



Gearing Up for Fall EVENTS

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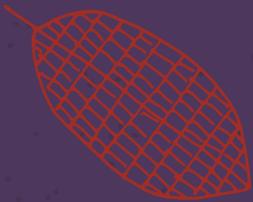
BEST PRACTICES



Gearing Up for Fall **EVENTS**



Fall. Autumn. Harvest. Regardless of what you call it, the weather starts to get a bit cooler, the leaves on the trees change color, children are back in school, and church programs and activities awaken from summer hibernation. It's one of a couple of times each year where the doors of our churches are passed through more consistently than others. Families are back from summer vacations, school is back in session, and families are eager to re-engage in community with other believers.



For churches, it's a time to put your best foot forward. It's a time to fully engage with all God has asked you to do as you help build His Kingdom.

With new people visiting your church and members being more consistent in their attendance, fall is the perfect time to connect with your congregation on several different items, but most notably, volunteering, events, outreach, and giving. All of these topics go so well with one another. We couldn't have events without volunteers. Well, we could but it would be chaotic, no doubt. We couldn't participate in outreach to our community without volunteers. We couldn't really do any of these without our church members engaging in Biblical stewardship.

For now, let's focus mainly on events before diving into the other items at a cursory level.





Events

Vacation Bible School. Wednesday night supper (does that even exist anymore? #covid). Kids camp. Student Camp. Backyard Bible Club. Back-to-school bash. Serve Saturday. The food pantry. Small group gatherings. The list could go on and on and probably should. What we listed was the tip of the iceberg. The reality is this – events are incredibly important to the health and vitality of your church and Her members.

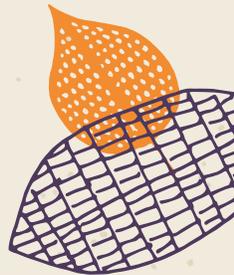
From an events standpoint, what do you do each year? Are there certain times of the year where you gather outside of Sunday morning, Sunday night, or Wednesday night? Almost all churches do Vacation Bible School each summer for the kids in the community. That’s likely one of the largest events of the year for your church and quite possibly requires the most volunteers. VBS is also likely the largest outreach opportunity for your church each year. There is nothing better than seeing the innocence of a child come to know Jesus after a week of being discipled by mature believers who carry out the mission of the Gospel.

God calls us to be in community with other believers. One of the most quoted passages of scripture about community is in Acts 2 when the Church was born. Let’s look at Acts 2:44-47.



“All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.”

What a glorious picture of community amongst believers in the Church! Do you see how community in the early church was continual? Events weren’t just once a month or even once a week. Scripture tells us they continued to meet together. And every day more people came to know Jesus because of their steadfast dedication to community with one another.





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The Bible doesn't just give us the blueprint to follow but provides the answer as to why we have events at our church – to see others come to know Him!

A few years ago, one of our employees took his family to Disney World. When he returned home, he told stories of how welcomed he and his family felt during their stay and at the various parks. From the many emails before their stay to the check-in experience, the magic bands and the memory maker, Disney provided a top-notch experience for the “event” that was their family vacation. That caused us to think. What if churches approached everything they did, every event that took place at their church or off-campus, the exact same way (or at least very similarly) Disney approaches the events they create for their guests?

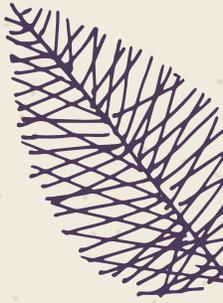
So, what shapes and molds events for your church? Allow us to offer a couple suggestions.



Go above and beyond to make members and guests feel completely welcome.

Treat them like royalty. Remember, we are to be in community with other believers. We're literally supposed to break bread with them and welcome them, even to our foes! Disney has “Magic Bands” that allow guests to load fast passes for rides they want to go on. What if churches were able to funnel guests that are on campus for an event to a welcome center, ask the appropriate questions, and then provide VIP-level access to reserved seating or moving to the front of the line for a ride at the fall festival? And after the event is over and you reach back out in the days ahead, you could make recommendations on what small group they should attend, what additional activities the church has for their family, other events coming up, etc.? Making guests feel special goes a long way to building loyalty. But that doesn't mean churches shouldn't continue to pursue their members by continually pointing them to Gospel-centered community with one another. Never forget that. We are all continually being sanctified, becoming more like Christ each day, and events at churches are part of that sanctification process for the community of believers you serve and lead.



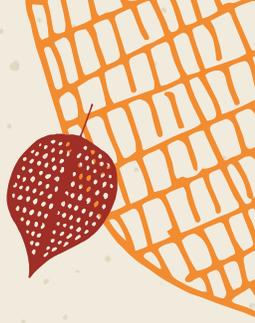


Make your experiences, programs, and sermons as dynamic and memorable as possible.

We aren't suggesting soaring guitar licks during worship, fog machines, or snake handling, but we are suggesting an engaging experience. Like with anything else, it starts and is modeled by the pastor. Additionally, make sure small group leaders communicate with their class members weekly, at least. Encourage them to form deeper relationships with members of their class. Let class members feel like they are part of the decision-making process when it comes to selecting which new study to walk through. Make sure small groups are regularly engaged in the community and with one another. Healthy groups make for healthy, thriving churches.

Through all of this, remember that your church management software should be your closest ally. From it, you'll be able to identify the who, track progress, run reports, review the data compared to the benchmarks, track overall progress, and more.





Volunteering

Let's face it. Getting your church members to volunteer can be one incredibly hard task. Sometimes you'll run across a unicorn, one of those super churchgoers who is there every time the doors are open and asks you what you need, how often, and how late they can stay. God bless those people, right? But that's rarely a reality.

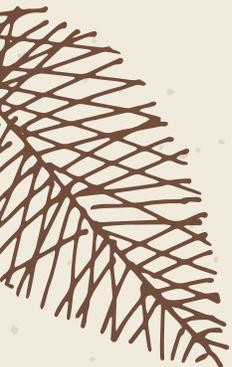


Volunteering should be modeled and encouraged by the pastor from the pulpit.

Pastors are called to shepherd their flock. You are called to lead your members well. People sit in churches every Sunday who constantly talk about discipleship, how many individuals they wish to lead to Christ and see baptized this year, how many small groups they want to start, how they want to reach their community, and much more. But how often do we hear the pastor talk to their congregation about their expectations on how the church members should volunteer, serve, give, and more. It needs to be addressed. The healthiest churches are those where the pastoral staff has expressed their expectations on how members should serve based on what the Bible says.

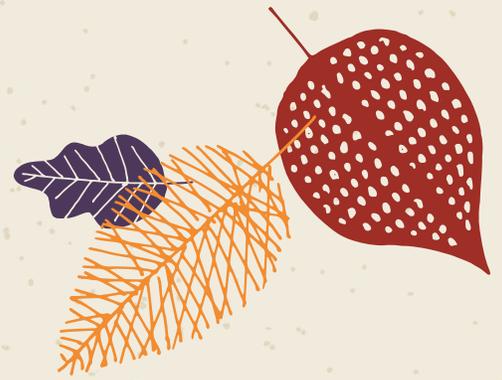
When the pastor and his family volunteer, it sets the example others are to follow. Sermons on serving others will help, but actually doing means so much more.

If you want to increase the number of volunteers, there are several things you can do, but it all starts with a goal of engaging people to serve more. If you want more leaders in your children's ministry or you need volunteers for your food pantry, let your congregation know what specific needs must be met. Your church members are more apt to be willing to serve if they know exactly what the need is, as many have a passion for serving in very specific areas. Some are called to volunteer in the choir or praise and worship band, while others may feel called to serve on the security detail or A/V support teams.





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Ways to communicate a need:

- Speak the need from the pulpit
- Social media messages (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, etc.)
- Emails from the pastor or pastoral staff describing the need, what is required, and what is expected
- Utilize bulletin inserts to tell your congregation what the volunteer opportunities are
- Hang posters across the church, in the welcome center. or in areas where people congregate
- T-shirts are another great way to call attention to a need. It causes people to ask questions about what the shirts mean and how to get one.

How often do you praise your church members for stepping up to the plate and serving sacrificially?

It's one thing to communicate and be transparent on a regular basis with the members you serve, but do you thank them for heeding to God's call of biblical servanthood? Make sure you are thanking them and praising them for being obedient in how they volunteer.

Volunteers are wonderful people. They help lessen the burden on you and your staff members. Just make sure you put the proper processes in place when it comes to managing and leading them so you don't find yourself up the proverbial creek without a paddle.

Through all of this, remember your church management software should be your closest ally. From it, you'll be able to identify the who, track progress, run reports, review the data compared to the benchmarks, track overall progress, and more.





Outreach



When you think of outreach, what comes to your mind? Phone calls? Emails? Letters from the pastor? Hopefully all of the above and more. Essentially, outreach is anything your church does to connect itself with the community. How is your church connecting with her community?

A short decade ago, I bet you could count the number of churches in your city using social media as a means of outreach. Now, most every church is leveraging the power of social media to let their community know what is going on, important details of events, and how to become involved in the events of the church. It's the modern-day equivalent of covering the billboard on the interstate for passersby, yet is targeted enough to filter through the noise and make a meaningful impact on the one consuming what you have to say.

There are various mediums in which to engage with your community, all of which are probably so obvious we are telling you what you already know, but we will anyway.

- Emails from the pastor to church members and recent guests
- Social media campaigns that are comprised of several ad variants targeted to your community
- Phone calls – We can't stress the importance of how it makes people feel, especially guests, to receive a phone call from someone on staff personally inviting them to an event, a small group, or just to inform them of something happening that you really want them to be part of.
- Handwritten note from the pastor – This is by far the one that should leave the most lasting impression.



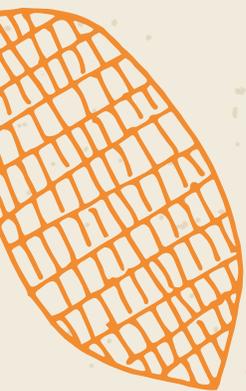


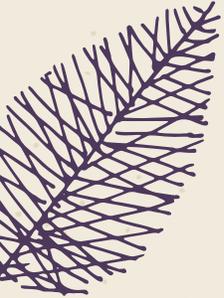
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There are others, but the point we are aiming to drive home here is this – communicate and nurture. Disney does a great job of this. If you’ve ever been, you’ve received several emails leading up to your visit. It’s not just limited to beforehand. After your stay, I’m sure you received a few more, asking about your experience and thanking you for coming. As part of your outreach plan this fall, make sure you are capturing email addresses of guests and communicating with them the week after they visit. Include topics like the upcoming sermon series, a list of small groups and locations, children’s activities, and a thank-you for visiting. Let them know what events your church has in the next month or two that they would have an interest in participating in. That goes such a long way.

How many people have set foot in your church on a Sunday morning only to make the decision not to go back simply based on the friendliness of the members and the follow-up that never happened the week following their visit? People want to be part of a church that cares about them, their family, and their spiritual growth.





Giving

Most everyone in your church knows why he or she tithes. The Bible calls us to. Furthermore, most of your members know how to give. In times past, they would write a check or drop cash in the plate as it passed during an offertory hymn. Times have changed, and now we can add swiping a credit or debit card at a kiosk in the lobby, giving online, or texting a tithe as options. As mentioned earlier, summer has now come to a close. People are returning to your church from a hectic summer, seeking relief and a sense of normalcy. So how are you, as a church leader, communicating why it's important for your members to be faithful in their stewardship along with the various ways for your members to give faithfully?

There are several different ways you can engage and educate your members on ways for them to tithe and the why behind it.

Posters

Mini posters are a great way to communicate new ways to give to your members. Place them around your church on bulletin boards, small-group classrooms, on the doors going into the sanctuary, and in the hallways. Make sure you tell your members the new ways they can give. If you offer kiosks, make sure everyone knows. If you only offer debit cards and not credit cards as ways for members to give, let them know.

Announcements from the pastor

People listen when your pastor speaks. He shepherds the flock. Ultimately, what he says carries a lot of weight. Make sure your pastor is letting folks know about the new services the church offers to let people give online.





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Videos

Do you play a video before the service starts on Sunday morning letting your members know about happenings in the church? Great! Include something about online giving, text giving, and kiosks if you have them.

Messages from your small-group leaders

Another captive audience in your church are the folks in your small groups. Suggest your small-group leaders make an announcement about new ways to give.

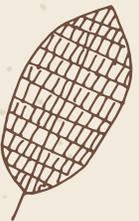
Emails

If your church is anything like mine, it sends out emails each week with announcements. Make the new giving solutions part of that email. Even better, dedicate an email to introducing the new giving solutions to your members.

Social Media

Most people are on Facebook, Twitter, or both. Make sure you are letting them know about new ways to give via social mediums as well. Include links for where to give online. Lead them to the water. They will drink.

The most important aspect of giving is that people give with a cheerful heart. Don't forget that. Encourage Biblical stewardship. Preach it. Let God lead you in this.





Conclusion

As we look at summer in our rearview mirrors and usher in cooler weather, we pray you are geared up for a fall full of fruit at your church! Remember, it's a time of year when people are hungry for the Gospel. Maybe as hungry as ever! And with that hunger comes the desire and tug of the Holy Spirit to be involved in various ministries of your church as servants focused on discipling others God brings your way. Volunteers are the fuel for your ministry and make the proverbial wheels of your church move forward. Outreach to your community should drive people, both church members and guests, to events at your church where radical life change can occur. Of course, none of this can happen without Biblical stewardship, and all of these aspects should be modeled by the leadership of the church starting with the senior pastor. Use this fall as a time of thanksgiving to God and his grace to you, His bride, and your community.



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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