



# STATE OF GIVING

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## 2019

By Warren Bird, Ph.D.

# Giving to ECFA Charities Remains STEADY After Six Years of Increases

## Study of Nearly \$14 Billion in Cash Giving Reveals Significant Variation Across 26 Ministry Types

WINCHESTER, Va. – ECFA State of Giving 2019 reveals a pace in charitable giving that held steady with the giving rate of the previous year. After six years of annual increases (2011-2017), cash giving to ECFA members declined slightly -0.6% between 2017 and 2018, according to ECFA's inflation-adjusted analysis of \$13.9 billion in cash donations to 1,940 ECFA-accredited organizations. Cash gifts include cash, checks and electronic monetary contributions.

The rate was much stronger than the stock market, where the S&P 500 declined an inflation-adjusted 6.2% for the same time period. It was also healthier than Giving USA's national data on \$125 billion in contributions to religion, which declined 3.9% when adjusted for inflation. Wage growth during that period was also relatively flat at 0.9%.

What prevented a greater increase in the giving rate? "Changes in giving often parallel stock market trends, so this year's report is not a big surprise," said Dan Busby, ECFA president. "Another likely influence is the massive change in our income tax structure effective starting in 2018. We're still sorting out the impact of tax reform and likely won't fully know what it's meant to giving patterns until this time next year."

ECFA State of Giving 2019 breaks down giving into 26 ministry segments, which surfaced considerable variety between various types of ministry. The areas with the most growth from 2017 to 2018 are community development (26.6%), camps and conferences (23.1%), and medical, dental and health services (11.9%). Those with the greatest decline are church denominations (-11.1%), leadership training (-7.1%) and relief and development (-6.9%). All numbers have been adjusted for inflation.



*What are the trends for 2019? In October, we asked ECFA members about year-to-date giving and 464 responded. When asked, "Please compare cash giving in Jan-Sept 2018 to Jan-Sept 2019," 74% reported that it has increased or held steady, while 26% said that 2019 is lower. This finding and other responses from the 2019 ECFA Member Financial Snapshot (a separate report downloadable at [ECFA.org/surveys](https://www.ecfa.org/surveys)), give me hope that 2019's cash giving will be stronger than 2018's."*

*— Dan Busby, ECFA President*

“Following a multiyear trend, smaller-budget ministries—those with annual revenue under \$1 million—again experienced a decrease in cash giving between 2017 and 2018. Interestingly, a decrease also happened with the biggest nonprofits—those with annual revenue of \$50 million and higher.”

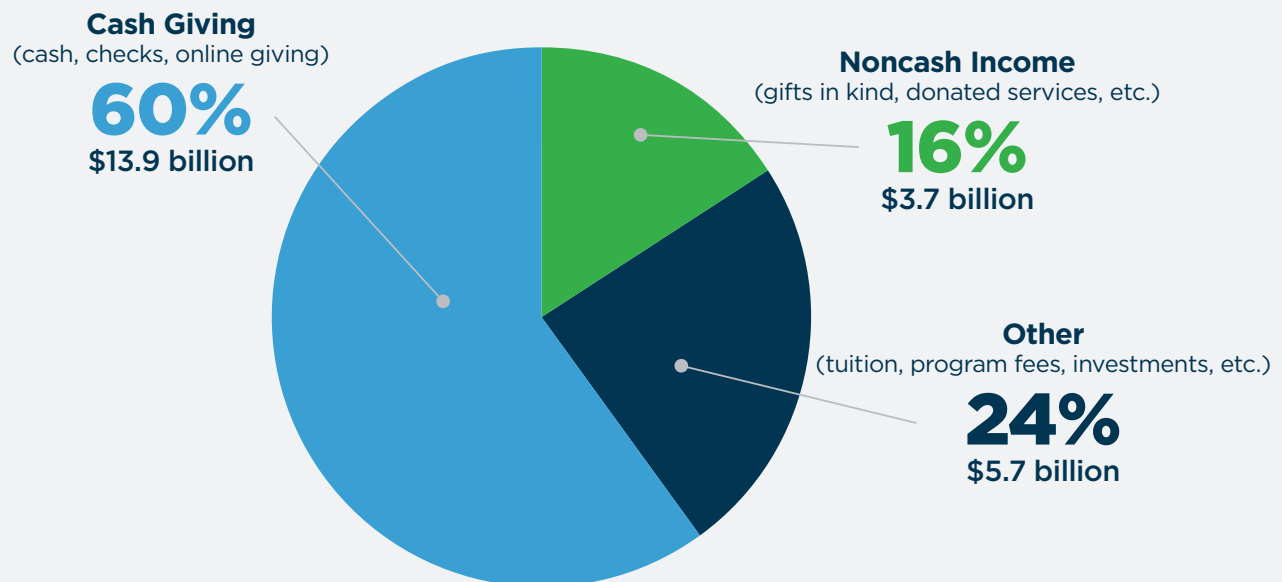
From 2008 to 2018, average cash giving to ECFA’s total membership increased annually by an average of 1.8%.

“I am pleased to see this consistent support for Christ-centered churches and ministries,” Busby added. “This generosity positions ECFA members to continue their positive impact for their causes both domestically and internationally.”

Data used in ECFA State of Giving 2019 comes directly from its member financial statements—primarily audits, which are prepared by independent, certified public accountants.

This is the ECFA’s 10th annual report on annual cash giving to ECFA-accredited organizations.

### This Report Focuses on Cash Giving



New for this year’s report: all year-to-year comparisons have been adjusted for inflation.



## About ECFA

Evangelical Council for Financial Accountability (ECFA), founded in 1979, provides accreditation to leading Christ-centered nonprofit organizations that faithfully demonstrate compliance with ECFA standards pertaining to financial accountability, fundraising, and board governance. ECFA has more than 2,400 accredited members across all 50 states and the District of Columbia. For more information about ECFA, including information about accreditation and a listing of ECFA-accredited members, visit [ECFA.org](https://www.ecfa.org) or call **800.323.9473**.

### What Is an ECFA Member?

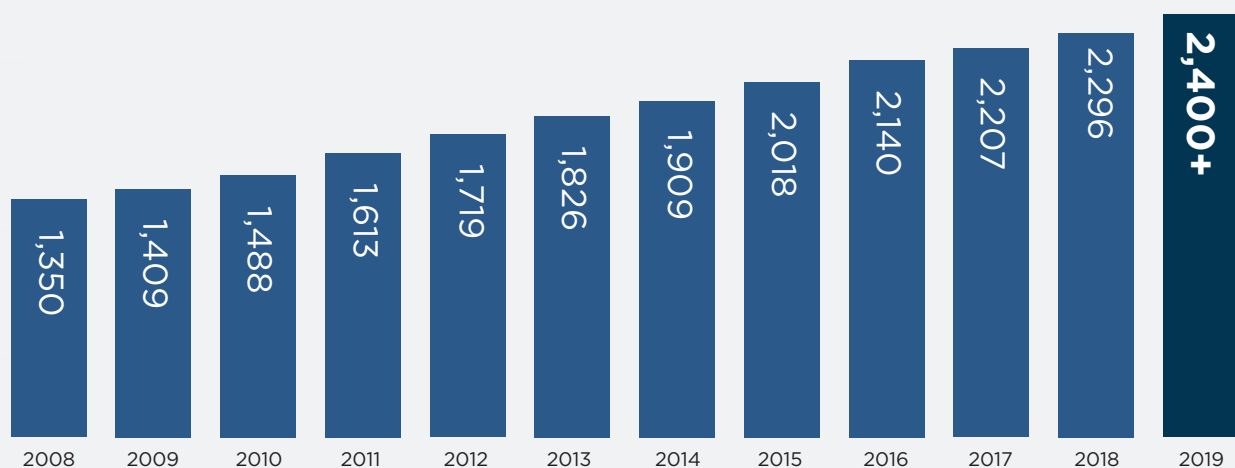


ECFA members are Christ-centered nonprofit ministries or churches that have committed to ECFA's Seven Standards of Responsible Stewardship™ and have gone through an initial and ongoing review process in order to use the ECFA seal. For example, all ECFA members must annually submit CPA-prepared financial statements. The terms ECFA member, accredited and certified are interchangeable.

### Previous Years of ECFA State of Giving

Visit [ECFA.org/StateofGiving](https://www.ecfa.org/StateofGiving) to download this report. Previous State of Giving Reports are available online: 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015, 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011, and 2010.

### Growing Membership, Growing Report Base



In 2019, ECFA had more than 2,400 accredited members. Data in ECFA State of Giving 2019 is limited to those who have been members during both years being compared. Other variations are due to the addition of new members, exclusion of some members that renewed membership after the deadline for various reasons, and loss of other ministries that did not continue membership.

# ECFA STATE OF GIVING 2019



## -0.6%

**SLIGHT DECREASE IN CASH GIVING BETWEEN  
2017 AND 2018 (INFLATION-ADJUSTED).**

THIS FOLLOWS SIX CONSECUTIVE YEARS OF GROWTH IN CASH GIVING.

### 2017-2018 CASH GIVING IN SPECIFIC AREAS TO ECFA-ACCREDITED ORGANIZATIONS



**+26.6%**

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT



**+23.1%**

CAMPS & CONFERENCES



**+11.9%**

MEDICAL, DENTAL & HEALTH SERVICES



**+9.3%**

STUDENT/YOUTH



**+9.2%**

ASSOCIATIONS



**+8.4%**

ADOPTION

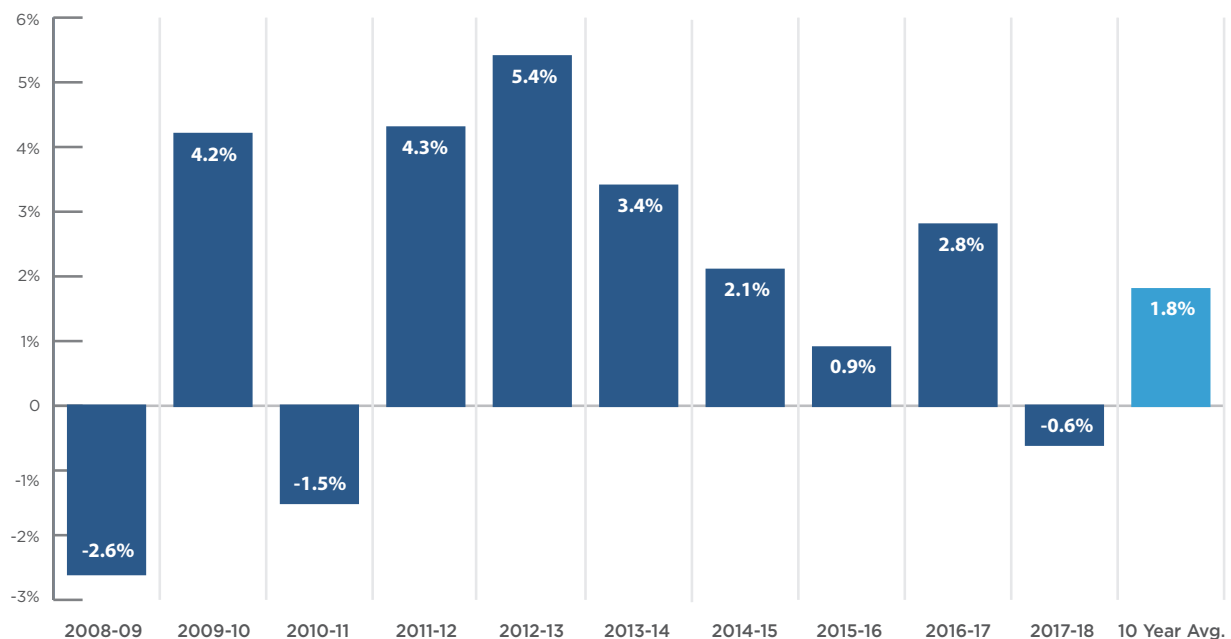


**+8.2%**

CHILDREN'S HOME & ORPHAN CARE

**SAMPLE SIZE: 1,940 ECFA MEMBERS**

### 10-YEAR HISTORY, ECFA STATE OF GIVING (INFLATION ADJUSTED)



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## ECFA Member Stats on Cash Giving














Years Analyzed	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018
Year-to-year change in cash giving by ECFA members (inflation-adjusted)	-2.6%	4.2%	-1.5%	4.3%	5.4%	3.4%	2.1%	0.9%	2.8%	-0.6%
5-year average	2.0%					1.7%				
10-year average	1.8%									
Number of ECFA members represented	1,148	1,360	1,481	1,634	1,525	1,550	1,816	1,842	1,807	1,940
Total cash donations represented, in billions for most recent of the two compared years	\$8.9	\$9.4	\$9.8	\$10.9	\$11.7	\$12.2	\$12.3	\$12.6	\$13.2	\$13.9

## Cash Giving by ECFA Members Compared to Other Benchmarks

Years Analyzed	2008-2009	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	10-Year Avg.
Year-to-year change in cash giving by ECFA members (inflation-adjusted)	-2.6%	4.2%	-1.5%	4.3%	5.4%	3.4%	2.1%	0.9%	2.8%	-0.6%	1.8%
Wage growth <sup>1</sup>	-0.7%	-2.6%	-1.5%	-0.2%	3.5%	-1.5%	5.1%	3.1%	1.4%	0.9%	0.8%
Giving rate by <i>all sources</i> to all charities <sup>2</sup>	-8.0%	3.2%	0.4%	9.2%	-1.5%	5.8%	5.0%	4.2%	4.9%	-1.7%	2.2%
Giving rate by <i>all individuals</i> to all charities <sup>3</sup>	-5.7%	1.9%	-0.3%	11.9%	-2.2%	2.4%	4.8%	4.2%	3.5%	-3.4%	1.7%
GDP growth <sup>4</sup>	-2.5%	2.6%	1.6%	2.2%	1.8%	2.5%	2.9%	1.6%	2.2%	2.9%	1.8%
Stock market growth <sup>5</sup>	23.5%	12.8%	0.0%	13.4%	29.6%	11.4%	-0.7%	9.5%	19.4%	-6.2%	11.3%














Footnotes are all on page 9.

## Percentage Increase of Cash Giving to ECFA Members by Type of Ministry

Organizational Segment (ranked by highest to lowest for recent year)		Most Recent Year: 2017-2018	Previous Year: 2016-2017	5 Years: 2013-2018
	Community Development	<b>26.6%</b>	9.6%	11.0%
	Camps and Conferences	<b>23.1%</b>	1.0%	7.2%
	Medical, Dental and Health Services	<b>11.9%</b>	9.6%	8.4%
	Student/Youth	<b>9.3%</b>	3.8%	7.2%
	Associations	<b>9.2%</b>	-1.1%	6.3%
	Adoption	<b>8.4%</b>	2.1%	13.2%
	Children's Home and Orphan Care	<b>8.2%</b>	-8.3%	2.0%
	Publishing*	<b>7.4%</b>	-12.0%	0.8%
	Pregnancy Resource Center	<b>6.3%</b>	6.7%	5.4%
	Child Sponsorship*	<b>5.8%</b>	0.5%	5.4%
	Prison	<b>2.3%</b>	-5.6%	1.2%
	Bible Study*	<b>2.0%</b>	-0.1%	1.3%
	Media	<b>1.9%</b>	1.4%	1.6%

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Organizational Segment (ranked by highest to lowest for recent year)	Most Recent Year: 2017-2018	Previous Year: 2016-2017	5 Years: 2013-2018
 Education: Higher Ed	1.5%	-2.7%	0.3%
 Individual Churches	0.5%	5.0%	3.7%
 Missions: International	-0.7%	-7.4%	0.2%
 Rescue Missions	-0.9%	3.9%	2.3%
 Missions: Domestic*	-1.4%	5.8%	1.0%
 Evangelism	-2.7%	9.1%	3.8%
 Alcohol/Drug Rehabilitation	-3.1%	-1.3%	1.0%
 Missions: Short-Term*	-3.6%	-6.4%	2.9%
 Other (many different ministries)**	-5.2%	1.6%	8.4%
 Education: K-12	-6.5%	10.0%	8.3%
 Relief and Development	-6.9%	11.6%	2.7%
 Leadership Training	-7.1%	-0.6%	4.6%
 Church Denominations	-11.1%	12.4%	0.1%

**Note:** All percentages have been adjusted for inflation.

\*Ministry types consisting of 20 ministries or less.

\*\*“Other” consists of ECFA ministry types that do not have a sufficient number of members to list separately on this report. They include: Advocacy, Apologetics, Art, Aviation, Bible Distribution, Bible Training, Bible Translation, Bible Museums, Chaplaincy, Children’s Ministry, Church Planting, Conflict Resolution, Counseling, Disability, Discipleship, Education: Home School, Education: Special , Education: Youth, Environment, Conservation, Family and Children Services, Financial Services, Foundations, Human Trafficking, Legal Services, Literary Program, Marriage, Family, Men’s Ministry, Military Outreach, Ministry Training, Consulting, Pastoral Support, Prayer, Public Policy, Education, Senior Care, Sports, Stewardship Services, Support Services, and Women’s Ministry.



## Changes in Cash Giving by Ministry Size (All Ministries Except Churches)

Annual Revenue	Most Recent Year: 2017-2018	Previous Year: 2016-2017	5 Years: 2013-2018
\$50 million and higher	-3.1%	3.9%	3.9%
\$25 up to \$49.99 million	4.9%	1.2%	2.7%
\$10 up to \$24.99 million	3.2%	0.6%	3.7%
\$5 up to \$9.99 million	6.1%	-0.3%	3.5%
\$1 up to \$4.99 million	1.2%	2.3%	1.9%
Less than \$1 million	-2.5%	-5.4%	-0.9%
All	-0.7%	2.7%	3.5%

**Note:** All percentages have been adjusted for inflation.

## Changes in Giving By Church Size

Annual Revenue	Most Recent Year: 2017-2018	Previous Year: 2016-2017	5 Years: 2013-2018
\$25 million and higher	3.0%	7.3%	6.5%
\$10 up to \$24.99 million	0.8%	4.3%	2.6%
\$5 up to \$9.99 million	-1.1%	5.9%	-0.1%
\$1 up to \$4.99 million	-5.9%	-0.7%	-2.1%
Less than \$1 million	-1.3%	-1.1%	-3.5%
All	0.5%	5.0%	3.7%

**Note:** All percentages have been adjusted for inflation.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Real median income in the United States, CPI adjusted dollars (source: US Census Bureau).

<sup>2</sup> Giving rate comes from Giving USA, givingusa.org which tracks giving to all charities. This row reflects changes in the total giving from all sources: corporations, foundations, bequests and individuals.

<sup>3</sup> Giving rate comes from Giving USA, givingusa.org which tracks giving to all charities. Categories of giving include religion (consistently the largest category, typically about one third of total individual giving), education, human services, health, the arts, and more.

<sup>4</sup> Gross Domestic Product (GDP) is the market value of all the goods and services produced in a country in a particular time period.

<sup>5</sup> Historic annual returns for the S&P 500 (the stock market index that tracks stocks of 500 large-cap US companies).

### Research Team

Warren Bird, Ph.D., Vice President of Research and Equipping, served as project manager. Dan Busby, ECFA President, contributed guidance and expertise. Kim Sandretzky, Executive Vice President, managed all aspects of production. Katie Peyton, Compliance Associate, oversaw all data integration. Travis Huntsman, Graphic Designer, created the layout.



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## 10 Ways ECFA Supports Your Ministry as an Accredited Member

- 1 Increasing donor confidence through proudly displaying ECFA's seal of financial integrity on your website and giving materials.
- 2 Strengthening your stewardship through the annual ECFA accreditation renewal and other specialized compliance reviews.
- 3 Informing you of the latest news and trends affecting ministries with the weekly Pulse eNews and monthly podcasts.
- 4 Offering continuing education through highly practical, 1-hour webinars throughout the year.
- 5 Sending you fresh research and benchmarking specific to your ministry's needs.
- 6 Providing real-time compensation benchmarking data for key nonprofit leadership roles.
- 7 Pointing potential volunteers and donors to your ministry through ServantMatch®.
- 8 Identifying new opportunities for growth through online self-assessments.
- 9 Advocating for your religious freedom and interests on Capitol Hill.
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