

Ideas for Community of belonging for people with varied abilities during the COVID-19 pandemic:

Hear from Congregants

- Find out what the needs are and what people are willing to share or do for others in the congregation and community. [This online form from Moran Park Church](#) in Michigan is an example.
- Have families be a part of the broadcast worship services in various ways: have congregants record themselves singing a hymn or worship song; have someone put together visuals to accompany a prayer using PowerPoint or other slideshow presentation, someone recorded reading Scripture, etc.

Build and Keep Routine

- Utilize Facebook groups your community may already have in place, or set one up, or use another platform to regularly communicate. Hold “Facebook live” events at a regular time to build in consistent routine and connection.

Pray

- Welcome prayer requests in various forms -make it easy for people to text, email, call, or write in prayer requests, or fill out an online form like [this one \(from the Chapel in Green\)](#).
- Pray and encourage others to pray for those on the front lines working in health care, grocery stores, and other essential jobs, and the tech people supporting and trying to innovate the technology needed to support all

the demands right now. For 20 short scripted prayers you can use see [Christianity Today's prayer list](#).

- Record prayers and/or be available at specific, regular times to pray with and for individuals and situations. Use Scripture to pray, comfort, and lead. Many facilities and homes have workers who do not share the same faith as residents but may be willing to push play or answer the phone so that residents can have a mealtime, bedtime or other time prayer.
- Church leadership, your life has radically changed as well. Welcome the prayer support of others and find a way to let others know what needs you may have.

Share with Congregants

- Deliver sermons in written, audio and/or video formats while practicing social distancing.
 - Some locations have access to technology to utilize online resources; some do not. In some cases, a written manuscript can be sent (or emailed and printed out), and read aloud, and in some cases, an audio recording could be played.
 - [This broadcast service from Trinity Presbyterian Church](#) has ASL interpretation of [the entire service](#).
- If your community is free to go places, consider having “drop boxes” at specific locations where tithe & offering envelopes, orders of worship, lyrics to songs, a word of encouragement, perhaps the Sunday School lessons, something to represent the “big idea” of the message, and some hand sanitizer might be found by congregants in preparation of a

broadcast worship service, like an Anglican church in Washington is doing.

- Share Sunday school and Bible-teaching materials with families to be doing together at home. Some churches are turning their curricula into online material. [Together curriculum from Friendship Ministry](#) is online and works well for intergenerational and adult groups. Right now Friendship Ministry is offering the "[Jesus: Face to Face](#)" unit free of charge (use code at checkout: **INTHISTOGETHER**)
- Think about ways to send home (perhaps that's through an email they can print off) Sunday School or Children's Church lessons. Keep in mind parents are already having to figure out how to homeschool and face new challenges and becoming Bible teachers as well may be difficult. Use objects and sensory-rich experiences to engage in Scripture to connect in more ways than written, heard or watched, such as a painting (see [this example from Ridgewood CRC in Jenison, MI](#)), sculpture or household object. Check with your curriculum provider to see what options they are now offering, such as video teaching to support Bible lessons at home. [Go! Curriculum is currently offering their curriculum online for free.](#)

Use the Church Building

- Offer your building and facilities as a COVID-19 test site, [like Church of the Highlands Headquarters has done](#) in Birmingham, AL.
- There may be other ways your church building could be used to support your community.

Be the Church Where You Can

- Take the “Blessing challenge” using [this blessing](#), as a family, church or community!
- Share worship songs and hymns with friends, contacts, people you know in need of encouragement. Scriptural words, videos and favorite biblical songs sent with a personal touch make a difference! Try apps like [YouVersion](#), [Dwell](#) and other sources of Scripture.
- Extend help to those who are vulnerable (which, [according to the CDC](#) can include but are not limited to individuals who may have difficulty communicating, difficulty accessing medical care, may need help maintaining independence, require constant supervision, or may need help accessing transportation) in various ways:
 - Set aside time each day as part of your new routine practicing social distancing to make phone calls. Use a database, directory or phone-tree to have church leaders and members calling all those who are especially isolated. A script for these phone calls, which do not need to be long but regular, may look something [like this](#).
 - Consider a “family reimagined” or “congregation connect” ministry: Pair families, young adults, singles, with older congregants, connecting people despite isolation, giving each a chance to support someone in their congregation. Coordinate this effort to make sure people are staying connected and provide guidance for the phone calls they may be making to someone they’ve never met before. ([Here is a good way](#) to start). If there are “pew hosts” or mentor families in your congregation, have those families reach out to others from their pew, row or group.

- Find out how best to help people communicate with those in group homes, living facilities, etc.
 - Would the church or some families consider donating an iPad so that a facility can use it to FaceTime friends and family of residents?
 - Can emails to the office of the facility such as e-cards and notes be printed off internally and distributed to residents?
 - What might the caregivers and workers need right now - could churches and/or families “adopt” a facility/home and include the needs of the caregivers and workers?
- When calling someone who is sick with COVID-19, consider using [this guide](#).
- Grieve for lives lost. Losing someone is harder than ever without the ability to gather for a funeral. [This article offers some ideas](#).

Offer Community

- Try playing a game like “Simon Says”, “Yahtzee” or “Boggle” or having a find-n-show-an-object scavenger hunt using FaceTime or another video-chat with someone in your church, if you both have the game or you can put the camera on the game and both participate. Send word-searches full of encouraging words (you can make them yourself [here](#)).
- Hold online contests, such as having congregants do an activity, snap a picture of it, submit the picture to be entered for a prize, and let there be votes for the winner. This could be an obstacle course in the back yard, building something with LEGO, cooking something -use your

imagination! Allow people to showcase their areas of strength, whether that is moving, speaking, drawing, cooking, memorizing, etc.

- Be aware of the trauma and depression encroaching on the body of Christ.
 - Sending encouragement and keeping God's Word in front of everyone helps.
 - Mental health resources like this [document from Ridgewood CRC](#) can be sent to individuals by mail or online.
 - [This mini-book from Grace Alliance](#) is an excellent tool for personal growth. Perhaps you can come alongside individuals by phone calls or video chats to work with them through the material.
 - Connect with local mental health resources.

Engage in Worship

- Church at home does not have to mean passive watching or “consumer” status. Engage the congregation!
 - Tithes can still be given online and in the mail
 - Singing, dancing, using [praise streamers](#), clapping –encourage all that your congregation might do when together.
 - Include in your message questions to discuss, tasks to perform (and take a picture of, then submit to the church somehow?), like [the Blessing Challenge](#) or doing something for someone in need right now.
 - Have a platform for congregants to respond, [submit prayer requests](#), [offer or ask for help](#).

- Consider using online meeting “rooms” (like GoTo Meeting, Zoom, etc.) rather than broadcasting a message, allowing for interaction during the worship service and message. Perhaps even use online Bible Study materials like [Together](#) to engage in Scripture with the congregation.

Our thanks:

In addition to the congregations mentioned in this document, ideas for this were contributed by:

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