

HYBRID **CHURCH**

**TOTALLY
FAMILIAR**

**ENTIRELY
DIFFERENT**



In the last 20 years, the Church has been throwing around the phrase “Both/And” ad nauseam. The Church has appropriately realized its call to all while corporate books and personal improvement topics concentrate on focus, on specialization, on the niche.

Andy Stanley puts it like this, “In leadership, there are always problems to be solved and tensions to be managed.” (Emphasis our own.)

We face a new tension while the “Both/And” crowd would highlight the tensions between the inward community and outreach, or leadership development and attendance growth, or facility budget vs ministry budget.

Amid a global pandemic, anxiety, and polarization, Church leaders must manage the tension between in-person gatherings and virtual connections. We must manage that tension well to provide a healthy environment of spiritual growth and relationship when people need it most.

We created this guide to help church leaders develop a hybrid approach to ministry that reaches people where they are and brings people together. It will help you overcome the hurdles that 2020 has made unavoidable but that have probably needed to be addressed for years. How can your church expand ministry, help people, and reach new heights amid the most challenging season you’ve ever faced? Read on to find out.

Reallocating Focus

It's time to take an assessment of the tactics and approaches to ministry that have always yielded results in the past to see if they still have application for today. What has worked that is now struggling? What was your "main thing" but now seems like an impossible task? What defined your ministry and how does it need to be redefined?

To create a successful hybrid approach to ministry, you'll need to be okay with diverting some focus from the tried and true and allocating some energy to the entirely new.

Effective ministry beyond 2020 will require a new mindset. One that gives permission for church leaders and the people you serve to think outside the box. Even more, you'll need a mindset that gives permission to reallocate budget, human resources, and mental and emotional energy to new things.

In other words, you'll need to learn how to divert your focus from your favorite aspects of church to new approaches to ministry. At the same time, you can't abandon what people have grown to know and love about your unique call in your community.

Only your church can play the part you've been given by God in your city. But you might need to envision a new way to play that part.

TOTALLY FAMILIAR

The first step toward reallocating focus is to determine your non-negotiables. What are the things that make your church unique? What ministry expressions do you have that define who you are in your community? Don't abandon your values. Don't change your ethos. Don't forsake your call.

A change in approach is not a change in purpose.

In fact, right now your people need you to press into the things that have given them growth, comfort, and hope. The reasons they're part of your church in the first place. They need to be reassured that even though the world around them may seem like it's falling apart, their church is still there for them, God is still moving, and the familiar things they've come to know and love aren't going anywhere.

Keep a focus on the principles and values that have shaped your ministry. But be willing to express those principles and values in adaptable ways that will hit new targets in an ever-changing field of fire.

ENTIRELY DIFFERENT

God is unchanging. And yet, He's changed His tactics over the years. He works with His people. He responds, adapts, and fulfills His purposes in a variety of ways. He can heal a blind man by speaking to him or by spitting on him. He can lead a nation with a king or influence nations through the King of kings. God's approach adapts to people and circumstances. So should ours.

The key here is to listen to the wisdom of your grandparents. Don't throw the baby out with the bathwater.

As you think through all the ways your church can adapt, hold onto the non-negotiables. Then, re-envision how those principles and values can be expressed in ways you've never imagined.

You might be a relational church that needs to develop relationships online. You might be a special events-focused church that needs to redefine what a "special event" looks like. You might be a teaching church that needs to move it out of the classroom. Or you might be a serving church that finds new ways to serve.

You don't need to change who you are. You simply need to adapt how you are to reach the people around you in an ever-changing world.

Rethinking Structures

Before you get into the particulars that will really help your church shift to a hybrid approach in particular areas, you've got to think holistically.

What structural changes must you make to spend the right resources in the right areas? Think big and think small. You might have to consider big changes such as facilities and staff. Or, maybe it's just small tweaks such as rearranging teams, developing new roles, or eliminating or starting some new practices.

Don't try to nail down all the structural changes you might need to make before working through the rest of this guide. Sometimes, the answers to the questions that follow will help you double back and realize where structural shifts need to occur.

However, it will help you be honest enough with yourself and flexible enough in your mindset to make the changes you need in other areas if you first begin to envision what it might look like to structure things differently. After all, you can't fit a square peg into a round hole. So if you try to change various aspects of your ministry but aren't willing to negotiate the structures, you'll be fighting an uphill battle.

Start by asking the questions:

- What ministries or practices are holding us back?
- What efforts aren't producing results?
- What teams seem too big or too small to be effective?
- What area of our budget is poorly allocated?
- What functions do our facilities serve?
- What is getting in the way of the changes we feel called to make?

As you work through these questions, and questions of your own that are similar, you'll begin to see potential areas for change. But don't change them yet!

First, discover what needs to change; then work through particular areas of ministry to see the specifics of how those structures need to change. One step at a time.

TOTALLY FAMILIAR

When you make big, holistic changes, it can be perceived that you are abandoning important core aspects of ministry that your people have become familiar with. Sometimes that requires keeping the same language, nomenclature, and titles but reworking descriptions and applications. For example, if your in-person services have stopped or shrunk, you might not abandon your greeting team, but perhaps you could expand the roles to include online greeters, developing community on social media and online groups. Your goals are still the same. How you reach them might be different.

Be careful to tweak and retool before you discard and remove. Remember, your people need a sense of security. Try to improve and reshape your structures without pulling the rug out from under your leaders and people.

ENTIRELY DIFFERENT

Even while maintaining what's familiar at your church, you may need to make some drastic changes. You'll want to make sure that you communicate why you're doing it if you find yourself in a situation where you have to fire staff, move locations, cancel certain ministries, start new ministries, or anything you have to do to keep moving the ministry forward.

The manner in which you approach new and different things will determine how well they will be received by your people.

After you've determined what's essential to your ministry, let your leaders and people know that the reason you're making these changes is to support what's most important, not to detract from it.

Connect the dots for your people and let them see that even though big changes are on the horizon, they are being made for the right reasons.

Make changes that support your core convictions, communicate them well, and see how people will mobilize around what's different to recapture what's familiar.

Developing Community

Since the advent of modern digital technology, people have become increasingly disconnected. People have more information and less common sense. People have more communication and less connection. We live in a world where you can talk to a thousand people at once and feel totally isolated at the same time.

Ironically, technology still holds the best solutions to keep your church connected and growing together, even while technological shifts have driven people apart.

So how do you take a hybrid approach to develop community while using technology?

It starts by understanding the human need for connection. From birth, we rely on other people. We build relationships. We spend time with people we like. We develop our identities amid the identities of those around us. We are community-oriented beings. God made us that way. We can't live in bubbles, but we find ourselves in them.

Right now, it's hard for people to gather in person. And it's difficult to have meaningful interactions online. You need to find ways for people to have familiarity, camaraderie, and closeness with others, even if they can't be close physically. At present, many people simply aren't comfortable gathering with others. At the same time, many people might be willing to take the risks to gather in person. Your approach should accommodate both.

TOTALLY FAMILIAR & ENTIRELY DIFFERENT

Let's be clear. Developing community in our present reality requires a hybrid in-person and online approach. You can't neglect either. Nothing will replace a group of people being in each other's presence. But it can be supplemented. Here are some ideas to get you started as you wade into what it means to combine physical and digital community.

Groups

Your circumstance will determine which direction you'll lean into most, but we recommend offering in-person, online-only, and hybrid groups.

In-person groups are made up of those people who think the benefits of being together outweigh the current risks. You'll want to encourage these groups to maintain social distancing, follow local mandates, and consider the safety and concerns of new visitors and guests. Beyond that, it's business as usual.

Online-only groups need to be designed differently. They need to have content and materials that can be consumed by participants in digital formats. That might mean taking teaching outlines or group readings and putting them in digital forms (PDFs, videos, etc). There are two ways to let people engage in these groups when they meet: 1) Livestream to groups that are more teaching-oriented so people who aren't as comfortable with the

camera on them can still learn and grow, and 2) use a video meeting software (Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, Hangouts) to allow people to talk and engage with one another as you would in an in-person group.

Hybrid groups with in-person and online attendees might be the hardest to manage but also the most sought out. They are harder to manage because group leaders and attendees have to be conscientious of including the online participants. Also, they need technology solutions that allow online participants to have a view and a voice during group interactions. They are probably the most sought out because they give attendees the flexibility to decide week to week how they want to participate. If there is a spike in COVID-19 cases, it's easy to go online. If things settle down, some of those people can venture out and get the human interactions they crave.

All of these group structures can be supplemented by online communication tools to keep groups connected during the week, sharing experiences and growing in their faith. So, regardless of what group structures you employ, good group management and online communication tools are a must.

Events

People love getting together for a good time. We've created a dedicated guide about how to put on great events during a pandemic. You'll want to check that out. But as a general rule, more small events are better than infrequent large gatherings. Smaller events allow people to engage in more meaningful activities with less risk of spreading germs. Whenever possible, livestreaming events is a good idea. Because even if people can't show up, they can see what's happening and know that your church is still around, still engaged, and still pursuing God while you develop community.

Discover all the ways you can keep events fresh by downloading a great resource.

www.acstechnologies.com/guides/small-events-big-impact

Discipleship

It's always been hard to keep disciples on track with their growth. When meeting in person is limited, so becomes accountability - a bedrock for healthy discipleship. Whether you keep meeting with disciples and discipleship groups in person or not, it's a great idea to have a digital tool to help keep them on track.

Instead of disciplining people on the fly, you should have pre-made but customizable pathways for your disciples to take. Each one should have various steps - assignments, readings, serving, etc. - that disciples can take, with follow-up to see if and how well they've progressed.

If you can create pathways for disciples, you can help them stay accountable even if you can't follow up as well as you could if you met more frequently.

No disciple is an island unto themselves. Jesus disciplined in groups, and the disciples learned a lot by learning together. Good group communication tools will help disciples engage with the materials and assignments you've provided by allowing them to share their progress, their wins, their struggles, and their personal perspectives.

As with events and groups, you'll want to give disciples the opportunity to engage with your programs both online and in person.

Reaching New People

How do you reach people when you can't see them? Think of playing a game of hide and seek. If they can see you, you can see them. One of the ways to get people out of their shells and into your church is by staying active in the community you serve in visible ways. You have to be discoverable. More than that, you have to be obvious.

In the past, you might have been able to get away with a big sign announcing your next event or your worship service times. The assumption is that people could see what you're offering and come to you. Even before 2020, that approach had limitations. We need to be the Church in the community, not just wait for the community to come to us.

Now is the time to retool your efforts to be visible, active, and approachable.

TOTALLY FAMILIAR & ENTIRELY DIFFERENT

A lot of the ways you'd reach people are still the same. Whether it's new visitors on a Sunday morning, encountering people as you serve, or offering resources for personal and spiritual growth, people still need what you've always offered. But now, there are new ways to reach people beyond waiting for them to come to you.

Worship Services

The first part you know already. You need to be livestreaming your worship services. Stream to your own web platform (website, church management system, etc.), as well as to one or more popular social media platforms. Facebook and YouTube are the best free options.

The second part requires more consistent effort. You need to help people find you. This will require running ads on web platforms and encouraging your people to share out what your church is posting. Consistently beat the drum with your people about the importance of them sharing and inviting people to your online community.

The third part is the secret sauce. You need to have a team dedicated to actively engaging with online viewers on each of the platforms you're streaming to. Reallocate your greeting team to welcome people to the service, ask questions related to the topics being

presented, and follow up with ways for viewers to connect. Try to simulate an in-person experience online, with all the same things you might do. You could even offer \$5 gift cards to first-time online viewers so they can get some coffee on you.

To have truly hybrid worship services, you need to recreate the in-person guest experience online in as many ways as possible.

Outreach Projects

There are many ways to serve the community that don't require close physical contact. This particular section doesn't really speak to hybrid outreach events so much as outreach ideas in general, but you'll want to adapt your outreach and service projects in your overall hybrid approach.

Here are just a few ways you can get out and serve your community without compromising people's health:

- Neighborhood cleanups - pick a street, alley, or block and clean it up. Put out your signs so people know it's you doing the deeds.
- Go Christmas caroling - just stand back and belt it out.
- Serve prepackaged meals to families in need.
- Prepare backpacks with school supplies and have a drive-through pick up.
- Go shopping for the elderly and shut-ins.
- Do a free car wash. People stay in their cars.
- Have a party in the park with socially distanced games.
- Get creative! There are lots of ways to serve and reach your community.

The temptation when things get hard is to turn in and shrink back. People are hurting and they need the Church. Now is the time to reach them!

Content Marketing

Okay, maybe "marketing" isn't the best term. Maybe we could say "content evangelists"? Either way, the concept borrows from a business practice wherein companies develop free content with high value and give it to anyone who wants it.

The idea is that by offering something people need, you can begin a relationship that could lead to something more. In the case of the Church, we hope that providing good content for life and growth will help people make a connection and discover God through His church. Some ideas for content you can give away on social media and through your website are:

- Parenting tips and support
- Marriage and relationship resources
- Ways to cope with depression and anxiety
- Leadership development best practices
- Local guides for fun things to do
- New-to-the-neighborhood resources
- Anything that people in your community might be interested in!

Mobilizing Volunteers

Many churches are struggling to keep volunteers engaged. Either because they are opting out of any type of serving that involves being around other people or because they don't really have anything meaningful to do. Both of those problem birds can be killed by the same stone.

TOTALLY FAMILIAR

You've probably had teams formed and role descriptions for various jobs at your church defined for some time. If you don't have organized teams and clearly defined role descriptions with explicit expectations, you should. Volunteers need to know what's expected of them and why it matters. That's volunteer management 101. A good volunteer management system will help you further define roles, serving times, and scheduling of roles with multiple positions. This is something every church should have. But what do you do with teams and roles that are either no longer pertinent or have yet to be defined? That's right; make some changes!

ENTIRELY DIFFERENT

As you move to a hybrid approach, you'll need to do the following:

- Rework the stated purpose (and possibly rename) each team to more clearly match the new functions your teams will have.

Example: Greeting teams should have online roles as well as in-person roles.

- Redefine role descriptions for existing roles.

Example: The sound engineer might need to make two audio mixes, one for in-person and one for online.

- Create new roles based on the needs of your ministry.

Example: online service hosts could help connect participants with other activities they might like.

- Create new roles based on the preferences of your existing volunteers.

Example: A front-door greeter with fear of contracting COVID-19 might be willing to host chats during the online service.

- Create new roles based on the skills and talents of new volunteers.

Example: You might have a member who hasn't volunteered yet because the existing roles didn't suit them. But maybe there are some introverts or otherwise talented people who could find a fit in the midst of the new needs. Maybe outreach project management, content creation, or social media engagement.

People still want to be part of something that matters. The trick is finding ways your church can make a difference; then reorganize and redefine teams and roles - coupled with a good system for managing and assigning roles - and get your people back in the game!

Increasing Giving

When attendance is down and engagement has decreased, giving declines. Or so the thinking goes. Add to that the feeling of many church leaders that talking about giving when people's personal finances are stretched seems out of tune, and you have a recipe for a sharp decline in giving.

But what if there were opportunities you haven't yet seen?

Most church leaders know that campaigns geared toward a particular need also help boost overall charitable giving. This happens because, even though people are giving to something specific, God is also working on their hearts for generosity toward the church in general. This happens because people like what the church is doing specifically, so they want to support it generally as well. Great example: building campaign. When a building campaign is started, it is typical for general giving to increase as well. So what are the areas where you have a specific need that would provide an opportunity to talk about giving in a general sense?

TOTALLY FAMILIAR

It's always a good idea to reinforce the vision and calling of your church, to talk about how God is using your church to make a difference in the community. Don't ever neglect that conversation. Still, even amid a global pandemic, people need to know how your church is meeting people's spiritual, physical, and emotional needs. And as per usual, you'll want to provide easily accessible ways for people to give. Online giving has been and still is a necessity when it comes to accepting donations for the general working of the church. Keep letting your people know why giving matters and how they can bless your church.

ENTIRELY DIFFERENT

As you keep reinforcing good principles of generosity, you'll also want to find ways for regular and first-time givers to start or maintain the habit of giving. Right now there are tons of opportunities to meet specific needs.

Pledge campaigns are the ideal vehicle to engage new givers and reinspire your regulars to put their money where they know it matters. A great benefit of campaigns is that they give you the ability to keep coming back to the giving conversation as you monitor the status and impact of the campaign. You can highlight how the campaign is going, how generous your church is, and the difference it's making in its stated goals. All these things inspire people to keep stretching their generosity. You could set up pledge campaigns for things such as:

- COVID-19 relief - getting resources to people who need help.
- Food drives - for any person or family who's struggling with food.
- A building campaign - especially if you feel a need to make a facility move.
- Special events - a drive-in movie, online event, or community dinner.
- Outreach projects - we've already talked about those.

Pledge campaigns give fuel to the fire that increase overall giving.

Another new thing that many donors appreciate is the ability to manage their own giving. With customized giving apps, your people can set up online and recurring donations, and monitor their pledge campaign activity at their leisure. What's more, they can see the progress of giving campaigns and feel more connected with their giving, knowing it's more than just a literal or figurative drop in the bucket.

People are stretched and your budget is stretched, but God always provides. Discover where God is giving vision for your church, and trust Him to fulfill it!

Empowering Leaders

Most of the time, church leaders are all working very hard to accomplish the work of the church. Sometimes it can lead to an unbalance that tips in favor of being too task-oriented in a people-focused occupation.

Burn out, cynicism, and feelings of ineffectiveness are all symptoms of overtasked leadership teams.

Now is the time to reflect on where the best efforts of your leaders can be most appropriately applied.

TOTALLY FAMILIAR

You'll always have work to do. Facilities need care, services need planning, inventories need replenishing, and on and on. Typically, getting the job done and celebrating good achievement is reward enough for most leaders. You'll still want to maintain a good work ethic and make sure you're tending to all that needs attention. At the same time, as people are together less often and the outcomes of work are less visible, it can be frustrating for leaders to see how their efforts are or aren't making an impact.

ENTIRELY DIFFERENT

A hybrid approach to leadership development requires that you make sure your team is accomplishing its tasks. But it should also incorporate more opportunities for your leaders to have meaningful personal interactions. That means that leaders in your church need to spend less time and energy on task-oriented projects and more time and energy on personal development.

It goes both ways. You leaders need to pour into other leaders and disciples directly, and they need to be poured into more by your pastors and church staff.

To keep your leaders fresh and inspired, encourage your leaders to:

- Meet with one another in smaller groups to brainstorm and collaborate.
- Identify people they haven't worked with and start building relationships.
- Meet with your pastors and staff to keep growing and get equipped.
- Read some resources together so everyone is on the same page.
- Present new ideas for ministry, knowing you'll listen.
- Go out - or online - and have some fun together!

Whatever you do in this season, don't neglect your leaders.

Mobilizing Volunteers

Taking a hybrid approach is not about changing who you are. It's about adapting for who you reach. It's about taking a verse from the Apostle Paul and being willing to become all things to all people so that by all possible means, you might save some. You do this for the sake of the Gospel...and for the sake of your church and community. We trust that God will give you strength and creativity to become what He's destined you to be in your city!

Choosing the Right Ministry Partner

The know-how you need from experts you trust.

ACS Technologies is the original pioneer of Church Management Software (ChMS). We are firmly dedicated to serving local churches all over North America by providing the best-in-class ministry software and service solutions that help you fulfill Christ's mission for your Church.

Tools and support to strengthen churches.

We build great software, but we don't stop there. We have a "service-first" approach that truly sets us apart. With hundreds of dedicated support and consulting personnel, your staff can reach our team 24/7. We're in your corner to help you with the ministry challenges you face every day.

Ideas and solutions powered by integrity.

Integrity is real for us, and it means consistently being faithful stewards by doing the right thing for church success. We have earned the trust of pastors, church staff, congregants, our employees, and colleagues for over 40 years.

A plan to meet your needs and move your ministry.

We're not just interested in satisfied customers. We see ourselves as your real ministry partner and will work with you to make disciples that will last for an eternity. We're excited to talk about your goals, create a plan together, and set you up with the software, service, and resources you need.

We believe in YOU!

ACS Technologies believes in the local church. Over 75% of our team has experience serving in their local churches. We know firsthand that serving the Church means serving people, and we take seriously our commitment to helping ministries like yours achieve their God-given mandate - to make disciples in their communities, states, and across the world.

Let's Talk

We know the challenges of switching or implementing new technology and how that can be intimidating. But we also know the unbelievable changes that have happened within churches that have partnered with us for their ministry needs. Let's connect and see how we can assist you in the greatest thing you do - grow God's Kingdom.

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