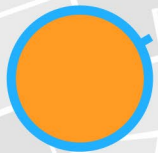


# CHURCH FROM ANYWHERE





We wrote this guide from a remote work environment. A home office, in fact. The collaboration on developing this resource was handled from multiple locations, using phone, email, text, and web conferencing tools. For years, and especially last year, work teams of all varieties have shifted to “work from anywhere” models that have introduced certain limitations, and at the same time, provided improvements in efficiencies.

Most households no longer have time set aside to retreat to a specific location to pay their bills and open their mail. Applications, forms, receipts, all in varied formats. Team activities, car repair, productivity, touching base, and all manner of activities are no longer conducted face-to-face. The world is not only changing - it's changed. The point....

## People are increasingly living their lives in mixed settings and multiple locations.

We created this resource to help pastors and church leaders navigate the cultural shifts that have displaced “normal” activities and that have allowed God’s people to be and do church from anywhere.

# WHY ANYWHERE?

The Church is relational. Its work is missional. Its aim is eternal. Why limit its settings to the institutional? Why exclude people based on their location or geography? Why make plans that are beholden to a person's situation instead of opening up doors to people's realities?

Hebrews 10:25a tells us, "And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another..."

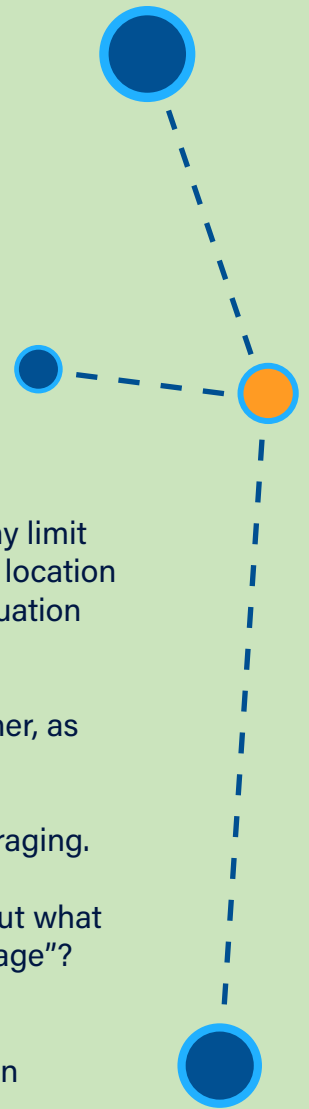
In that charge there are two components: 1) meeting and 2) encouraging.

The Church must gather. The Church must build one another up. But what does it mean to "gather" and how can we more effectively "encourage"?

2020 and the onset of COVID-19 have challenged the notion of what constitutes a "meeting." And it's challenged our ability to be an encouragement to one another.

If God is in the midst of the gathering of His people, and God is a Spirit, doesn't that imply that His presence is brought on by our spiritual, rather than physical, unity? Can you be "with" someone without being in their proximity?

Certainly, there are benefits that only in-person interactions can bring about. Body language, hugs and handshakes, and the energy that exists in crowds can't be replicated when people are apart. At the same time, encouragement, teaching, worship, and unity of spirit can all be shared even if people are not present face-to-face. What's more, many people who might otherwise not be able to gather - the immobilized, immune-compromised, elderly, those working difficult schedules, those with new babies, and those who need time to get comfortable with a new community - can be given options to participate in the second aspect of the charge, to encourage one another, if we remove the limitations foisted on our people by demanding their physical presence.



### Why be and do Church from anywhere?

Because it allows more people to not neglect meeting together and giving and receiving encouragement.

### Why be and do Church from anywhere?

Because it provides opportunities to stay more connected, more often, than occasional in-person meetings allow.

### Why be and do Church from anywhere?

Because there are people with whom you need to share the Gospel who might not be able to come to your in-person activities.

### Why be and do Church from anywhere?

Because the Church has an opportunity to become all things to all people so that by all means some will be saved.

Read on to discover how your church can adapt to the changes that are upon us so you can revolutionize your reach and connect like never before!



# IDEAS FOR EVERYWHERE

Parents waiting in parked cars for team practice to end. Students retreating to their dorms idling away their loneliness. Kids without rides sitting in their rooms. Adults on break at work. The sick in their beds or hospital gowns. People in transit, juggling the myriad challenges of daily life. All of these need your best and brightest ideas for bringing the Body to them, trampling obstacles, empowering them to break the habit of forsaking togetherness so they can be encouraged. The following represent ideas we've discovered to open the possibilities for church from anywhere (CFA).

# WORSHIP FROM ANYWHERE

The easiest to execute and longest-standing method of CFA is virtual worship services. For many years, pioneers of the modern faith have infiltrated homes, cars, parks, schools, and places of work; turning them into places of worship.

The setup can be quite simple or quite complexly professional. A camera, a mic, a computer with internet, and a streaming service will get you started. Dedicated audio mixes, online interaction tools, follow-up procedures, and multiple channels of delivery will be the next steps.

Regardless of the resources available to you, livestreaming services are a must-have for doing Church beyond 2020. As you allow your people to worship together, learn together, and grow together, there are some things you'll want to consider.

## Tips for Virtual Worship:

- Ensure good picture and audio fidelity. Fast internet speed, a good camera in the right location, and ample light are the basics.
- Introduce online-only elements to let your online audience know that you are considering their experience, not just inviting them to watch.
- Create interactive opportunities such as: asking questions of viewers and live audiences, giving away random gifts or prizes, or even stream in speakers and testimony from remote viewers so the whole church knows that people are participating from multiple venues.
- Share lots of testimony. Help what has been unseen come to the surface so everyone can celebrate and be encouraged!
- Deploy dedicated online greeting teams to welcome new visitors online.
- Launch an online new visitor class that people can take from wherever they are.
- Dedicate time to praying for people who are present in-person as well as for those who aren't.

Whatever you do, keep it personal. Acknowledge the complex nature of your varied audience. Take pains to include as many people as possible. And never forget to encourage those not in-person to prepare themselves to be together in heart, focused in mind, and unified in spirit.

# COMMUNITY FROM ANYWHERE

Again, not a hard concept to grasp. Since the advent of chat rooms, messenger groups, and even before that, party lines, people have been connecting in groups via telephonic and digital communication.

But church groups are different, right? Yes and no.

No, because many church groups and teams function in much the same way as any other group or team. It could be a grouping of friends who gather around certain interests (affinity groups) or a collaborative work team that needs to delegate tasks and brainstorm ideas. Or maybe it's a youth group, men's group, or marriage group. Whatever the case, people understand how to organize around common interests or shared missions whether they are in person or not. People in your church get it.

Yes, they are different because church groups often find themselves sharing information of a sensitive nature. Life struggles, poverty issues, sexual sin, self-worth, and many other besetting problems are involved in real church community. This requires participants to agree to certain understandings of privacy. This also requires platforms that aren't quite so "public." Not only that but also because your church is diverse, not everyone is going to be using the same platforms for communication. Some prefer Facebook, WhatsApp, group texts, email chains, and so on. This leaves the communication and development of the community disparate and disconnected.

Even further, many church communities "gather" around certain resources: PDF's, videos, books on marriage, and so on.

Thus, your church needs to have a dedicated platform that allows church leaders to establish healthy structures, permissions, sharing of resources, and delegations. This solution **MUST** include a dedicated mobile app so everyone in your church can gather at the same place to discover groups and events and stay connected to the conversation.

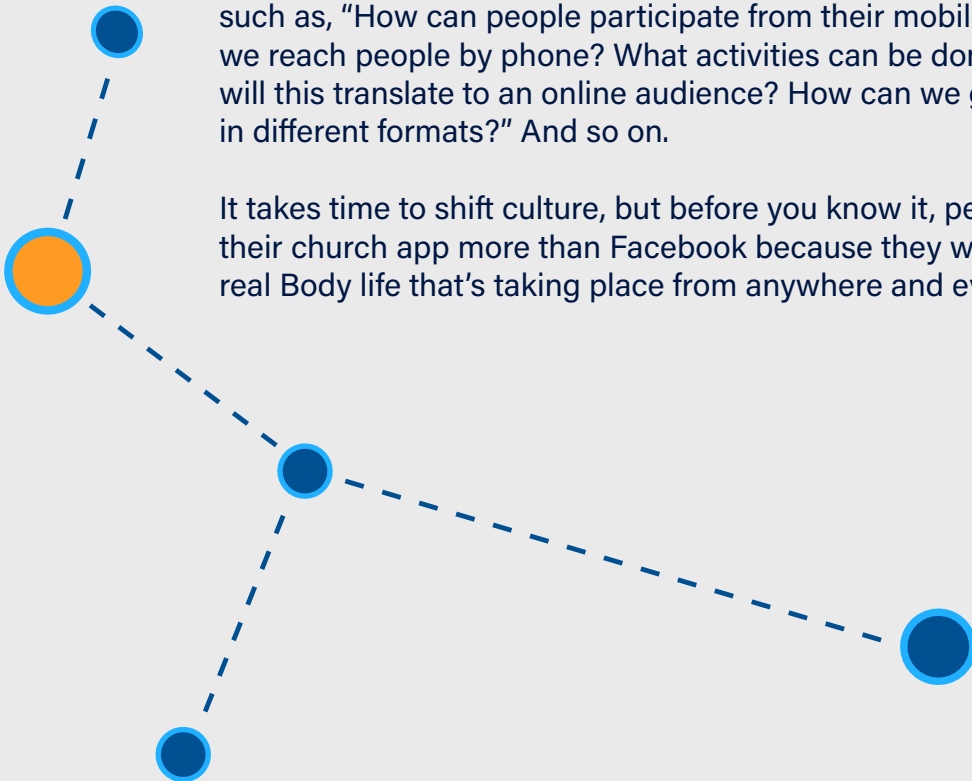
So get an online group solution that your church can control, and then empower your people to download the app and engage in the various groups that your community has to offer.

## Tips for Encouraging Online Community:

- Establish basic groups around church priorities and mission.
- Empower people to create their own affinity groups.
- Leverage “pulpit time” to promote online groups and the downloading of the mobile app.
- Give people assignments or elicit responses that can only be conducted through the online or mobile app so people get familiar.
- Use mass texting to get the outliers into the conversation.
- Encourage “phygital” experiences where people can gather in-person and then continue their activities and conversations online.
- Share visual resources and imagery that keeps people engaged beyond mere words.
- Stay consistent. Eventually, people will catch on.

The key aspect of developing real community from anywhere is shifting the focus from in-person meetings to online interactions. Always ask questions such as, “How can people participate from their mobile devices? How can we reach people by phone? What activities can be done from home? How will this translate to an online audience? How can we get people to interact in different formats?” And so on.

It takes time to shift culture, but before you know it, people will be checking their church app more than Facebook because they won't want to miss the real Body life that's taking place from anywhere and everywhere.





# SERVING FROM ANYWHERE

Maybe a little more unorthodox than the first two concepts, serving from anywhere will take some more coordination and effort on the part of serve team leaders and service project organizers.

There are two main divisions of labor when it comes to serving from anywhere: 1) serving in recurring roles for all your “anywhere” efforts, and 2) organizing “virtual” service projects that people can participate in on their own time.

The first segment is really just about reorganizing teams so you can dedicate resources to meet the demands of church from anywhere. It involves dedicating portions of existing teams and creating new teams to make sure everyone is being reached. From online greeters to managing text campaigns to increasing group participation, you’ll need people focused on supporting church from anywhere. We’ve written other guides related to this topic that more fully explore structuring teams.

The second segment is the virtual service project. This involves motivating people to serve in ways that don’t require them to get a whole group of people together at the same time. This could be useful because of COVID-related concerns, but it’s also a great way of staying active in the community in any situation. It allows people to serve when they can and doesn’t let them off the hook because they “can’t make it that day.”

Ideas for virtual service projects are limited only by your imaginations and the needs of your community. From neighborhood clean-up projects to shut-in visitation to back-to-school drives, blood drives, and beyond, your people can do more than gather for the occasional morning bake sale.

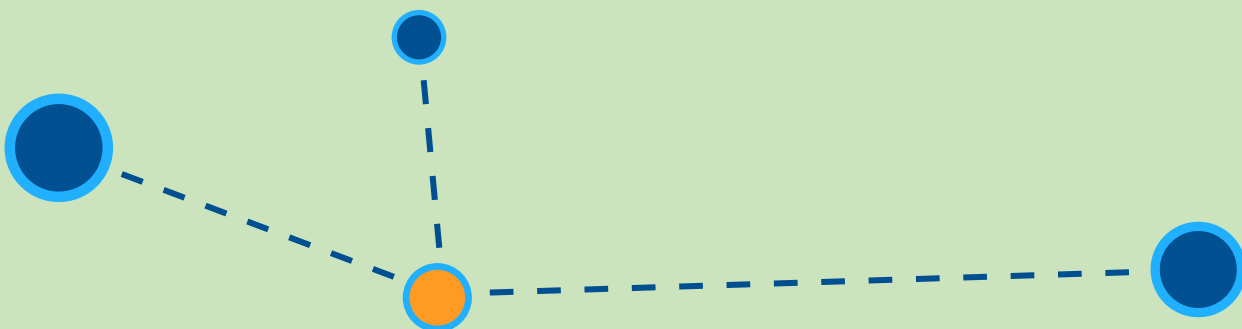


## Ideas to Get Started With Virtual Service Projects:

- Revolving Blood Drive - Instead of setting up a big event to donate blood, why not pick a hospital or office that takes anyone at any time and then encourage people to donate blood between a certain time window. Maybe it's a "week of donating." You can encourage your people to take their picture after donating and post it onto the group page you've created for it. Then share the results and how many lives you've impacted to celebrate the group effort.
- Street Cleanup - Work with the city or neighborhood association to pick a street, culvert, alley, or park and set another time window for people to go and do various tasks. You can set up a task list that people can choose from. Once all the tasks are accounted for, let people go on their own time with provided tools and instructions, and get the job done.
- Visitation Trains - Find out which people in your church or community need extra special care. Then bring them meals, offer errand services, do yard work around their premises, whatever they need. People can drop in as requested and then share their activity with the group.
- Back-to-School Kits - This could actually be done any time of the year. Regardless of when you do it, you can have families or individuals self-assemble backpacks full of essential school items for kids who need them. Then distribute.
- School Lunches - Many kids in the public education system depend on school lunches for sustenance. The school will have a list of who those kids are. Get the list; then organize a group of people to make and deliver lunches to those kids.

You get the idea....

Just about anything you would do as an in-person group, you can do as a staggered "virtual" group with a little organization and communication. Your church is probably itching for some purpose. Why not take a few extra steps to let them use their gifts to bless your community?





# GIVING FROM ANYWHERE

Most churches have some sort of online or mobile giving solutions. If you don't, you need to get one ASAP. A good online giving solution will let people give through your website, via mobile devices, and text-to-give. Also, it should allow for recurring giving - especially useful when people aren't coming to church services regularly - and pledge campaigns - so you can organize giving around specific efforts.

But let's be honest, giving people the ability to give from anywhere doesn't mean they'll do it. What you need is not only a solution to allow for it but also a system for promoting it.

## Tips for Promoting Giving from Anywhere:

- Give people a reason to give by setting up various pledge campaigns for your service projects, special needs, and missions of your church.
- Send out pre-recorded videos letting people know about your ministry needs and what the Bible says about stewardship and generosity.
- Share testimony of how people who made a commitment to give started seeing the fruitful blessing of the Lord.
- Have all new members donate \$1 to a certain cause they can't resist, such as a charity drive, to get them used to using the mobile giving app.
- Send requests and reminders for online offering just like you would for other events and services.
- Remind people that supporting the church is an opportunity, not an obligation.

If you do the first few things in this guide well - community, worship, serving - people will already see the benefit your church provides to the community and their own lives, and they'll be used to the online tools that allow for it. Giving will naturally follow.

# TOOLS FOR ANYWHERE

We've already alluded to some of the things you'll need to truly support church from anywhere, but let's do a brief rundown of what you'll need, and why.

## Phone

Sometimes a good old-fashioned phone call is the personal touch you need. Use phone outreach by dedicating volunteers or staff to call church members and check up on them. Ask what they need, how you can pray for them, and what suggestions they might have for greater involvement. In the same way, pastors and priests should connect with the church and team leaders to build them up.

## Text

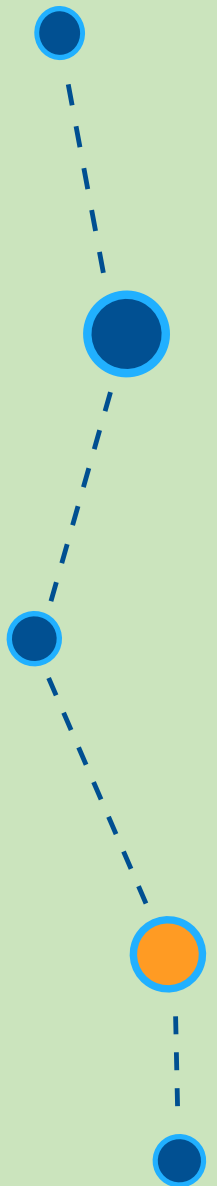
Used for occasional reminders, encouragement, and reflection questions. Go beyond text updates by thinking through some meaningful ways to grab people's attention with a text. Don't over-do it. Don't be a nuisance. Instead, offer value with reflection questions, inspirational quotes, relevant Scriptures, and links to more visual content.

## Social Media

Since most of your group and community activities should happen on your own platform, social media becomes more of an outreach tool than anything else. However, you will still have a sub-community on each platform for those people who prefer those methods. Think through each platform (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) and determine how you can point people to your own online community while still providing value to those who only engage on social media. The key to growing and keeping a social media audience: provide value. Make more meaningful posts than requests. Highlight other people's victories more than your own. Be more concerned with adding worth to people's lives than getting people to your church.

## Email

Good old-fashioned email still has a place. It's ubiquitous. Everybody has an email, whether they check it or not. Use email for longer-form content. But still, keep emails short. Don't throw everything into a single email. Instead, segment emails so people are receiving information about what pertains to them. People won't respond to an email with five different calls to action. Give recipients one thing to do for each email you send. One link. One response. One idea. Then save the next one for the next email.



## Online Groups

You've got to have an online group option that allows you to control who can create groups, post to groups, share resources, moderate conversations, and so on. Basically, you've got to have a customizable solution because every church is different, every group is different, and different leaders need varying levels of access to monitor and manage the happenings at your church. Plus, the solution MUST be able to be accessed from the web and mobile devices.

## Giving App

See the first paragraph in the "Giving From Anywhere" section. That pretty much sums it up. Mobile, online, pledge campaigns, recurring giving, website integrations. But there's one more thing: Only Realm offers giving PLUS accounting so all your incoming and outgoing transactions can be tracked in one place.

## Streaming

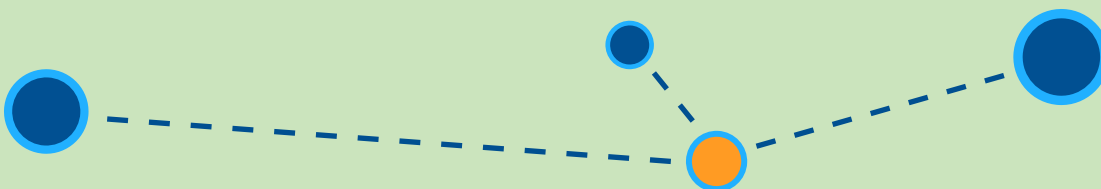
Two solutions are needed here. One for outgoing livestreams that will be published to YouTube, Facebook, your website, wherever. That's more of a one-way stream to let people watch. Participation in one-way livestreams needs to be more creative, such as asking viewers a question and having them respond in the comments.

The second solution is your typical online meeting software: Hangouts, Zoom, and so on. These are best for group discussions, strategy sessions, collaboration, and fully immersive event experiences.

The first solution needs to be customizable to your church for branding and publishing purposes. The second could be flexible, depending on what works best for your church and people.

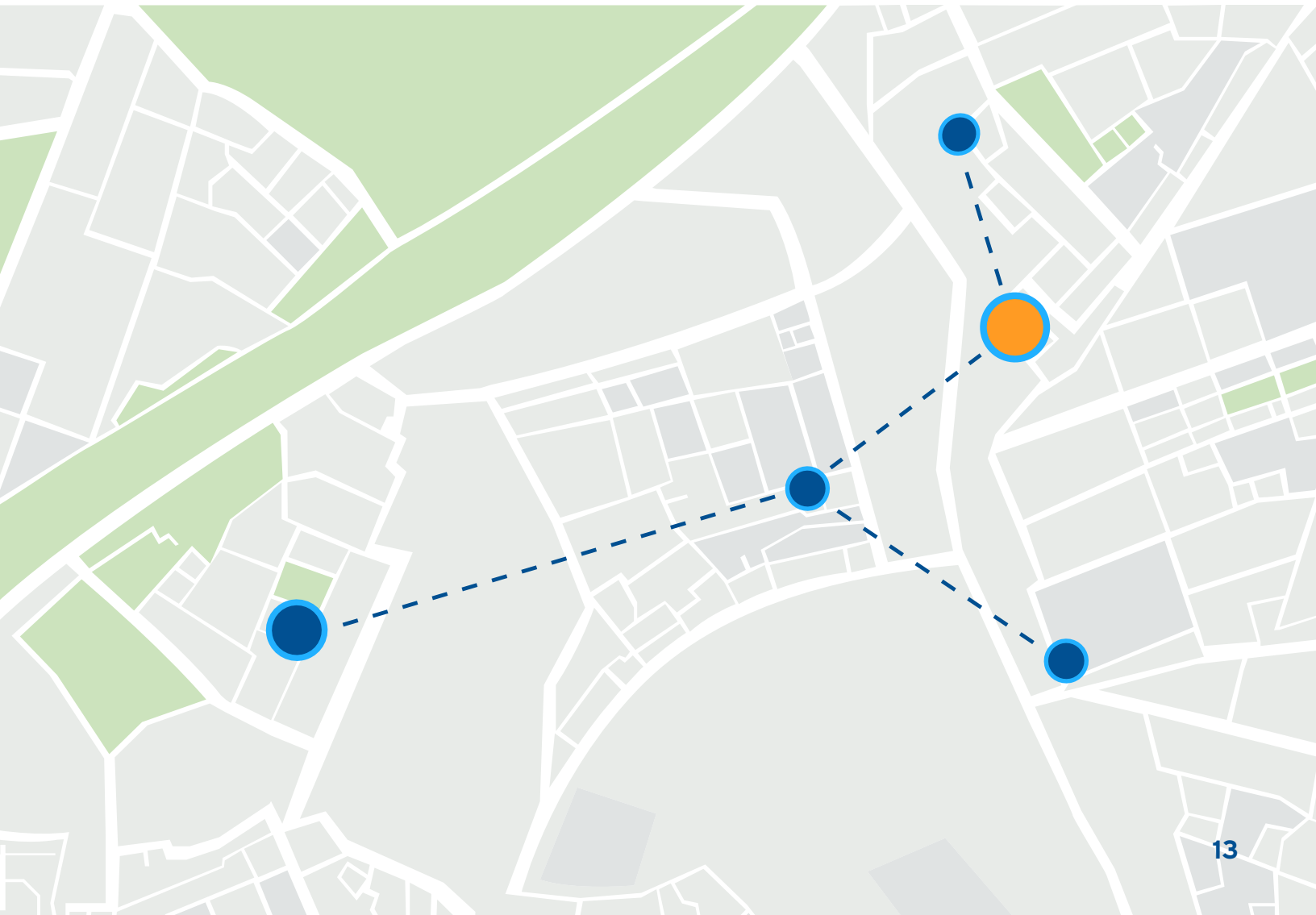
### Church Management Software

At the heart of all your "Anywhere" activities is a web-based church management system (ChMS). It should be the hub for all your information, efforts, and organization. Realm offers the best-in-class, all-in-one ministry software solution to get you on the fast track to fully engage in church from anywhere.



# GROWTH FROM EVERYWHERE

You already know the Church is not a building. So why limit your growth to who you can fit in - and who's willing to come to - your building? It's time to expand your reach beyond what you can see and open up the doors of invitation to everything your Body of believers has to offer. Keep gathering in-person as you see fit to do so. But don't neglect "meeting" together with those people who can't always make it to your services and events. That way you can encourage one another in ways that will cause people to take notice. People from all walks of life will see that you have made the effort to reach them with the Good News, and you'll see the best kind of growth that matters. Not necessarily people in seats but hearts united by a common purpose, being built up into the Body of Christ.



# 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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