No Tech and Low Tech Ministry Ideas for Local Churches
by Susan Arnold, Holston Conference

Phone Tree Connection:
Churches have had phone tree connections for years. This is where people are grouped and someone is the leader of each phone call group. This leader is responsible for calling and sharing information with the people on their branch of the phone tree. Often this has been used to communicate weather delays, prayer concerns/praises, etc. Many congregations have these in place, but they would be great for all congregations. Sometimes these are organized by groups and the leader is the one that contacts people. For example, Sunday School teachers, UMW president, UMM president, Small Group Leaders, Youth Group, Choir, etc.

Another way that these have been organized is by alphabetical order: Aunt Sally might contact everyone whose last name begins with A-D; Danny might contact everyone whose last name begins with E-J; all the way through the end of the alphabet. This is very common in many churches, and it is easily created. The people who are naturally checking in on the stay at home saints and people that are healing from illness or surgeries are great phone tree leaders.

This can also be accomplished by using online systems such as the ones offered at www.call-em-all.com, www.dialmymcalls.com, or www.onecallnow.com. While this requires technology for the organizer, it does not require the congregation to have anything more than a telephone on which to answer the calls. NOTE: We have not researched these systems to learn cost and benefits, but all three offer free trials so that you can see if it will work for you.

Encourage Prayer Connection: Relationship building

Photo/membership directory:
Many congregations have a formal pictorial directory for their congregations. Others usually have a printed contact list for their congregations. These are good ways to stay connected with each other.

Encourage congregation members to pray daily for the people that are in the directory/on the contact list. This encourages people to pray for each other by name and helps keep them connected to God and each other in prayer. Extension: they could also call or send a note to people to check on them and let them know they prayed for them. Low technology: would be to use texts/email.

Have someone help review the directory/contact list and divide it up by page. Then, divide the page up into halves and invite two people from that page to pray for their half the people on that page.

(adaptation): Each week during social distancing, pair up people in the directory/contact list with each other as prayer partners. As a prayer partner they would agree to pray for their partner every day during the week, and would call them to check in on them during the week. These prayer assignments would change every week, so that they would get to connect with people they may know well or may be new connections for them. (If you have youth or children, I do this within their age group).

Pass the Peace: Find your name in the directory/contact list. Everyone on that page and the next page, are your neighbors around you. Connect with them by a phone call, card, or note that shares the peace of Christ with them. If you do not know them you have a chance to make a new neighbor.
Encourage Faith Formation Connection:
Several ways to continue to inspire, equip, and encourage everyone in taking next steps in their daily journey with God.

Daily Scripture:
Phone tree which was mentioned already can also be used to send daily or weekly bible verses, 3 study questions, and a prayer. This takes very little time, but is very encouraging.

If people have access to cell phones a daily verse can be texted to people. This way everyone in the congregation is connected through reading and praying the same daily scripture. If they have an email address this can be sent to these, too.

A weekly bible verse can be sent in an encouraging card or in an envelope through the postal service on a weekly basis.

Weekly Worship Liturgy:
On a weekly basis, a worship page or a weekly worship newsletter can be sent out via e-mail or postal service. The order of worship is similar to a Sunday morning bulletin. Except the prayers, sermon/devotional, song lyrics, offering moment are all written out. They can continue to have announcements, prayer requests, weekly challenges, etc. They can still be written in a way that makes them interactive. (Thanks to a dear lay servant, and clergy colleague in the Appalachia District for priming the pump for this idea)

Send out a weekly bible study, Sunday School, or small group study that includes a passage of scripture and a list of questions that would be helpful in diving deeply into the scripture. This can be email/text/ or weekly mail (I am aware of a person who has had to social distance for 2 years due to medical condition – and is reaching 7 states and Mexico from East TN)-So the world is the limit!

Monthly scripture writing plan – there are many of these that can be found on the internet. They are usually thematic (for example fear, Lent, or monthly) and they encourage writing the scripture out and focus on it and how God is speaking into it across your day. This one is low tech in that you need to have access to it, but then it can be printed and mailed out, or emailed.

Weekly Prayer Stations:
On a weekly basis send a set of cards for prayer stations. The Lord’s Prayer and Apostle’s Creed would be great beginning prayer stations. Prayer stations are interactive ways to pray that often include an action or word for people to participate in. There are many prayer stations on the internet that are ready to print and are free. Many require materials such as paper, pencil, markers, crayons, etc.

Encourage Relationship connections: We can continue our weekly connections in new ways:

Weekly Coffee Call / Lunch Call:
Think about setting a regularly scheduled time to connect with others by catching up over coffee during a phone call. This can be a time to chat and talk about what is happening in life, how you are doing, and pray for each other.
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Group Activities:
This can be as simple as everyone praying the Lord’s Prayer at the same time every day. This could be done with the Apostle’s Creed, too. Or everyone reading the same scripture at a specific time during the day for a week. These could change on a weekly basis. One church is reading Psalm 91 for the next 91 days as a way to remain connected.

Listening Check-ins:
Frequently check in on each other with a morning (evening) call/or text. Something as simple as Good morning/evening. How are things going today? Is there anything I can do to help you today? How can I pray with you?

Daily/Weekly connection challenge:
- Write an encouraging card to 1 person a week.
- Make an encouraging phone call to 1 person a week.

Sharing Stories:
Have everyone choose a favorite bible story write/type it and send it via email to everyone. If it needs to be mailed through the postal service it could be mailed out on a weekly basis.

Encourage Family/children/youth connections:
Some families and homes may have very little technology or want to limit their children/youth technology usage.
- Mail: hand written notes of encouragement are always meaningful to receive.
- Send a scripture, prayer, or creed for them to read/hear each day during the week.
- Bible trivia games, scripture puzzles, bible verse scavenger hunts
- Worship packet – including a bible story, coloring page/activity/and prayer.
- All of these can be sent weekly via the postal service or email.

Encourage Serving connections:
Listen and look for where God is already at work in the community, neighborhoods, congregation. Then, listen in prayer as to where you could join God in ministry.

Missional Hubs: Check in with your missional hubs and pray together regarding the needs and resources you are seeing in your communities. Support each other in prayer and connect to see how you could serve together without duplicating ministries.

Community prayer exchange: write down names of ministry partners, community, and world prayer needs. Mix them up, and pair community prayer opportunities with congregation members, too. So that we might have people with the last name beginning with A-B praying for local school children, EMS, Fire Station, etc. Send this prayer via postal service mail.
- Check in with local school systems. Many are distributing meals while they are practicing social distancing. This is helping students and families have the food that they count on and need.
- Send a card to a nursing home resident during the week. This can just say resident of name of nursing home and the nurses will help it get to a person that needs that special touch.
- Pick up groceries, medications, and run limited errands for those in the community, neighborhoods, and congregations that cannot.
- Thank a first responder, delivery person, grocery, restaurant, convenience store employees.
Encourage Generous Giving connections:
Be generous in your gratitude regarding the gifts, tithes, and offerings that are given.

- Send a thank you card, note, text, email sharing how generous giving is continuing the mission of the church.
- Encourage consistent giving – even when they are not physically present by making giving as easy as possible. Send information regarding the giving opportunities. This might be mailing a check, or having one or two persons at the church for a limited number of hours one day a week to receive their gifts and tithes. Consider sending a note that explains these options along with a thank you for the way they are continuing to give generously.
- Set up a drop box in a secure location outside the church so that people can leave a check without having to come in contact with others.

Even in low to no technology environments the world still seems to be at the end of our fingertips.

I want to end brainstorming and sharing time with a poem of blessing from Jan Richardson called,

**Blessed Are You Who Carry the Light:**

_Blessed are you_
who bear the light
in unbearable times,
who testify
to its endurance
amid the unendurable,
who bear witness
to its persistence
when everything seems
in shadow
and grief.

_Blessed are you_
in whom
the light lives,
in whom
the brightness blazes—
your heart
a chapel,
an altar where
in the deepest night
can be seen
the fire that
shines forth in you
in unaccountable faith,
in stubborn hope,
in love that illumines
every broken thing
it finds.