

Keeping in Contact

Lisa Goetze

Our church gatherings will continue to fluctuate between meeting in-person and connecting virtually for some time to come. While practice can make perfect, it also makes for giving new things a try and tweaking to see what works for your community. Here are some ideas to support church connections:

1. **Create small touchpoints.** Meaningful connections often happen when we're in more intimate settings, so don't worry that your entire community can't get together all at the same time in one place.
 - **Park pop-ups.** A park pop-up allows folks to show up and use an outdoor space however they want: use the playground, bring a ball to kick around, lounge on a picnic blanket. This is great because most public spaces allow for smaller gatherings such as this without a permit. Rally a few leaders to host these in a regular rhythm in your area for low-program, high-relationship connection times for all ages.
 - **Takeout Tuesdays.** Because who doesn't love an alliteration! Encourage your community to pick up their favorite takeout meal and meet at a public space to enjoy with others. These not only help local restaurants but also give your church a chance to meet up in a relaxed setting. Consider a tail-gate-style parking lot picnic.
 - **Viewing parties.** If your church is sharing its Sunday service by video live or after the fact, encourage people to host small gatherings to watch it together.
2. **Use several lines of communication.** I personally can get stuck on just one mode of communication. Other times (cough cough—frequently), I avoid the less-comfortable-to-me ways of communicating. But good news: You can share the load!
 - **One is not done.** We cannot assume that sharing a piece of information or a greeting once will land for everyone. It often takes a person hearing something three times to let it click and sink in.
3. **Share spiritual practices.**
 - **Use multiple platforms.** Broaden your communication of the same message across different platforms. Think Sunday in-person verbal announcement, email, and engaging stories via social media posts.
 - **Phone calls are golden.** You might enjoy it, or someone else in your community may love cold-calling simply to check in with people. This also ensures that people who have fewer tech devices are being reached.
 - **Feed yourself and others at the same time.** Jesus' directive to feed his sheep (our people!) includes ourselves. Find ways for the spiritual practices you share with others to feed your soul too. Maybe you are exploring contemplative prayer, for example; invite your church to practice it as well.
 - **Printable booklets.** A print-at-home option is nice for those people who like to have their hands on a hard copy of writing. And you likely don't need to re-create the wheel—reuse content your church has used in the past for special weeks in the church calendar, or search online for prayer practices to share.
 - **Live on social media or watch later.** This works well as a follow-up to the above ideas. Instagram Live and others are beginner-level friendly when trying out how to share videos. Give it a try. See who tunes in, and make the videos available to watch later. Suggest prompts for viewers to share their prayers in the comments.
4. **Support families and kids.** The way you incorporate families into the above ideas goes a long way in caring for them. Beyond that, consider these options as well:
 - Provide online resources for families that they can print at home.
 - Shoulder-tap point people to pick up resources and share items with families. Not only does this get the items into families' homes, but it also creates an in-person connection at the same time.



Lisa Goetze is passionate about helping people embrace their path in life, even if it's not the one they'd planned or expected. She also *attempts* to keep daily rhythms of spiritual practices to stay aware of what God is doing in her own life and in those around her. Lisa is happiest with a coffee in hand and sand between her toes. She is a pastor at The Meeting House Oakville.