



Digital Disciples Ministry Program

Keeping PCUSA Churches Open For Business Distance Ministry

Step By Step Guide

By John Fong

Johnfong@elizabethpresbytery.org

@AskJohnFong

Introduction

The goal of this guide is to provide step-by-step, actionable strategies to help your church and/or ministry continue to minister to your congregation, followers, and your larger community, even when they can't be physically present in church. Distance Ministry integrates many strategies from my Digital Disciples Ministry Program.

These strategies are relatively simple so that almost any church and/or ministry can implement some or all of them with limited resources. Think of these strategies as baby steps. But, as I was reminded by my friend Pastor Marilyn from Forsyth Presbyterian Church, baby steps are still difficult for babies. Do what you can with the goal of meeting the needs of the people God has called you to serve.

Who am I?

My name is John Fong and I'm a member of First Presbyterian Church in Metuchen, New Jersey. I am married to Jennifer, and I'm a proud dad to three wonderful teens. In 2017 I received an Innovation Grant from the Synod of the Northeast to help churches in four New Jersey presbyteries establish and better utilize digital communications for their ministries. Based on this work and my experience with churches, I developed the Digital Discipleship Ministry program, and now work with churches in three Synods (PCUSA). The program utilizes a variety of current marketing and engagement methodologies that have been adapted for churches and other ministries. All strategies in this program are data and analytics driven, so results can be quantifiable.



Distance Ministry

Designed to meet the needs of church goers who may not always be physically present; combines informal ministries with traditional church.

In this guide you'll find step-by-step actionable Distance Ministry strategies in baby steps.

Preparation

- Make sure church leadership and volunteers contact every member to personally reassure and connect with each member in this time of uncertainty.
- Request that all church leadership, Elders, Deacons, and other members in leadership consider helping with ministering digitally to membership. Organize tech helper members who can assist those who may need help with the technology required. But keep the technology simple and straightforward to make it accessible to as many people as possible and to reduce any frustration.
- During individual contacts, make sure the church has the most current and up-to-date contact information for each church member. You will need email, cell phone, and landline. Encourage members to follow your church Facebook page while still on the call.
- Prepare a contact list, be ready to email, text, connect on social media with all church members and make phone calls. Now is the time to make sure all church members who are on social media follow the church social media accounts. 7 out of 10 Americans now connect on social media, so it's a great place to reach them.
- Prepare to minister, connect, send messages, text, email, and post on social media to your membership several times a week.
- Continue to have Sunday services at the same time digitally and on social media, whether or not the service can be held physically.
- **Implementation progress will depend on your resources. But start immediately with the Distance Ministry strategies you can do.**
- Moving forward, make sure to include a message for offerings or donations whenever possible and appropriate. Set up an online mechanism for donations and provide instructions for their use now.



Connect with all your members and reaffirm your commitment to them.

Make sure you have updated contact information for all members. Explain how the church will continue to minister to them.



Connect digitally and personally with your members. Keep tech simple and user-friendly.

Start Now. Stream Live. Facebook Groups. Chat Groups. 60/90 Second Sermons. E-newsletters. Online Giving.

@AskJohnFong

Establish Facebook & Distance Ministries Part 1

- Establish teams of staff and/or volunteers for each Digital ministry. Teams can be as small as two people, and some staff or volunteers can be involved in multiple digital ministries. Set up time: 1 day. Add teams as you go.
- Establish more Administrators on your church Facebook page to help with each task. Start with 4 Administrators, add more if necessary. Lead by committee or assign one person to lead your Facebook team. Set up time: a few hours.
- Make sure all church members who can connect with your church on Facebook do, to Like/Follow the church Facebook page and follow up with them (ask church leadership to follow up with individual members).
- Set up Facebook groups on your church Facebook page. Start with one or two new Facebook groups and add more as you go (for example, a group for Elders, Deacons, Choir, PW, Bowling club, Yoga club and others). Creating these smaller, more intimate groups will help make sure no one feels left out. It will help to maintain and strengthen relationships among members and the church. Set up time: 2 days.
 - Assign and/or identify members in each Facebook group to help moderate, initiate conversations, minister, and monitor the group.
 - Establish the rules of the road: acceptable content, appropriate interactions, keep everything positive and supportive in these Facebook groups. This task will require two staff/volunteers to establish the groups and to help supervise groups daily.
- Facebook Live Streaming. You will need a cell phone or mobile device and a tripod or stand to hold the device. The best way to learn is to practice a few Facebook Live posts. Delete practices when done. Set up time: 1 day.
 - You will also need dependable WiFi or a Mobile Hotspot.
 - Ask members to donate a used cell phone/mobile device with a decent camera and a tripod to save money. This task requires at least two staff/volunteers to implement.



Connect digitally and personally with your members. Keep tech simple and user-friendly.

Start Now. Stream Live. Facebook Groups. Chat Groups. 60/90 Second Sermons. E-newsletters. Online Giving.

@AskJohnFong

Establish Facebook & Distance Ministries Part 2

- Establish teams of staff and/or volunteers for each Digital ministry. Teams can be as small as two people, and some staff or volunteers can be involved in multiple ministries.
- Establish Chat Groups on apps such as GroupMe or in Facebook Groups for Prayer Circles, Bible studies and other group ministries. This task requires at least two staff or volunteers to implement. Set up time: 1 day. Start with one group, add more as you go.
- Develop 60 or 90 Second Sermon videos. This task requires at least two staff/volunteers to implement. Set up time: 1 day.
 - Sound is most important
 - Authenticity is more important than perfection
 - Use a simple teleprompter (optional)
 - Prepare to repurpose these sermons for various channels: Voicemail sermons (where people can dial in to hear the sermon), upload to YouTube or Facebook and send the video/sermon link out by email and text to your congregation. Make it easily sharable.
 - [Here is a link to examples of 90 second sermons on Facebook](#). These are professionally done, but you don't need to be perfect! Focus on being authentic and being yourself and it will be great!
 - Send out a simple, concise weekly digital newsletter to keep members up to date. Set up time: 2 days
- Establish the [PCUSA online giving payment platform](#) to collect offerings and funds. I highly recommend using them because they offer great customer service and they understand your church. Set up time: 2 days.
- Need help establishing these ministries? Please [contact me](#).

Establish Low Tech Distance Ministries

- Establish a Dial-A-Prayer voice mail message so people can call in for comfort whenever they need it and leave a message asking for prayer. Make sure to include a request for offerings. Have a pastor or staff member confirm that the church received the prayer request by email/text.
 - People can listen to a pre-recorded prayer.
 - People can leave a prayer request.
- Establish recorded 60 or 90 second phone message sermons so people can call in and listen to it at their convenience. To save time this can be an edited recording from your Facebook Live streaming videos. Make sure to include a request for offerings.
- Establish a GroupMe account or prepare for group text messages on your phone.
- Establish a team of volunteers to call those who lack the technology to stay connected.
 - Leave inspirational/motivational voice messages.
 - Ask them to pray for others.
 - Call to check up and keep them updated.
- [Contact me](#) if you need help with content.



Connect by voice and personally with your members. Keep low tech and user-friendly.

Start Now. Dial-A-Prayer. Voice Mail Messages. Group Text. 60/90 Second Phone Message Sermons.



Connecting personally and with targeted ministries with your members & beyond.

Identify a need or interest. Minister regularly. Community service. Grow it. Share God's love.

@AskJohnFong

Other Ministry Ideas

- Use Zoom for a Conference Call Ministry. Use it for meetings, Bible Study, etc. The free Zoom platform offers online tutorials.
- Gamification ministry:
 - Coordinate family friendly online multiplayer games for all ages.
 - Bible Verse scavenger hunt.
 - Funny Riddles.
 - Group Crossword puzzle.
 - Sharing Favorite Bible verses, inspirational/motivational quotes.
 - Guessing games from clues, partial photos, music.
 - Photo or video clip of the day challenge.
 - Sharing gratitude for the day.
 - Photo/video of your favorite 4 legged friend.
- Online Youth ministry:
 - Youths are used to connecting everyday. Offer daily inspiration.
 - Gamification ministry, using online games/platforms like Xbox.
 - Multiplayer games online.
 - Other social media platforms like Snapchat, TikTok, Instagram.
 - Virtual hangouts and in person hangouts (if possible).
- Meal Delivery and other door to door deliveries.
- House/Home Church small gatherings.
- Would you like more suggestions and ideas? Please [contact me](#).

Create Content & Minister Regularly

- Share Bible verses on all your channels.
- Share Inspirational/motivational thoughts on all channels.
- Post photos of church members and photos from church.
- Share church music.
- Upload video clips.
- Share prayer requests.
- Record daily voicemail prayers.
- Record daily voice Bible verses.
- Host a daily Facebook Live lectionary Bible verse reading.
- Post good news!
- Send out weekly e-newsletters.
- Provide daily children's and youth ministry interactions.
- Need help with content or creating content? Please [contact me](#). I spend almost 50% of my time creating content for churches and presbyteries.



Build & strengthen relationships from a distance digitally & regularly

Minister daily & regularly. Bible verses. Inspirational/motivational. Touchpoints. Recordings. Texts. Emails. Phone calls. Memes. Interacting with God's love.

Final Thoughts

These are uncertain times, but I also see this as opportunity for our churches to minister more profoundly, touch more lives, strengthen relationships with our members and connect with our larger community when they need our churches the most.

Based on my years of experience working with struggling churches, the key to success is to start immediately, and do what you can do now. Once you start, tap into this new energy, identify those willing to help, and follow through consistently. Make sure to share the results of these incredible ministries with everyone, get as many people involved as possible, and focus on growing by ministering and nurturing one relationship at a time.

If your church needs more hands-on help, feel free to contact me. My fees are very cost effective and can be adjusted to fit any budget. The work I do is based on data so the results are quantifiable. We set benchmarks and utilize automated systems to track improvements.

- Ask your questions at John's Help Desk on Facebook ~ @AskJohnFong
- Email me: johnfong@elizabethpresbytery.org
- Text me: 732.318.7955
- Join your local Digital Disciples Ministry or Distance Ministry support group to enhance your success once it is available.
- Please contact me to learn more about the Digital Disciples Ministry Program or Distance Ministry Program.

