WHOLE
CHURCH

DEVELOPING A WELL-ROUNDED CHURCH

SOLUTION GUIDE

The ministry ideas, how-to tips, and advice you need to develop a well-rounded church.
PLUS... how our software, Realm® can help you achieve this ministry goal.

realm®

Our Goal Is To Help You Have Real Ministry Impact

Website
Videos
Blogs
General Info

Consulting Team
Software & equipment specialists
Custom plan providers
Launch specialists

Ministry Guides
Solution Guides
Product Guides
You Are Here

Industry Leading Customer Service
Phone & email support
Knowledgeable
Always available
Optional 24/7 support

Ideas to Impact Conference
Ministry ideas
Practical implementation techniques
Peer-sharing

On-site/Off-site Training Services
Instructor-led
Self-paced
Local user groups

With nearly four decades of experience in providing services and software to churches of all sizes throughout the world, ACS Technologies has learned a lot. We've collected data, gained vital information, and received thousands of first hand testimonials on best practices and methods that effectively help ministries the most.

This knowledge is the basis for our free ministry guides like the one you're reading right now. We also offer a whole lot of other services, making us the world's largest provider of ministry solutions to churches.

We know everyone needs a little help sometimes. That's why we are providing advice, examples, tips, and information to help you turn your ideas into real ministry impact — that's what we mean when we say "Ideas to Impact."

It is our aim to assist in strengthening how you're currently doing church in providing an alternative to your current efforts. Whichever the case may be, it's our goal to be a trusted resource for how you're serving God.

There are a bunch of ways we can help, and the visual aid on this page outlines ways we can connect with you and help strengthen your ministry.

Thank you for downloading this ministry guide. It is our hope that the knowledge included can help empower you and grow your ministry the right way.

If you're interested in learning more or taking the next step for your ministry, you'll find our contact information at end of this guide.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEVELOPING A WELL-ROUNDED WHOLE CHURCH

Member Profiles   Attendance & Check-in   Communication & Community

Groups & Teams   Events   Dashboards & Reports   Finances

realm

INTRODUCTION

FOCUS, FOCUS, FOCUS.

That seems to be the buzzword of the decade. You hear things like, *"Good is the enemy of great,"* and, *"Only do what you can do well."* And it gets you thinking, "How do I know what to prioritize in ministry? How could we possibly only do what we're good at and still support all the life and operations of our church?"

There is truth to the sentiment that **specialization and focus hold value.** Certainly you want to staff your church with people who serve particular functions that they're great at. After all, the Apostle Paul reminds us that not everyone can be the hand, or the eye, or the nose. But for a church as a whole, there is no getting around the reality that there are just some things you can't do without. In fact, most church leaders are much more accustomed to wearing multiple hats on a daily basis than specializing in just one area.

Every church is unique. Each with its own calling and its own giftedness, as made up by the individual members of it. God puts certain churches in just the right place for a particular purpose. Churches should embrace their God-given uniqueness. But when you're trying to serve a multi-generational and multi-cultural community in a multi-faceted way, you can't avoid the fact that...

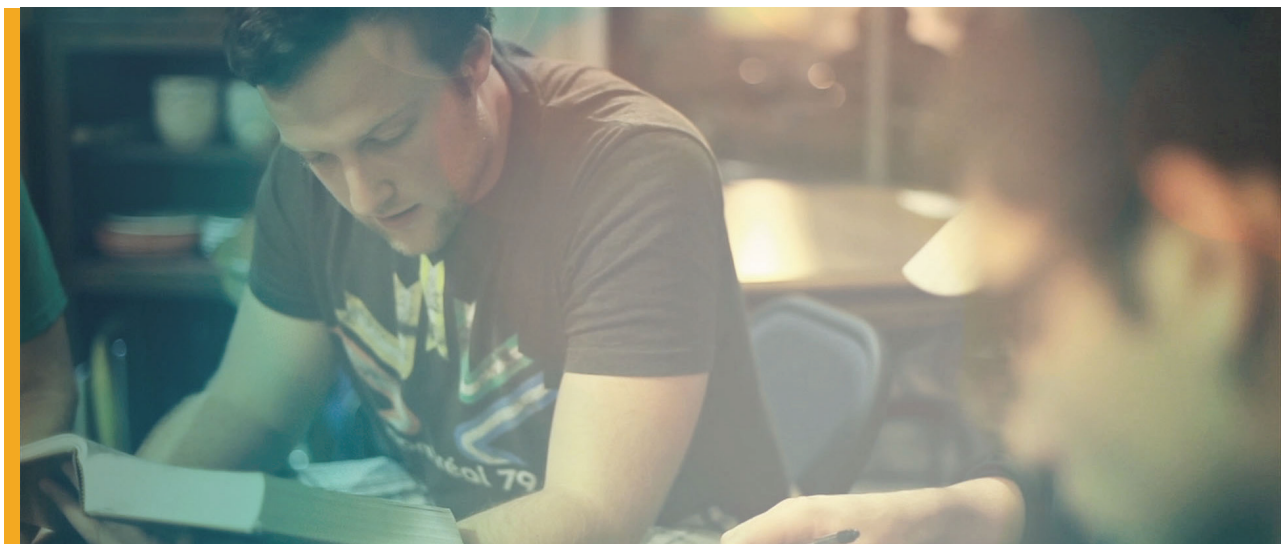## CHURCHES HAVE TO BE GOOD AT A LOT TO MAKE IT ALL WORK.

You can't just do worship services. You can't only do small groups. It's not possible to exist as a church if you solely put on special events. Managing data and making sermons are not the only function of the church staff. Nor is cultivating community, developing generosity, communicating clearly, or running a great kid's ministry. The truth is, you have to do it all, and you have to do it well.

SOUND DAUNTING?

It is. And if you've been in church leadership for any more than a day, you know just how difficult it can be to hold it all together, do it better, and continue to make disciples and do real ministry.

Not to worry, we've developed this guide to show you how - with the right tools and proper approach - you can develop all the important functions your church needs to serve your community, grow, reach more people, make better disciples, and expand the Kingdom.

We hope the information we present will help your church be all that it needs to fulfill the unique purpose God has called you to.

GROW, REACH MORE PEOPLE, MAKE BETTER DISCIPLES, EXPAND THE KINGDOM.

WHAT A CHURCH NEEDS

The following sections represent the overarching needs of most churches. The expressions of each can - and probably should - look different from church to church. Nonetheless, these foundational components and functions need to be an integral part of any modern-day church that wants to expand its reach and serve its people.

Keeping track of all the happenings in your church is difficult. From finances to communication and from groups to assimilation, it all matters and it all needs to work together. When a church has to manage multiple solutions, information gets lost, time and energy that could be spent on more meaningful endeavors is wasted on unnecessary tasks, and people lose connection.

It's time for you to get all your community, accounting, administration, and more, in one place so your church can:

- Develop community, on and off line
- Establish and manage assimilation and discipleship pathways
- Communicate with and manage members and groups
- Keep accurate personal, financial, and church records
- Gain key insights from robust reports and dashboards
- Manage individual and team tasks and responsibilities
- Empower leaders and staff to do real ministry in real time

Another important consideration for online solutions is the ease-of-use. When all your people can access the parts that pertain to them, it helps people stay connected and gives leaders more vital information about member and volunteer participation. From managing their own profiles, registering for events, updating giving records, group communication, and more; when you're people are all connected on a single platform it creates space for a healthy, connected, well-functioning Body.

realm

ASSIMILATION & DISCIPLESHIP

These cousins are two sides of the same coin. And you could probably throw in spiritual formation and leadership development as kith and kin. Why? Because they all have one thing in common: the goal of moving people from where they are to where they need to be. The content may change, and the nuance in approach will differ. But the fundamentals stay the same. Namely, educating, motivating, and empowering people to take their next step.

Just think of the similarities. People need to know where they are, where they're going, and what they have to do next to continue on the journey. It's true of visitors, disciples, leaders, and anyone looking to grow in their faith. It doesn't matter if the content of the curriculum is a visitor's information card with ways to plug in, an assignment, a manual, a meeting, a Bible study, or a book. Every good assimilation and discipleship plan should involve:

- Clear next steps for every person to take
- Information related to teaching people how to take that step
- Communication about where they are in the process
- One or more leaders to walk the person through each step
- A way to track progress, provide prompts, and move people along

Realm gives churches the perfect tool for creating a system that encompasses everything you need to put a plan in place and carry it out. Pathways is a feature that empowers leaders and staff to create completely customizable next steps for every person assigned to that Pathway. Whether it's a volunteer following up with an assimilation step, or a disciple taking their own step toward spiritual growth, the processes and applications that Pathways enables is truly revolutionary. Now, instead of wondering where people are in their journey, and more importantly, if they are getting the guidance they need, you can rest assured that your church is doing all it can to offer world-class assimilation and discipleship programs for your people.

GROUPS & TEAMS

Most of what is done in church is done in the context of community. We learn from one another, serve together, meet each other's needs, and have fun collectively. God designed his Church to be a pluralistic group of people, in a covenant community, together. As churches grow, they find a need to meet in smaller groups, serve teams, or special projects coalitions. Groups are a place to grow in faith, share more personal experiences, build friendships, connect, and accomplish more together than we could alone.

The ideological advocacy and support for groups is well understood in most churches. We get it, groups are important. But managing groups - communication, locations, meeting times, and community - is not always the easiest task. In some cases, it's preferable to be a cat herder than a small groups or ministry teams leader. The reason for the difficulty is often because people, even in the same group, communicate differently, have varying expectations, and get involved in differing capacities. And sometimes, people just don't know about what's going on in groups.

To ensure that everyone in your church, and in particular groups, knows how to get involved, what's expected of them, and all the other group-related information you need to keep track of, you'll need a system that:

- Organizes and lists groups by name and category
- Allows for private and public group settings (especially important for teams)
- Identifies leaders and provides varying posting permissions
- Fosters communication within the group
- Provides group details and participation information

Groups in Realm can be organized into larger "ministry areas" to accommodate virtually any church structure. So you might make a ministry area called "small groups" where you have all your public groups that meet on a regular basis. You could also organize ministry or leadership teams into a different ministry area that contains private groups with specific functions. However you want to arrange it, you'll have an organized way to see, participate in, and structure groups.

Every group has the ability to toggle privacy, permission, and communication settings that allows churches to interact within groups, however they best see fit. Basically, all your groups and teams can function in the way that's best for them, and best for your church, supported by a flexible, easy-to-navigate, and intuitive platform.

FINANCES

Receiving and tracking donations for churches have gone through a lot of changes with the advent of technology. Never before have there been more ways to engage in a financial transaction. People are increasingly willing to transact online, with a credit card, or using their mobile device via text or app. Nothing indicates that the plethora of options that exists is going to change anytime soon.

Churches need giving and accounting solutions that provide as many options as possible for their members to give. Studies show that churches who enable online giving see an increase in overall donations as well as an increase in consistency. Think about it, if someone who normally pays by check doesn't come to church on a particular Sunday, they'll likely not make up for what they would've given. But, if they have an option to give online - or better yet - set up recurring giving - they'll faithfully and automatically continue with their generosity.
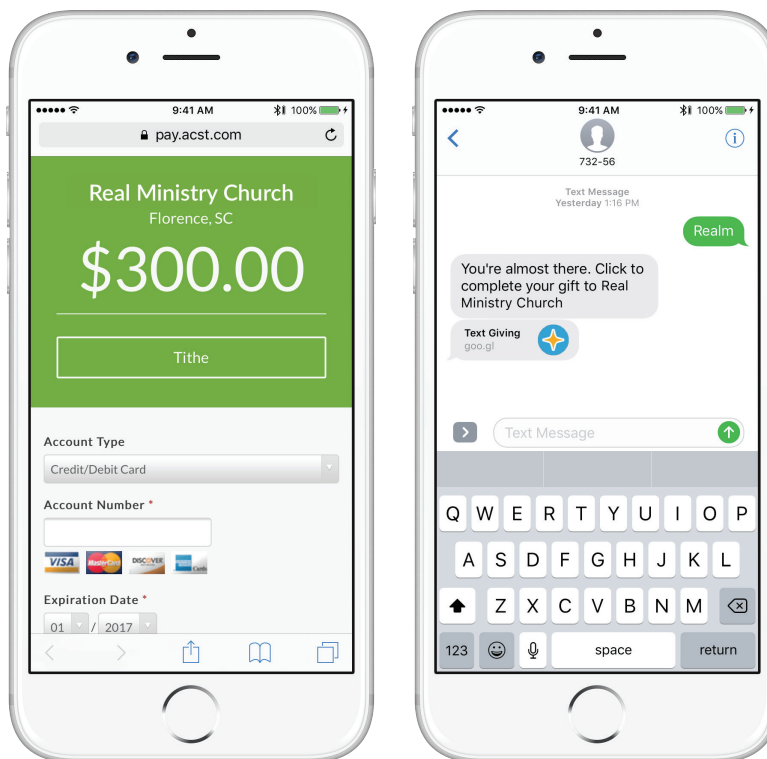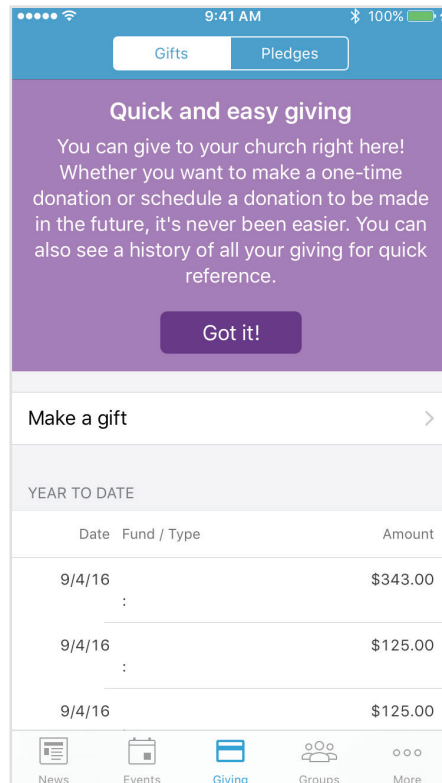
One problem many churches face is the disconnect between their various platforms. One handles web giving, another text-to-give, another manages accounting, and from their ChMS or other database they track records. It can be a nightmare to import, export, copy, paste, and stare at a screen trying to reconcile all these systems. It also increases possibility for error.

Having all your eGiving, accounting, and member profiles in one place saves time and protects against mistakes. A good, comprehensive church financial system should have:

- Multiple options for receiving and tracking donations
- Synchronization between receipts and member records
- Giving and accounting all on the same system
- The ability to designate specific funds and set up recurring giving plans
- Automated report generation and records management

Integrated eGiving is a new approach for churches that pairs powerful online giving solutions with accounting, and a best-in-class ChMS - Realm. Whether your donors are giving by check, cash, text, mobile app, or website, all that information flows into Realm where it's then recorded not only in donor giving records, but also in your accounting system, keeping all your financial records in one place. The benefits of taking a comprehensive approach to financial management are numerous and include: increases in giving, increases in consistency, saving time, better budgeting, and the ability to empower your people to proper biblical stewardship.

ONLINE GIVING SOLUTIONS
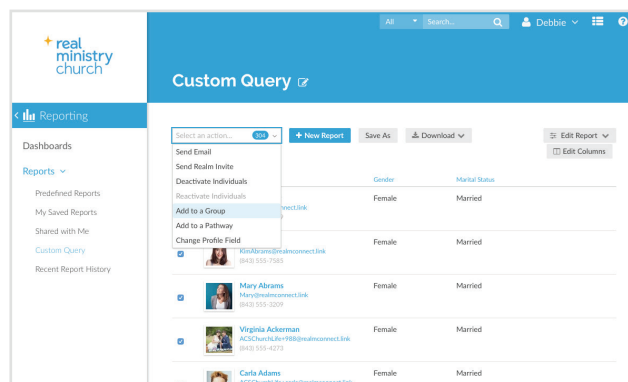
COMMUNICATION & COMMUNITY

While not exactly the same thing, community and communication go hand-in-hand. Communication is required to build community, and community drives more and better communication. Consider a group of friends. The closer they are, the more they meet and the better they communicate. And groups that are bad at communication typically lack as robust of a community. Good communication not only builds community, it increases engagement, empowers people for discipleship, and spreads the message for growth.

Creating an engaging community or communities in your church demands good communication. So, it stands to reason that online community and groups need an online vehicle to carry the message. If you want to create lasting and integrated community in your church, you have to establish ways for your people to get to know each other and to share stories, prayer requests, and needs. They need to have a safe place to interact in whatever ways that are associated with their involvement in your church.

There is no way to monitor, create, or control all the communication that happens in your church. People are free to call, text, and email each other or have private conversations and get-togethers. That's a good thing. But you can foster greater community by modeling it and communicating about it using best practices. To get the word out for all that is happening at your church, to provide a way for people in your community to interact, and to increase the overall effectiveness of both your communication and community, you'll need a solution that gives you the tools to:

- Target communication to particular people, groups, or audiences
- Get out messages to your entire church
- Provide reminders and notifications to people based on their involvement
- Allow members to communicate in a safe online environment
- Post announcements and updates

Realm was built with community in mind. It provides an online context for communication of all kinds. From alerts to announcements, and from targeted emails to messages on group walls, Realm helps churches develop greater community and growth through better communication.
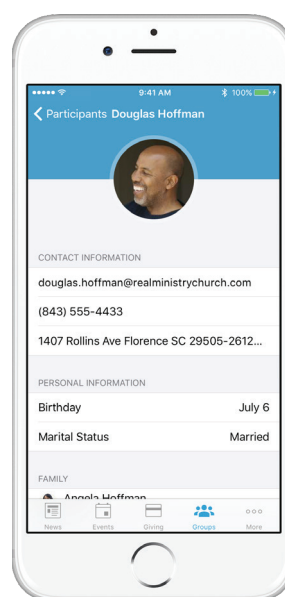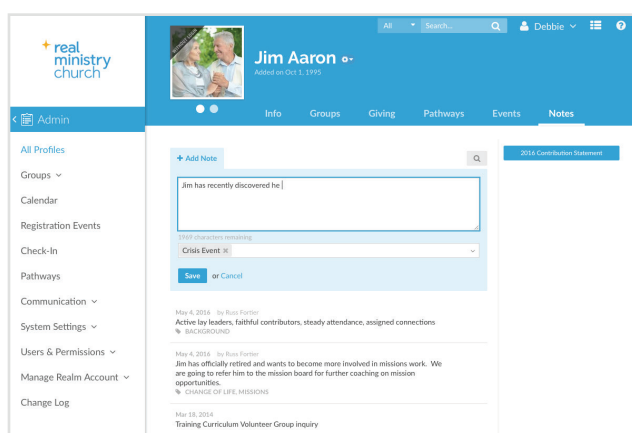
PROFILES

What do you know about the people in your church? Can you tell with certainty the last time they joined a group, made a donation, attended a class, began a discipleship process, or got baptized? What are their names, their kids' names, their ages, their struggles, their unique situations? How will you lead them if you don't know them? As churches grow, it becomes harder and harder to understand the individual people who make up the body of your church. That makes it harder to understand your church, its health, and the way forward.

Member profiles might seem like a small thing, but when properly utilized, they're invaluable. They give you insights into the history of your people's involvement. They help you get to know them. They record events and other pertinent details. And most importantly, they help church leaders and staff know how to reach out, lead, and serve the people. What's more, profiles aren't just for staff. If you have the right system powering your profile database, it will also help the people in your church get to know one another better by providing an easily-accessible online directory. You profile management system should give you the ability to:

- Create custom fields so your staff can track what's most important to your church
- Keep confidential information secure by providing multiple viewer permission settings
- Import data from your existing system to save time and maintain data integrity
- Allow members to update their information on their own on web or mobile devices
- Connect your people through a church directory with pictures and profile information

Profiles on Realm not only do all of the above, they also sync with donor records, church involvement, groups, and communication. Basically, everything you need to know about your people, you'll know. And you'll be able to see it all from one cloud-based solution that you can access from any device.
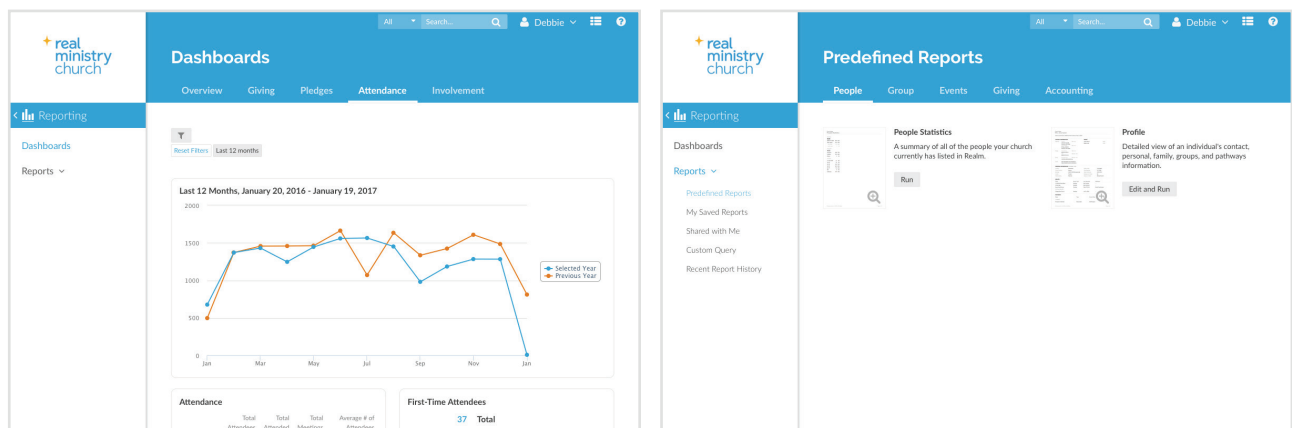
DASHBOARDS & REPORTS

Churches need a holistic view of the health and activity of their church. From community life to daily operations, there is a lot happening in any given church across the country. Access to information is vital for church leaders seeking to understand their data and then take actionable steps to improve their ministry efforts. But what good is data if you can't comprehend it?

Most of the time, ministry leaders in growing churches are strapped for time. And often, the staff is too busy to compute attendance, giving, and participation numbers.

A two-fold approach is the best bet for providing actionable intel to church leaders. The first thing leaders and staff need is quick access to a snapshot of overall church participation. This develops into an ongoing understanding of the workings of the church. With that high-level information on the top of their minds, leaders and staff can constantly operate under the knowledge of all the goings-on at your church. Secondarily, churches need the ability to drill down into more granular statistics. Not only for their own analysis, but also to help members get a better picture of their own level of involvement. Whether it be their current place on a discipleship plan or an update on their year-to-date giving records; knowing how members are currently involved helps both leaders and disciples move forward with ministry.

By providing high-level, semi-customizable dashboard views, Realm delivers important information to leaders and staff in a consumable, understandable format that helps them make sound decisions. In providing more detailed reports related to specific ministry areas and member involvement, Realm gives both leaders and members the opportunity to gauge their level of participation and their discipleship progress to spur them on to deeper commitment, ultimately leading to ministry growth and greater success.

EVENTS

It could be argued that every time a group of church-goers come together in a planned way, it's an event. Sunday mornings, bible study, small groups, classes, outreach, service, fellowship: all opportunities to have an event together. It's for this reason that good event management is so important to churches. As churches work hard to "not give up meeting together" (Hebrews 10:25) there are things that must be done to ensure that the most people, and in some cases, the right people, are present at gatherings.

It's kind of simple, really. All events, small or large, need a few core components to get off the ground. All events need:

- A way to plan and organize the details
- A date, time, and location on a calendar
- Promotion to get the word out about the event
- Some idea of who and how many will be coming
- Reminders and follow up notifications

Realm powers better and bigger events by giving churches the tools to plan and pull-off great gatherings. It lends attendees the ability to self-register for events; which has the added benefit of letting leaders see who's coming. People can check-in on the Connect app, invite lists of people, and coordinate all the little details. All events are housed in a church-wide calendar, keeping everything organized and visible. And, reminders and notifications can be controlled to keep people apprised of what's coming up next. If you're a church, you do events. If you do events, Realm will help you do them better.

IF YOU DO EVENTS, REALM WILL HELP YOU DO THEM BETTER.
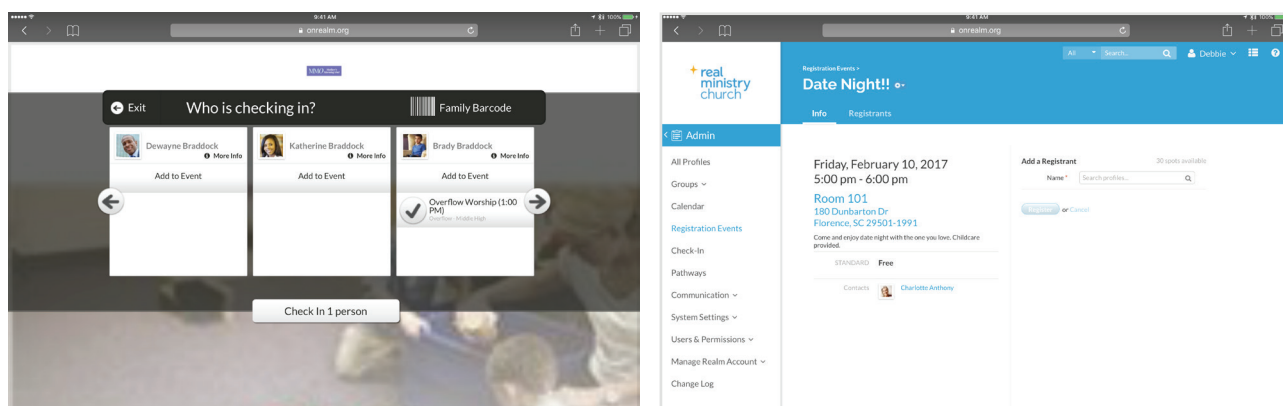
ATTENDANCE & CHECK-IN

Whether you're shrinking or growing, knowing who's coming and going, how often, and in what frequency can be a powerful thing. Sure, some might say it's not necessarily "about the numbers". But it kinda is. After all, aren't churches supposed to reach people for Christ? More than that, knowing the numbers helps leaders understand how people are involved and what improvements or adjustments need to be made to their ministries.

Employing an attendance tracking and check-in system is the best way to consistently and accurately track who's present, and who's skipping. Even better, it helps you understand a little more about the people who are there. This is especially important when talking about small groups and kids church. For example, it might help a group leader know that John Doe is coming to group, but that he has a peanut allergy, so maybe it'd be better to hold off on the peanut butter bars that were planned for snack.

When it comes to kids church, knowing details about the kids - or babies - gives teachers the tools to meet the needs and expectations of both kids and parents. This puts parents at ease, knowing that while they are in service, their kids are tended to properly. Another benefit of a check-in system - and one that is of utmost importance - is security. Parents want to know that their kids are in good hands, with teachers who understand their needs, and that no one other than themselves, or someone they designate, are able to check out their kids; because it's all being managed by a reliable automated system.

With Realm, your church can:
- Centrally setup and manage all your check-in kiosks
- Allow people to check into groups and events
- Give parents the ability to check in their kids and provide care details
- Offer a safe and secure check-in process with sticker labels
- Run attendance reports and view activity in real time

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

If you've made it this far, you've learned a lot about what your church needs in a ministry software solution across multiple areas of ministry. But there's more to it than just meeting certain needs and checking off the boxes. As we said when we started this guide, churches have to do more than just one thing. A church is a multi-faceted organism with many moving parts, making it difficult to keep everything together in a cohesive way. That is where the real power of Realm comes in. Unlike other solutions, Realm powers every aspect of the life and operations of your church, from a single database that can be accessed from any device of your choosing. Sitting at your desk or on the go, with Realm, you have access to all your records, all church participation, contact info, giving and accounting, discipleships, events, and so much more.

Your church needs a solution that keeps your people involved, empowers leaders, facilitates discipleship, and moves your ministry forward.

Now you can save time and energy by opting out of piecing together a conglomerate of solutions and opting in to a single, powerful church ministry software that pulls it all together.

DO IT ALL. DO IT BETTER. DO IT WITH REALM.

Real ideas for
real ministry impact.

This guide is brought to you courtesy of ACS Technologies. We're excited to share more information with you about our new ministry tool, Realm.

Realm offers something for everyone in your church. It is a totally new type of church ministry software that combines administration, accounting, and community into one system. It also connects your entire church and personalizes each person's involvement in your ministry.

People in your church and on staff will love Realm. They can access it online or from their phones whenever they want. It's quick, user-friendly, and simple to get started. Plus, we've got a dedicated team to make it a smooth transition and guide you the rest of the way.

realm®

Administration
· Track what impacts your ministry
· Modernize church giving
· Host organized events
· Know who's coming and going
· Generate insightful reports

Accounting
· Organize your finances
· Maintain vendor relationships
· Pay bills and write checks
· Reconcile your accounts
· Plan and monitor budgets

Community
· Put names to faces
· Connect people in smaller groups
· Facilitate communication
· Shepherd people through life
· Grow your outreach potential

Three easy ways to learn how Realm can help your church:

1 Attend: You're invited to attend a live Realm demo. Just pick the day and time that's best for you
   realmchurch.com/demo

2 Watch: Take a quick look into Realm. Visit **realmchurch.com**

3 Talk: Ask us anything. We're here to help.
   Call 1 (800) 736 -7425 or email solutions@acstechnologies.com

Powered by the people of **ACSTechnologies**®

Family owned
for 40 years

#1 rated
in service

Nearly 50,000
churches served

Over 400 staff
ready to serve

Best place
to work