

The Guide to

SUCCESSFUL CHURCH ENGAGEMENT

in the Digital Age



Pushpay®

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About This Ebook

America's fastest-growing, most impactful churches aren't necessarily the biggest or the loudest churches in the country. They're the ones who engage their congregations most effectively both physically and digitally. In this ebook, you'll learn seven significant characteristics of churches that engage a high number of their congregations. Most importantly, you'll discover actionable steps to improve those areas so you can drive engagement, grow your church, transform your community, and stay connected with your congregation digitally in any type of circumstance.

About Pushpay

Pushpay was created in response to well-documented declines in both giving and church attendance. We build world-class mobile giving and engagement solutions that help pastors and church leaders drive participation. Ultimately, Pushpay exists to bring people together by strengthening community, connection, and belonging.

Please take advantage of our [other free resources](#). To learn about our model and what a custom church app could mean for you and your ministry, [talk to one of our experts](#)

About Tobin Perry

Tobin Perry has served as a writer and editor for Saddleback Church, the North American Mission Board, and the International Mission Board, where he has frequently focused on church leadership issues. He has also served as the lead pastor of a church in Southern Indiana. He has written for numerous publications, including Christianity Today, HomeLife, ParentLife, Baptist Press, and On Mission magazine, and has ghostwritten for a number of Christian ministry leaders. He has served as managing editor for Rick Warren's Ministry Toolbox and as the editor of the pastor's version of On Mission magazine. He was also a contributing writer for Zondervan's The Jesus Bible. A graduate of the University of Missouri School of Journalism and Gateway Seminary (formerly Golden Gate Baptist Theological Seminary), Tobin lives with his wife and three children in Evansville, IN. For more information about Tobin, visit www.tobinperry.com.

All of the first person pronouns in this book are his.

Why Engagement Matters

Imagine you and a friend take a long-planned canoe trip. You've got it all prepared. You have a new canoe, food to last the duration of your trip, and an exciting destination.

You take off with high hopes, but just a few hundred yards into your trip, your friend stops paddling. It's too much work. He wants to just sit back and enjoy the ride. He knows you'll do the work. But now you're stuck. To reach your destination, you need both people to work together. You need 100 percent engagement. Now you can't even get back to the shore.

The same is true for local churches. For about a century, we've measured churches by how many people show up on Sunday mornings. When more people show up this week than last week, you're growing. When more people show up the third week, you've got a growth trend. Repeat those results over a year or two and you have a book deal.

But, as Canadian pastor [Carey Nieuwhof explains](#), tracking attendance as the Rolls-Royce metric of the church made much more sense in an era when all the church had to do was open its doors and people would flock inside. In the past, most church leaders believed attendance would drive people to get engaged with the congregation. When someone showed up for church, you could confidently engage them deeper into the life of the church.

That has changed. With the growing use of technology in our every day lives, "showing up" does not necessarily mean always physically being at church every Sunday. Many churches have now taken advantage of online gatherings through live streaming and digital giving right through their church app. This helps reach a broader audience and makes engagement within your congregation more accessible (i.e. especially for those who are out of town, sick, or who have a physical disability).

Live streaming and digital giving is made easy through your [mobile device or social app](#) and can be easily shared through your [church website](#), [church app](#), or promoted on your [social media](#) platforms or through [email](#).

Today, Nieuwhof explains, the expectation has to be that engagement drives attendance, not visa versa. More people will attend physically and virtually if the church has onboarded them in its mission. He [writes](#), "If you want to see your church grow, stop trying to attract people and start trying to engage people."

And it will grow healthier, too. Albert Winseman writes in **Growing an Engaged Church**: “The more engaged members there are in your church, the healthier it is. A spiritually healthy church is the good soil that produces fruit in abundance and engagement is the key.”

So what is church engagement?

Engagement is anything people do that furthers the mission God has given them. It can range from worship attendance to small group participation to ministry involvement to giving and engaging digitally. It's defined first and foremost by what God has called your church to do (and how you do what God has called you to do). That's why you can't easily list engagement metrics to measure. But considering Jesus' commission to the church “to make disciples,” we can likely agree upon a few components of engagement:

- *Virtual and physical small group (i.e. Sunday School , youth ministries, bible studies, engaging outside of Sunday gatherings etc.) attendance*
- *Giving and the convenience of digital giving*
- *Leadership development*
- *Mission and ministry involvement*
- *Worship attendance (how often people attend not just in the pews.)*
- *Technology usage (live streaming your website, mobile app, etc.)*

In many ways engagement is another word for church involvement. Instead of measuring who shows up, engagement focuses on how they show up (or what they do when they attend). For years, we've had the basic assumption that 20 percent of the people do 80 percent of the work.

But does that have to be so?

Absolutely not.

In this book, you'll be introduced to seven actions of growing churches that are engaging more of their people—and growing because of it. None of them are silver bullets. There is no one-size-fits-all solution. But these seven actions can drive engagement to new levels for your congregation. You'll also find several applications you can start taking today for each of these actions.

Let's turn the tide on church engagement—and leave the 80/20 rule in the dust!

Simplify Your Church Strategy

At first glance, it might seem counterintuitive. If you give people too large a variety of opportunities, engagement will drop. Sure, you'll get people involved in busy work, but engagement—real engagement that drives your church's mission forward—happens when we get people involved in the core work of our church.

To do that, you have to make those core activities the only options.

It's easy to complicate our churches with too many engagement options but there are a few that are really directed toward our mission. When a person comes to us with a passion for a particular kind of ministry, we want to encourage the enthusiasm. But as the options increase, confusion reigns.

Carey Nieuwhof writes, “If you have lots of off-mission programs (like the Quilting Club or the Men Who Eat Bear Meat Fellowship), you will have a hard time focusing people on what you really want them to do. They're passionate about their ministries, but not the ministry. And that's the problem. Too many Christians get passionate about their mission, not the mission.”

Remember, engagement is best defined as people doing activities that further your church's mission.

A few tips for increasing engagement through simplifying your strategy:

1. Schedule some time with your leadership team to evaluate your church's strategic plan, which also includes a digital experience. Simplification doesn't happen on accident. You will never naturally simplify your congregation. In fact, just the opposite, without correction you'll likely complicate your ministry over time. Take significant time as a leadership team to review your vision and mission and make sure it's simple. You want to make sure you are using the right tools to set-up both a physical and online presence. It's likely best to do it on a weekly basis over several months so you leave time for team members to process your planning and have clarity in your communication. Make sure you involve as many key stakeholders as you can in the process.

2. Define your church's vision and mission in terms of engagement. Once you complete your strategic planning, you need to re-frame your mission in simple terms that people will remember. Think in terms of imperative verbs like “go,” “grow,” “serve,” and “become.” The shorter your statements the more memorable they will be.

3. Make sure all your engagement opportunities fit within your church's vision and mission statement. Once you've developed a memorable, engagement-focused vision and mission statement, you need to make sure everything you do fits within what you now say your church is all about.

4. Be willing to “retire” ministries that don’t fit within your church’s vision and mission statement. This isn’t easy, but it’s critical. You can’t simplify if you aren’t willing to stop doing certain things that don’t match your vision. Take your time. Be gentle. But have the tough conversations. End the ministries that are out of step. It’s a key part of the process of increasing overall engagement within your church.

Great resources on the topic:

[Simple Church](#) by Thom Rainer

[Purpose Driven Church](#) by Rick Warren

[Purpose Driven Church Conference](#) [DVDs]

Shrink Your Church

The larger your church grows the tougher it becomes to engage with your congregation. Or, maybe more accurately, the larger your church becomes the more passivity is rewarded. For years, larger churches have benefited from people's ability to remain anonymous in such a large congregation. Many have been able to explore Christianity from a distance, without the messy entanglements of human interaction

But anonymity can lead to passive church consumers who rarely contribute to the mission of the church. The answer? Shrink your church through groups. or more specifically virtual groups within your social media channels, church app, or website. This is a great option for those who may not be able to participate in person (i.e. out of town, sick, or physically disabled) but would still like to contribute and engage with your smaller groups. This isn't a one-size fits all approach either. Increasing engagement doesn't depend upon in-home small group Bible studies. Your ministry context can decide that. Instead, focus on connecting small groups of people in the congregation around a common purpose—whether it's Bible study, ministry, or mission.

"Small groups deliver maximum participation. There are opportunities to discuss the issues with others in the church," [Ed Stetzer writes](#). "Church life issues can be discussed openly among trusted friends. Mission can be planned out and participated in together. Lives are sharpened and leaders developed. Small groups are an absolute necessity for involving as many people as possible in the life and ministry of your church."

A few tips for increasing engagement by shrinking your church:

1. Host a digital connection event. Small group connection events allow you to connect a large amount of people at one time. You simply invite people to an event where they can sift themselves into affinity, life stage, and geographic groups. These events are also designed to identify new leaders, which can be particularly helpful when starting new groups. Mark Howell's article below can help you with the nuts and bolts of creating an event like this. You might want to try some other types of connecting events. [This article on churchleaders.com](#) identifies two other connecting events that may be helpful, depending on your ministry context.

2. Split existing groups. Whether you have small groups, Sunday School classes, or ministry groups, the size of the group will impact their ability to become engagement engines for your church. If you have large groups (particularly ones with more than 20 people), it's time to divide them in order to increase engagement.

3. Enlist new leaders. Undoubtedly the key contributor to bloated group size is a limited pool of leaders. Develop apprentice leaders in each existing small group. But don't stop there. Raise the visibility of those leading ministries, small groups, and Sunday School classes to encourage more people to step up. Consider using live streaming, and video curriculum and changing the terminology from leader to host to allow you to start more groups.

4. Multiply the number of jobs in your groups. Encourage group leaders to give everyone a job. When you give people jobs, they have a reason to return. They also learn that they aren't a part of the group just to consume. They are in the group to contribute! Those jobs can include everything from organizing the snack list to leading mission efforts to hosting a virtual meeting, to choosing curriculum. Give people a job in a small group or a ministry environment and they'll likely look for ways to participate in the broader church ministry.

Great resources on the topic:

[Small Groups with a Purpose](#) by Steve Gladen and Rick Warren

[Creating Community](#) by Andy Stanley and Bill Willits

[Life in Community](#) by Dustin Willis

Lead the Way With Technology

Just a generation ago, most church engagement opportunities were confined to what someone could do within the four walls of their building. That's where we attended worship services, gave to the church's ministry, fellowshiped with other members, and taught Sunday School. For many churches, the vast majority of engagement happened on Sunday mornings, Sunday nights, and Wednesday nights. Of course, that's no longer true. Today, whether it be scheduling conflicts, a natural disaster, or a global pandemic, it's hard to come up with any church engagement opportunity that can't, at least in some manner, be done remotely thanks to technology. People can engage with your congregation every single moment of every day thanks to technological changes in the last two decades.

Nothing holds more potential for multiplying engagement in your church than today's ever-present technology. But you must lean into it. Make embracing technology a priority for your church. Every time you urge engagement from your congregation, try to provide digital opportunities as well.

Especially in times of unexpected events, such as a pandemic or natural disaster, it's more important than ever that churches have the tools and technology to reach and minister to their congregation. This will allow you to never miss a moment to provide support and fellowship. Making sure you have a **digital strategy** in place and are taking advantage of a church app, your website, social media channels and more. This will assure you will be ahead of the game when online ministry calls.

But let's be clear. Technology alone can't solve your issues with engagement. "Technology is an accelerator, not a problem solver," says Chris Heaslip, the co-founder of **Pushpay**, a leading mobile engagement partner for churches.

Effective use of technology will point people toward engagement and toward your local church. Let technology accelerate what God wants to do through your church. Don't ever let it be all that you do.

A few tips for increasing engagement through leading with technology:

1. Put a digital thinker on your leadership team. For too long, digital thinkers have been relegated to tech or communications teams on church staffs. You need a senior-level digital thinker who is involved in the important strategic decisions your church makes. A digital thinker will see engagement opportunities through technology that others won't. Do whatever it takes to get one of them a seat at a decision-making table in your church.

2. Get an effective app. The conduit to the future of church technology is no longer the laptop, the server room, or the desktop computer. It's the mobile device. To have a seat at the table with the millennials and Gen Z, you'll need a mobile app. But it's more than just the "cool" factor. Mobile apps are an engagement factory your church members carry around in their pockets. No longer do congregants have to show up at your building to engage with the mission of your church. They can give, grow, connect with other members, invite friends, read their Bibles, and even watch worship services from a mobile device they carry in their pockets.

3. Make sure people can engage quickly via technology. Having a mobile device or a website won't guarantee technology will drive engagement for your church. A bad piece of technology can actually drive away engagement. A clunky app or disorganized website that can't deliver results to congregants quickly, will not be used to engage with your church.

4. Find out how your people use technology. Not every ministry context is the same. To use technology to help spur engagement, you need to know how the people in your congregation use technology. Create a simple survey to dig into social media, mobile device, and email habits with your congregation. You can slip it in your Sunday morning bulletin or send it digitally to your members. You want to communicate with your congregation (and the wider community) using their preferred channel.

5. Invest in partners that provide security, reliability, and scalability. If you want to take your church engagement to the next level, you'll need help to get there. The largest churches in America are realizing they'll embrace future technological innovation more effectively with the right partner than they can on their own. Find best-in-class partners who will provide you with the security, reliability, and scalability you need for future engagement opportunities.

6. Amplify how you engage your online community. Live streaming your service allows your members to participate and worship with you anytime, anywhere. But it's also a great way to expose your church to people who have never been to your services before.

Whether these people are local, across the country, or on another continent, there are things you can do to help them feel more like part of your church. [Engaging your online community](#) can help some people transition to joining you in-person or encourage them to invite others into the experience. As you connect with people online, you may find that there are growing pockets of fellow believers joining you from around the world.

Great resources on the topic:

[The Future of Church Technology](#) [free ebook]

[Pushpay blog](#)

Clarify Membership Expectations

Every relationship comes with expectations. Before you get married, you and your spouse express them to one another through vows (and maybe through premarital counseling). When you start a new job, you sign a contract listing out your responsibilities and the company's responsibilities to you. In good marriages and good employment situations, expectations aren't just expressed once, at the beginning of the relationship, and then ignored thereafter. They are continually reiterated.

What does this have to do with engagement? Hyperbole aside, just about everything. Whether churches express them or not, they expect engagement from members. They expect members to give, serve, invite other people, and engage in worship services. Where engagement is expected, it must be expressed (and expressed clearly). This doesn't just happen once either. Expectation must be reiterated over and over again in classes, live streams, sermons, and membership covenants. Your congregation needs to know that when they become a part of your church they have a part to play. They are expected to do more than just consume. But this is also a two way street. Your church should not be the only one throwing out the options to engage. The best ideas come straight from those who will be engaging from your congregation. They too can offer up suggestions on different ways that would entice them to become more involved.

Growing churches do this all the time. For example, [Rick Warren once told his Saddleback Church congregation](#), "Let me just be honest with you as somebody who loves you. If you passively just want to sit around in the next 10 years and just waste your life on things that won't last, you probably want to find another church because you're not going to really feel comfortable here. Because if you're in this church, I'm coming after you to be mobilized."

Warren expects involvement from the whole congregation. He's not shy in letting the people he leads know it.

Albert L. Winseman writes in [Growing an Engaged Church](#), "I can't stress it enough: People need to know what is expected of them as members of their church; they need to know 'the rules of the game.' Otherwise, they will make up their own rules."

Don't let your members make up their own rules of church membership. Engagement will suffer.

A few tips for increasing engagement through clarifying membership expectations:

1. Start hosting a membership class. This is a bare minimum. If you don't have a membership class, that needs to be a high priority. This will allow you to explain what the church expects from members (and, frankly, listen to what new members expect from the church) before they agree to become members. Be sure to list out all the engagement expectations in the class (such as giving, serving, inviting, and attending).

2. Preach annually on membership expectations. A one-time explanation of church membership doesn't cut it. Members must be reminded of the expectations at least annually. Incorporate the expectations into regular sermons. We expect engagement because it matters and engagement is biblical. Why not teach what the Bible has to say about these expectations?

3. Put your expectations down on paper or share digitally. More and more growing churches are including a membership covenant into their process of joining the church. A membership covenant allows you another opportunity to reiterate engagement expectations of members. Be as explicit as possible about what you expect. Not only does a covenant help make the expectations a bit more concrete, but it gives new members something to take home and keep. In fact, if you can reproduce your covenant on premium paper and have it professionally designed or format it to be shared digitally, you may increase the likelihood that members will keep the reminder with them longer.

Great resources on the topic:

[High Expectations](#) by Thom Rainer

[C.L.A.S.S. 101: Discovering Church Membership](#)

[10 Points to Include in a Church Membership Class](#) by Patricia Lotich

Diversify Engagement Possibilities

At first it may sound contradictory to both simplify your strategy and diversify engagement possibilities. Yet both are essential. Increasing engagement means getting more people to do the things that move your church forward in its mission (and fewer things that aren't related to your mission). It also means giving people new opportunities to engage with your mission in ways that fit them. In other words, if your stated mission statement centers around making disciples, stick to that but always look for new ways that your congregants can do it.

In their book [The Other 80 Percent](#), Scott Thumma and Warren Bird suggest churches think in terms of a “cafeteria-style” college catalog. They recommend organizing your engagement options under broad categories (i.e., components of your mission statement) that resemble graduation requirements. For example, you might have categories like small groups, ministry opportunities, outreaches, etc. Then your church could provide a variety of engagement opportunities within those categories while still focusing them on your mission.

Thumma and Bird write, “This approach ensures a balanced coverage of all key components of a faithful life without specifying a set path. It allows personalized options and choice.”

Diversifying options doesn't have to be the exclusive domain of large churches either. If you know the diverse interests and talents of your congregation, you can always be on the lookout for how to mobilize those talents toward your work.

A few tips for increasing engagement through diversifying engagement possibilities:

1. Initiate a brainstorm session. Get a diverse cross-section of your leadership together. Digitally put the main points of your mission statement together, so it can be easily shared and edited as you make changes. Brainstorm engagement possibilities that fit within those broad categories. Don't hold anything back. Take risks. Be creative. You can edit the choices later. A brainstorming session isn't the time to concern yourself with the plausibility of any ideas. Your job is just to get them together. Then, at a later time, take a look through the ideas and begin sifting the ones that best fit your ministry context.

2. Give people the freedom to engage in ways (and places) that fit their lifestyles.

A half century ago most church engagement opportunities looked alike. You gave by putting money in an offering plate. You attended worship by sitting in a pew on Sunday morning. You attended Bible study by sitting in a physical room and talking with fellow Christians about what you were reading in a printed Bible. While all of that qualifies

as engagement today, it's not all that qualifies. Thanks to technology, congregants can engage the church at any time at any place (i.e. [digital giving](#), online gatherings through [live streaming](#), and small group gatherings through [social media channels](#)). Not only should you find that acceptable, but you need to encourage it.

3. Celebrate unique engagement possibilities. It isn't just churches that tend to think of one-size-fits-all approaches to church engagement. The people in your congregation likely have a limited view of how they can engage with you. Help them see the possibilities and give them the opportunity to voice their opinions on how they'd like to engage with your church. Highlight in church communication (and even sermons, if possible) unique ways members are engaging with your church's mission.

Great resource on the topic:

[Ultimate Brainstorming: A Toolbox for Brainstormers and Facilitators](#)

Help People Discover & Develop Their Unique Contributions

You'd likely be surprised by how many people in your church don't contribute to the work of your church because they don't believe they have anything to offer. Many Christians have grown up believing only pastors can do the work of the church. Many see their talents—the ones they use in their jobs and in their hobbies—as entirely secular, with little spiritual benefit. Of course, that couldn't be farther from the truth. Some of the most compelling ministries in the church today came from Christians discovering how to apply abilities they use every day in secular pursuits to Kingdom efforts.

Helping people discover and use their gifts and talents isn't just practical either. It's biblical. Ephesians 4:12 teaches that the job of pastors is to “equip the saints for the work of ministry.” This isn't just a small side job for church leaders. It's at the core of our ministry calling.

You can't stop at helping your congregation identify their gifts either. When Scott Thumma and Warren Bird prepared to write their book about the 80 percent of churchgoers who stay on the sidelines rather than engage with the church's mission, they studied the engaged and disengaged members of 25 large churches around the United States. According to the pair, they found no correlation between identifying gifts and higher levels of engagement. But they did find a correlation between “church leaders helping you find and use your gifts and talents” and higher engagement. Why? Thumma and Bird suggest higher engagement happens when churches move beyond simply trying to “fill a slot” and toward “service that builds people's spiritual lives.”

A few tips for increasing engagement by helping people discover and develop their unique contributions:

1. Develop a process/class to help members discover their gifts and develop them.

The good news is that today you'll find many options to help with this. Spiritual gift assessments and tests come in many forms. Some are free; others come with a cost. But make sure you go beyond simply handing out an assessment to everyone in your congregation and urging them to go through it. Develop a process that helps your congregation develop their gifts, not just use them. Train them. Coach them. Mentor them. Take some time away with leaders in your church and talk through this process together.

2. Take advantage of your congregation's knowledge in technology. Today, with the growing use of technology, a number of people in your congregation are bound to be tech savvy and more than likely use these skills towards their profession. From building your website to setting up your social media accounts to providing you with

tools to take advantage of online gatherings through live streaming, these people are the foundation in your church creating an effective digital strategy.

3. Let volunteers “try out” gifts and talents through the ministry efforts of your church. Spiritual gifts assessments can never tell you with 100 percent accuracy where a person can contribute most. Most people find their ideal ministry by trial and error. Give volunteers permission to transition out of roles that don’t fit them.

For example, a great way to “try out” your community’s talents is by encouraging volunteers to become digital leaders through ministries such as Sunday School and small groups. While using online meeting tools, (Facebook Groups, Google Hangouts, Zoom Meetings or Skype) many of these individuals may already be using these tools in their professional settings. Being able to blend their knowledge with their passion for ministry, may come as second nature to them to help them succeed in their ministry.

4. Look for creative ways to thank everyone who serves in your congregation. People like to be thanked. When your church develops a culture of gratitude toward those who are using their gifts, your congregation will want to dive into service even more. It also sends a great message to other potential volunteers about what you value and how you see the work of the church.

5. Create “easy” entry points for ministry and mission projects. Some ministry efforts will require considerable training. You want small group leaders, lay counselors, and many other volunteers to feel properly trained when they begin serving. But not every volunteer responsibility requires the same amount of training. Make sure you have easy entry points where people can start volunteering quickly and easily.

Great resources on the topic:

[**C.L.A.S.S. 301: Discovering My SHAPE Kit**](#)

[**The Volunteer Revolution: Unleashing the Power of Everybody**](#) by Bill Hybels

[**Connect: How to Double Your Number of Volunteers**](#) by Nelson Searcy

Be Specific About How to Get Involved

Too often people don't get engaged with our churches because they don't truly understand how to do so. Our information about small group involvement, giving, and ministry engagement is sometimes obvious to those already plugged in but unclear to those who are new to the church.

That's why, if you want to increase the number of people engaged with your church's core mission, you need to make sure you're clear and specific about how people can get involved. Don't assume anything. Make sure to eliminate cliches. Try to think like someone who isn't connected yet.

A few tips for increasing engagement by being specific about how to get involved:

1. Do an “audit” of your communications to see how clearly you communicate engagement opportunities. Check your website. Take a look at your mobile app. Look at all your printed and digitally shared materials. But take it a step beyond your efforts. Find some people who know little about your church. Have them take a look at your materials, and then quiz them about various engagement opportunities. Make sure anyone who attempts this has a firm grip on how to give, join a small group, sign up for a ministry, and participate in other engagement opportunities. If they can't figure it out immediately, you have work to do.

2. Make sure you're using the most effective means of communication possible for your ministry context. We live in a world with lots of communications options. You have websites, social media, mobile apps, print and digital products, and more. It's not enough to know general communications trends. You need to take the time to understand how your congregants like to receive information. You can try some of the free polling sites online, but you can also try informal inquiries of your congregation. Often, your small group and ministry leaders will have a good idea of what communication tools work for which congregants (of course, they will know more about how the already-connected communicate than the not-yet connected, but they will still have helpful insights).

3. Simplify engagement opportunities as much as possible. Ensure that people can get involved with limited red tape. Obviously, some red tape can't be eliminated. You need to be able to train new volunteers for many roles. Proper contact information for donors will help you provide them with end-of-year giving statements. Background checks are critical for children's ministry volunteers. But, at times, extra steps in our engagement process can slip in without good reasons. Try to eliminate as many of those needless steps as possible.

4. Tell stories of how other people got involved in your church. Personal testimonies can be some of the most significant communication tools at your disposal. With testimonies, people get to put themselves in the shoes of other people who have engaged in your church. They get to hear why and how a person started to give. They get the story behind why a person joined a small group. Clear communication is more than just expressing the nuts and bolts of when and where and how someone gets involved. It also explains the why.

5. Expand your prayer ministry. More than anything, people need to come together in prayer. Deploy a phone tree campaign and invite people to call and check in with each other. Whether the current conditions are calm or anxiety is running high due to the current social state, it will be reassuring to know the church is praying together and for each other. Using your online communications channels or sharing a daily devotion or prayer, enables people to stay grounded in God and connected to each other.

Great resource on the topic:

Outspoken: Conversations on Church Communications by Tim Scraeder
(lead writer)

How to Measure Engagement

You measure what matters to you. Engagement will never become important to you as a church until you start to measure how well you're doing it. For most of the past century, churches have measured their ministry impact on the types of metrics that showed up on the back of church bulletins and on church registry boards—worship attendance, giving, and Sunday School attendance. At times those can be valuable numbers to digest, but they tell us little about engagement.

There's no one-size-fits-all approach to measuring church engagement. Since you define church engagement as activities that further your church's mission, it's really your church that must define those activities (and the metrics that will let you know how you're doing).

But let's assume that making disciples is a big part of what you do. (Jesus seemed to have an affinity for it. [See Matthew 28:16-20.](#)) Certainly, churches have different definitions of what makes a disciple. But here are five broad areas where you'll want to track engagement, as well as some metrics to get you started:

1. New leaders. Leaders and engagement go hand in hand. Typically, you develop new leaders as they become more engaged with your congregation. Leaders typically engage with your church more than followers. To truly dive into leadership metrics, you'll have to define the leaders you want to make. Some will define leaders as anyone serving in ministry capacity. Others will more specifically expect leaders to have some sort of authority over others.

Regardless, you want to see growth in sheer volume of new leaders. You want to make more leaders this month than you did last month. Better yet (since you have to take into consideration seasonal adjustments), you want to see growth in volume this month versus growth in the same month a year ago.

2. Giving. Metrics on giving demonstrate engagement on a whole new level.

Why? We typically don't give to institutions where we're not engaged. Measuring engagement through giving is tricky though. Total giving numbers won't be helpful. Instead, you want to look at the percentage of your congregation engaged in giving. Divide the number of your members by the number of members who gave over a month. (You can also do the same with attendee giving.) Obviously, some people will give through cash so it's far from a perfect figure, but it's still helpful. Per capita giving (total giving divided by attendees in a week) can also help you understand the depth of giving within the congregation. Digital giving solutions, like [Pushpay](#), can be critical to your work in tracking giving.

3. Group involvement. Whether your church has small groups or some kind of Sunday School structure, understanding your group involvement is critical. Keep track of the percentage of your members (or attendees) who are involved in your groups.

4. Worship attendance. While measurements in attendance may not measure engagement effectively (see [Why Engagement Matters](#)), the average number of times a person attends services per month can offer a unique view into how valuable your congregants see attendance. Thom Rainer calls the trend of people—even your active members—attending worship less frequently the [Number One Reason For the Decline in Church Attendance](#). It's a tough number to capture because it requires you to track individual attendees, which can be difficult, imprecise, and awkward. But it's worth trying. Some churches have tried to do this through digital kiosks, sign-in registries, live streaming, and attendance cards. As smartphone adoption continues to climb, technology may provide a solution. (Smartphone adoption is expected to be [nearly 80 percent](#) by 2021.) Geofencing technology in the church will allow us to track when our congregants with smartphones arrive on our campus and when they leave. You may also get other important metrics from this data, including where people go and how long they stay when they're on your campus.

5. Technology. Many in your congregation will engage your church more on the go, thanks to technology, than they will on your campus. The good news is tracking technological engagement tends to be much easier than other metrics. Take a careful look at the numbers of people who visit your church website, download your mobile application (and what they're accessing on both platforms), and measure how many people are joining your streamed services if they cannot attend in person. As you make updates on your mobile app, denoting the number of people who download, the updates can give you a rough estimate of how many people are deleting the app.

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