remain hopeful that parish life will return to some degree of normalcy by the third collection in early October.

1.2 What does this mean?

For the first and second ShareLife Sundays in April and June, parishes will require the ongoing observance of pandemic restrictions. This means that changes in our approach to certain campaign activities and how we communicate to our parishioners are required in order to make the strongest impact possible.

1.3 What's available now?

As mentioned above there are a several resources that have made all the difference in parishes developing and executing their ShareLife campaign plans. These resources are used primarily by pastors, volunteer committees and parish staff. They include:

- [Campaign Guide](#) – A comprehensive guide to planning and executing a parish ShareLife campaign.
- [Best Practices](#) – The best of the best practices used by the most successful parishes in consistently delivering and exceeding on their ShareLife goals.
- [Key Dates Calendar](#) – An overview of the Parish Campaign, including ShareLife Sunday collection dates, reporting deadlines, direct mail timelines, and recommended dates to show agency videos.

2.1 Planning

Campaign plan

Develop a campaign plan as a team with the pastor's approval and input. If you require assistance developing a plan, contact a ShareLife parish campaign officer. These plans are a speciality at the ShareLife office and will deliver measurable benefits to your parish campaign. These plans can be developed remotely with standard office tools.

Committees

Continued engagement of committees is recommended. Committee members can be recruited virtually via the parish bulletin with remote assistance from the ShareLife office. Interactive meetings or interviews can be conducted via any conferencing platform or facilitated by a ShareLife campaign officer. Pastor attendance will be required for final volunteer recruitment. Any questions regarding this process can be channelled through a parish campaign officer.

Committee engagement

The pandemic has created opportunities for clergy, staff and volunteers to reach out to parishioners. The ShareLife office as always can share donor information with the pastor. The campaign officer can then work with the pastor to build a soft call campaign with the pastor's approval that can be carried out by pastor, parish staff or volunteers.

Virtual meetings

Engage a campaign officer prior to the campaign starting, optimally 4 to 6 weeks before the first collection. Periodic meetings during the campaign will provide focus and insight into what other successful parishes are doing for success in their campaigns. Campaign officers have worked with several parishes over the years to increase the value of their parish campaign. It's well worth a monthly video or telephone meeting to ensure all bases have been covered.

One-to-one agency impact meetings

Through the ShareLife office, one-to-one agency-parish meetings can be arranged. The agenda will focus on agency functions, services and programs, current challenges and impacts. This vital information can then be used to develop parish specific messaging to be delivered from the pulpit, via committee members, bulletin announcements or targeted letters from the pastor. ShareLife agencies are there to serve people – ask them and they are eager to help!

2.2 Administration

Online giving and PAG

Wherever possible, please encourage online as well as pre-authorized giving. This reduces the risk for donors who planned to make a gift but could not do so because of the pandemic or absence away from home. The PAG and sharelife.org/donate platforms eliminate the risk of missed or lost gifts due to circumstances beyond the donor's control. Please have the donor call the ShareLife office to initiate a recurring monthly or one-time gift via PAG. Donations can also be made by credit card through sharelife.org/donate as well as parish websites.

Results reporting

Specific instructions on how to report parish results can be found [on our website](#).

2.3 Promotion

ShareLife materials

Please continue to post and prominently display all ShareLife materials within your parish. For 2021, we are asking parishes to display posters, banners, lawn signs, and thermometers starting in late March. These materials should remain on display until the end of October 2021.

Pew envelopes

Even for limited church attendance during the first quarter of 2021, please ensure ShareLife envelopes are stocked as always in a visible place at the back of the church. ShareLife envelopes should also be placed in pews prior to all masses leading to ShareLife Sundays.

Parish bulletins

Parish bulletins sometimes serve as the only information source between the parishioner and the parish. Please make use of the online parish bulletin to provide parishioners with inspirational messaging from the pastor, collection dates, goal status, in-person or virtual events, spiritual and motivational messages from Scripture, notes of thanks, and [ShareLife bulletin announcements](#).

ShareLife achievement

With limited church attendance for the first (and potentially second) collection, it will be critical for parishioners to know where the parish stands with respect to its goal. Please post the parish result in the bulletin and parish web site and parish foyer via a thermometer with the parish goal. Also consider the possibility of identifying the current ShareLife status/achievement on the parish voicemail system. Given that many parishes continue to live stream or record services, pastors should attempt to state the parish goal at the end of every mass.

2.4 Events and speakers

Fundraising events

Until warmer weather sets in, any ShareLife fundraising events will need to be virtual or supported through limited social gatherings. Under normal circumstances, most ShareLife events are carried out in mid to late spring. As the final collection for 2021 is in October, fundraising events in the summer of 2021 are encouraged and will be credited to the 2021 campaign until December 31, 2021.

Agency speakers

Plan to have a speaker do a presentation at your parish. An in-person speaker may not be possible for the first April collection, but may be possible for June, as well as the final collection. Agency speakers offer invaluable insights into the positive work and impact they are having in our communities through the generous gifts of our parishioners. If your parish is technically equipped to handle a video conference, speakers can be made available for a live feed. Alternatively, we recommend parishes use one of the [pre-recorded agency speaker videos](#).

In-person agency visits

Again, for the first collection this may not be possible. However, a virtual agency tour can be prepared and provided to the parish. The tour will be supported by an agency staffer who has intimate knowledge of the services and impact the agency is having in the community through ShareLife funding.

Virtual event ideas

1. Fundraising challenge

Challenge your friends, family and fellow parishioners to take part. Here are some examples:

- Physical challenge: For every \$10 raised, the pastor or parishioner commits to running/walking a particular distance, climbing a flight of stairs, doing a number of push-ups, or some other feat;
- Readathon: Participants ask their friends and family to support them by the book or by the minute;
- All-day game challenge: Collect pledges and play a video or board game for 12 hours straight.

2. Silent auction

Prizes can include a variety of goods, services, and experiences. Promote the event by email and social media. Silent auction software can take care of most of the work for you.

3. Virtual class

If you have parishioners with a strong skill set, offer a virtual workshop or class. You can also recruit a professional to volunteer to host a class.

4. Virtual concert

Find musicians to perform online and charge for tickets. You can ask the talent to do a special Q&A session after their performance.

5. Outdoor movie night

Hosting an open-air cinema event is a fun opportunity to sit in the great outdoors on a summer night. Simply set up a screen and video projector in the parking lot of the parish.

Stories from the Seminary

ShareLife is the primary funding source of St. Augustine Seminary. Pending availability and with enough notice, seminarians will be available to speak in a virtual group setting or one-on-one. ShareLife funding to the seminary has enabled many to contemplate and realize their dream of becoming priests and religious. ShareLife is a key source of funding in the development of future priests.

2.4 Donor engagement

Donor meetings and inquiries

Together with a parish staff member, the ShareLife office will be happy to facilitate or participate in virtual meetings where potential or established donors require further information about ShareLife or the work of the agencies prior to them making a gift.

Acknowledgment and thank you

Please use every opportunity to frequently acknowledge and thank parishioners for their gifts and generosity. A thank you is valuable and goes a long way. The ShareLife team will be happy to personally call and thank donors for their support. Please remember, a thank you call should just be a thank you call with no hint or reference for a future gift.

Contact

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A virtual campaign success story

By the ShareLife committee of St. Agnes Kouying Tsao Parish

Our ShareLife Team was ready to roll out our parish campaign in March 2020. We held our team meeting, an announcement was published in the Sunday bulletin, brochures were placed in the pews, the ShareLife thermometer was displayed and the team was ready to speak at the pulpit. Suddenly everything was put on hold because of COVID-19. Public masses were cancelled and the first collection was postponed. However, we knew our job to raise money for ShareLife cannot be stopped.



We started sending out the [ShareLife video](#) via email to our parishioners and asked them to donate online. For those who preferred to send in cash or cheque, we encouraged them to drop them in a collection box at the church. Funds were coming slowly because of the restrictions imposed by the government. We then started our second wave of promotion by sending messages through WhatsApp, Facebook Messenger, text messages and our email contact groups. We also placed the ShareLife campaign message on our website.

In September, we were able to go back to church with some restrictions. We spoke to the congregation, adding a local focus to the [sample speech](#) provided by ShareLife. We delivered the speech in Cantonese, English and Mandarin. Envelopes and flyers were made available. Parish priests included supportive messaging in their homilies.

The response was great! It was totally a surprise when we learned we surpassed our target. Our parishioners understood the need for ShareLife agencies, especially during the pandemic. Without the support of our priests, parishioners, office staff and the committee, there was no way we could have achieved this. While we are facing another challenge this year, we believe we can work wonders!