

Donations to faith groups decline for second year

by [Lauren Markoe](#) in the [July 25, 2012](#) issue

Post-recession America is beginning to open its wallet to charities again but is not giving as generously to religious institutions.

While charitable donations from individuals rose nearly 4 percent overall in 2011, according to the annual *Giving USA* report, donations to houses of worship and other religious bodies dropped by 1.7 percent—a decrease for the second year in a row.

The report, compiled by the Indiana University Center on Philanthropy and released June 19, shows that individual Americans gave nearly \$218 billion last year, \$96 billion of which went to religious organizations.

The proportion of the charitable donations going to religious groups has been falling steadily for decades, said Robert Evans, of Giving USA's editorial review board.

Evans offered several reasons for the decline, including increased competition from a proliferating number of nonreligious organizations, a decrease in church attendance and a general lack of sophistication within religious institutions regarding fund-raising.

"Clergy in America have not been sufficiently trained as CEOs of institutions to be comfortable and conversant with contemporary fund-raising technology and techniques," he said.

The report shows that charitable giving is a priority for Americans, said Eileen Heisman, CEO of National Philanthropic Trust. "People were giving even during the lowest points of the recession, but as we make an economic rebound, donors feel more comfortable gifting their dollars—especially when they support a cause or organization that's important to them." —RNS