



MINISTRY
RESOURCE CENTER

EMMANUEL CHRISTIAN SEMINARY AT MILLIGAN

RESOURCES
for SACRED
DIGITAL SPACES

Resources for Sacred Digital Spaces

A free packet provided by the [Ministry Resource Center](#) at [Emmanuel Christian Seminary at Milligan](#). The Ministry Resource Center is part of the [Thriving in Ministry Initiative](#), funded by the Lilly Endowment, LLC.

Churches everywhere are concerned about reduced ministry capacity during COVID-19. As ministers, one of our greatest challenges is continuing the mission of the church in the face of the unknown. We want to empower you to prepare your church to not just survive, but to thrive and grow in that space. The virus may have taken away traditional church services, but we know as Christians that church is a seven-day affair, and that God can do incredible things in this time. We hope that we can be a part of helping your church experience that blessing.

How to get the most out of this resource:

Ministry is best done in collaboration with others. Church staff, eldership, key leadership, and lay volunteers are all folks from your church who can benefit from being a part of this conversation. We have set the groundwork for this by collaborating with local churches to tell success stories of moving online and developing sustainability and missional success during COVID-19. We also link to other resources and tools made available for free.

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- **“How Will We Gather?”** – A linked tool from [Rooted Good](#) to help you make decisions for gathering while sustaining or expanding the mission of your church.
- **Listening During COVID-19 and Beyond** – How to develop discovery teams from your congregation to help you listen, learn, and collaborate past COVID-19.
- **“Want to Live Stream?”** – A resource for starting your own live streamed services, covering a range of cost-efficient streaming models as low as \$150.
- **“Which Video Conferencing Tool is Best for You?”** – A chart and prompts to help determine which video conferencing tool is best for your church.
- **Tips for Gathering Online for Digital Church Newcomers** – A set of ten (10) guidelines for churches in establishing communities online.
- **“What about Tithing?”** – A helpful guide to launching and managing online gifts and tithes for the first time.
- **Stories from the Community** – Anecdotes and resources from local churches in East TN that are successfully ministering to their folks online during COVID-19.

Rooted Good's "How Will We Gather?" Exercise

Making decisions as a church can be difficult even during a pandemic. In his book [Canoeing the Mountains](#), Tod Bolsinger references Heifetz and Linsky, stating, "Leadership is disappointing your own people at a rate they can absorb." It is never easy to make decisions about moving online. There are many questions facing a church during a time such as this:

- How much loss can our people sustain? How do we equip people to deal with this loss and disappointment?
- Is church just a show we all stream on Sunday morning right now? What is the core missional DNA of the church?
- What are we continuing to do just because we like it, even if it is not truly effective?
- How do we bring in people who are different from us and listen to those who have been on the margins of our network?
- Am I only listening to people my own age and background? What are the unique needs of someone who is different from me right now?

Rooted Good, a UK based organization, has developed a tool to help you with these processes. Among the questions the tool will ask you are:

- Why do we gather?
- How were we fulfilling this purpose pre-COVID-19?
- Can we do it in the same way? [And if not,] how do we accomplish this?

Although you will need to enter your email address to download, the resource is free.

The myth is that when making decisions, we alone are responsible and must shoulder the burden by ourselves. This is categorically untrue. Rather, "our task is leading so that others can adapt and thrive" (Bolsinger, *Canoeing the Mountains*, 101). When we invite others into the process of making difficult decisions, especially laypersons and eldership, we uplift everyone and lead in the manner of Christ. The Rooted Good tool is a collaborative tool to help you do just that.

Follow the link [here](#) to download the tool and begin making decisions to help expand your church's mission, even in the midst of a pandemic.

Listening During COVID-19 and Beyond:

Discovery Teams: What are they and why should I have one?

A discovery team is an exploration-oriented group of trusted individuals who help you search out the wisest way forward on a project or initiative. They can be experts, experienced volunteers, friends, mentors, and more. Better yet, they can be an efficient tool to include your unofficial leaders in decision making processes and show the congregation that you're listening and leading as a team. Proverbs 27:17 reminds us that "iron sharpens iron, and one person sharpens the wits of another." In times as difficult as a pandemic, the best way forward is to collaborate with others who are in the same boat or a bit farther out to sea. Plumbing the depths together is better than attempting to go it alone.

Organizing Your Discovery Team:

- **Identify your project or initiative and its scope.**
 - What is the key issue I must address? What steps do I want to take?
 - Think beyond pandemic transition teams: these people are here to dream up creative moves. It's not just solving an issue – it's creating culture.
- **Decide who you want to recruit for your team. Here are some questions to ask yourself:**
 - Who would be willing to devote time to this team?
 - Who has the most insight into this area of concern?
 - Can I trust this person to give me honest feedback even when it is hard to hear?
 - Does this person have a window into needs that others might have that I am not familiar with?
 - Consider if your church's diversity is represented on your team (a good resource for this is Scot McKnight's *A Fellowship of Differents*). Think intergenerational, inclusive of men and women, and multi-racial.
 - Seek out your *mearcstapas*. Makoto Fujimura, author of *Culture Care*, identifies these as people on the edges of your church and its culture, not quite "in" or "out." They can be especially beneficial in illuminating pathways to grow and move forward as a church.

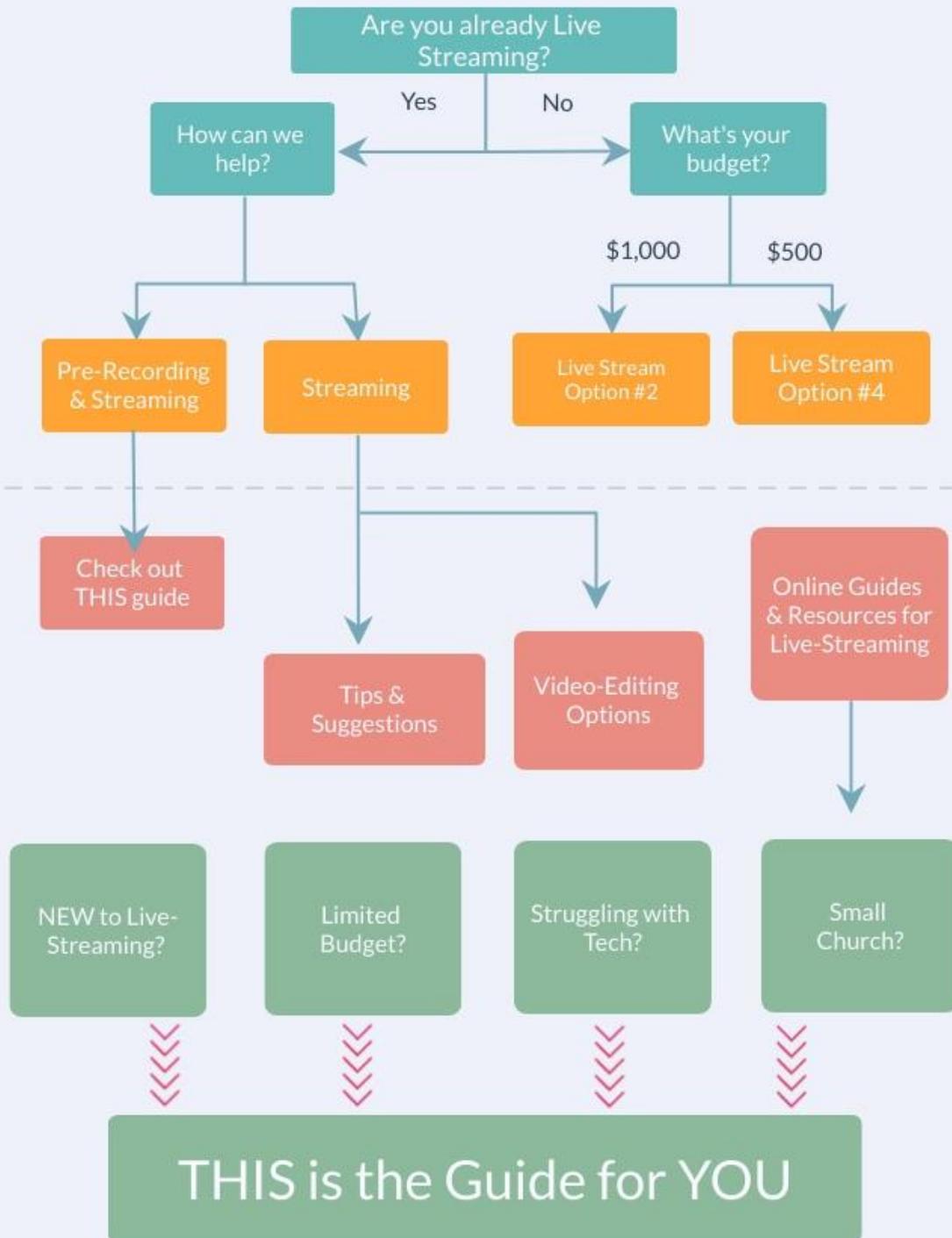
- **Establish a clear goal/prerogative for your team.**
- **Set a clear schedule and time commitment for your team.**
- **Communicate efficiently and frequently.**
- **Create space for building community and culture.**
 - If you have an application such as Slack, Microsoft Teams, etc. that you like, invite them to join. [Slack](#), Microsoft Teams, and other similar systems such as [Mural](#) are web-based programs that help organize information, share files, and encourage collaborative brainstorming.
 - Consider playing trivia in Zoom. Host celebrations and award ceremonies for your key players and contributors. Additionally, consider throwing a party using the free website [Mixaba](#).
 - You can also create event pages in the YouVersion Bible app to post scripture, images, hymn text, etc. to go along with your service.

Getting the Most out of Your Discovery Team Beyond COVID-19:

1. Pray at the start of each meeting and/or pray to close out the meeting.
2. Establishing a team of people from your congregation will ensure its commitment to your church and to the ongoing mission. It will better enable you to utilize this team as a go-to resource for future projects.
3. Emphasize how appreciative you are of their help in moving forward.
4. Make a chart of the qualities and features of each member of your team. What do they excel in? How might they be of help to you in the future?
5. Continue offering opportunities for your team to help if they are members of the congregation. If they are new leaders, offer support and encouragement.
6. The best teams are flexible teams. Recruit people to new teams or invite people into your first team anticipating longevity past COVID-19.

WANT TO LIVE STREAM?

CONNECT TO THE BEST & MOST COST-EFFECTIVE LIVE-STREAM OPTIONS



Online Resources for Live Streaming

Each following link will take you to that site's live streaming guide.



[Grow a Healthy Church](#) is a site with a great introductory guide to live streaming that has fantastic options for small churches and those just beginning to live stream.



[Churchfront](#) is an online blog, YouTube channel, podcast, and website with free resources to help with live streaming and setup.



[Boxcast](#) is a complete, easy-to-use live video streaming solution for non-profit and other organizations.



[Pastorwill](#) is a guide for effective church ministry through communications and technology.



[Pro Church Tools](#) is a site with high quality free tools, guides, and help for churches. See their YouTube channel, podcast, and blog for free resources, guidance videos, and price comparisons for video streaming options for churches.



[PushPay](#) is a site featuring engagement technology built to help reach people. Free resources and guides are available on the site for digital giving, church apps, management software, and live streaming.

Or, email us at the Ministry Resource Center at mrc@milligan.edu for a free consultation on live streaming solutions for your church.

Live Stream Package Suggestions for Beginners

A guide by Lance Hanbey, Associate Minister at Unicoi Christian Church in Unicoi, TN.

Live Streaming Package #1 | \$150 – 200

The most basic level – all you really need to live stream these days is a smartphone. The quickest way to run a live stream is to simply use a smartphone that is owned by someone in your church. Chances are, one of your leaders, pastors, or congregants has a smartphone they can use to live stream. However, that model is not sustainable. We recommend the purchase of three items for this most basic, entry-level set-up:

- **iPhone 6 or better, or an Android equivalent**
 - Get an iPhone 6 for \$70-100. If new, it will cost around \$200. When our church started live streaming, we purchased a used iPhone 6 for \$80 and are still using it. We also now run all of our church's social media through the phone as well. Naturally, the higher quality phone you purchase or use, the higher quality in video content. Some larger churches have been using the latest iPhone model for filming, which costs about \$1,000.
- **Microphone**
 - An immediate quality upgrade will come for just about \$20-40, purchasing a small microphone for your iPhone. You can spend more money for a better microphone, but if your budget is limited, this is a quick and simple way to improve your audio. You can purchase [shotgun](#) or [lavalier](#) microphones that are compatible with a phone. Ensure that the phone is compatible with the microphone before you purchase it.
- **Tripod**
 - Unless you want to keep leaning your phone against the back of the pew or an old stack of hymnals, it's worth it to buy a low-cost tripod. You can pick one up for about \$30.

The total cost for this package can be as affordable as \$150-200. Anyone from your staff can purchase a phone, a microphone, and a tripod, and begin live streaming your services. This is probably one of the cheapest and best options for live streaming.

****NOTE – The stand and the microphone are not necessary, but will vastly improve the level of quality quickly and affordably.***

Live Streaming Package #2 | \$700 – 1200

With live streaming, the upgrades in quality come with quick cost upgrades. The goal in this upgrade is to be able to move away from having a phone mounted right up in front of the sanctuary and to be able to film from the back of the church, streaming services through a computer. This way, everyone enjoys the option of streaming to multiple sites such as Facebook, YouTube, Instagram TV, and more. Here's what you need:

- **Camcorder**

- The highest recommended camcorder was the [Canon VIXIA HF R800](#). It has good video quality and costs roughly \$300-350. If your church has a sound board, you can connect the sound board to the camcorder or to the capture device (see next).



← The Canon VIXIA HF R800 Camera used by Unicoi CC.

- **Capture Device**

- You will have to run the video output from the camcorder to a [capture device](#) in order to stream it from a computer. The price is variable depending on the quality and longevity of what you want to purchase. You can pick up a high quality one for around \$350 - \$400.



← A typical capture device.

- **Cords**

- You will need a [HDMI mini to HDMI cable](#) (about \$15) to connect the camcorder to the capture device. [If you order the bundle package for the VIXIA HF R800 it will come with this.] You will also need a [USB 3.0 male to male cord](#) (about \$15) to run from the capture device to your computer. Finally, to connect the camcorder or capture device to our soundboard, we needed a [TRS Male to Dual 1/4" TS Male cable](#) (about \$20) to link the sound to the video.

If you play your cards right, you can make this package happen for around \$700.

Tips and Suggestions from A Small Church for Live Streaming Success

- Be sure to create your live streaming set-up in conjuncture with the equipment and tools that you already have at your disposal. Unicoi Christian Church's governing board has made live streaming a much higher priority during the pandemic season and was willing to spend more money to make sure services stream smoothly and with quality.
 - Think about what the technology you have on-site is like. The computer UCC had in the audio/visual booth did not have the speed or capacity to run the software needed to stream. UCC made the decision to spend over and above budget to purchase a better computer in order to make the more advanced live streaming package work.
- When Unicoi CC upgraded to the second live streaming package, we had three thoughts in mind. Consider these when implementing a package:
 - We wanted to video record our service from the back of the sanctuary. This would give us more options to stream a worship set as well as the sermon. The camcorder has great zoom capabilities and good video quality for the cost.
 - We also wanted to be able to utilize the sound equipment that we already have in place (shotgun mics, lavalier mics, etc.). The camcorder let us connect the sound to our video and be able to run the entire live stream from our audio/video booth in the back of the sanctuary.
 - Finally – we also wanted the option to be able to live stream to multiple platforms. Using just the phone can limit your live streaming options. Having video/sound feed coming into a computer grants you the ability to stream to a variety of online platforms.
- If you have a larger budget – we recommend expanding your options. Check out some of the online guides and resources for live streaming for more info on DSLR camera options as opposed to camcorders, or more expensive options. There are excellent online resources already out there, and this guide is not an exhaustive list of the possibilities available.

Choosing Platforms for Live Streaming Your Services

There are a variety of platforms online that you can stream your service through. During the initial COVID outbreak when everything from the service was online, the option to pre-record and then premiere services was optimal. However, if in-person services resume, having the ability to live stream the service as it occurs is essential. You might discover that 75% or more of your congregation has access to or is using Facebook. Due to this, many churches have made Facebook their primary streaming platform for services. However, there are an assortment of good options available. The more platforms that you have your service streaming on, the more options you have to garner a larger audience.

Options for Live Streaming Platforms, with Links to Tutorials:

- [Facebook Live](#)
- [YouTube Live](#)
- [Instagram TV](#)
- [Twitch](#)

Those are some of the most popular options, but there are plenty more. Check them out [here](#).

Encouragement in Live Streaming

Our number one recommendation is this: *don't be afraid to ask for help*. You've already taken a great first step in looking to this packet, but reach out to those around you in your neighborhood – from different denominations and different backgrounds. We're all in this together. Use your discovery team to help you as you work through this process of live streaming your services.

Figuring out how to live stream is definitely a big learning curve. You will have to be willing to make mistakes, learn through trial and error, and figure it out as you go. Lance Hanbey, creator of this section of the packet, says, "We had one Sunday morning where the iPhone we were streaming with decided to auto-update right in the middle of the sermon that I was preaching! But God is good, and I believe that the learning curve is worth every minute of it if it can make the gospel more accessible."

What About Tithing? A Short Guide to Online Giving

Tool	Platform	Price/Fees	Decision Makers
SecureGive	Mobile, online, text, kiosk giving, check scanning	Tiered monthly; fees are 1.75% (debit) and 2.5% (credit) + \$0.30 off each transaction.	Enterprise-level security keeping donor info safe Bridges gap from online to in person with kiosks, which lower transaction fees to as low as 1.5%
Tithe.ly	Mobile, online giving integrations, kiosk giving, admin gift entry, and text to give (additional fee)	Free (\$19/mo if using text-to-give); 2.9% + \$0.30 off each transaction	Convenience for givers and admins through app integration “Cover the fee” option for donors
PayPal	Online giving integrations (website and email)	Free; 2.2% + \$0.30 per transaction for qualifying nonprofits	Donate button capable of being embedded on a website or email Custom “landing” page with a link only available to your church Recurring payment system
PushPay	Mobile, online, text, kiosk giving	Tiered monthly cost; fees vary by payment type from 2.5% – 3% per transaction	PushPay was designed to increase regular monthly giving App use for connection cards, sermon notes, and more
EasyTithe	Mobile, Facebook App integration, text to give, and kiosk (additional fees)	Free version is 3% + \$0.39/transaction; price varies depending on the plan.	Convenience for givers and admins through free app integration and recurring payment “Cover the fee” option for donors Online coaching system

GiveLify	Mobile, online giving integrations, kiosk giving, admin gift entry	Free; fees are 2.9% + \$0.30 per transaction	Useful for large or small churches through app integration and simplicity of systems Free setup and download
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Making Sense of Cents in Online Giving

The process of online giving can seem intimidating. The apparent loss of gifts through a percentage pulled from each transaction can complicate a seemingly otherwise simple practice. Nevertheless, an increasing number of congregants across the U.S. are leaning toward online giving as a normalized paradigm for tithing. In choosing a system, consider the following:

- What can our church afford now and in the future? Does this system fit into a sustainable budget for the next several fiscal years?
- How should this investment help grow our church past COVID-19?
- What does this system bring to the table that we did not already possess in our church, especially beyond merely digital gifts?
- How will the system that we implement reflect and engender the values of Christ-centered generosity and stewardship?
- Who could help us administrate this system if no one on staff is capable? What resources are available to help if the system malfunctions?

What about the alternatives to online giving?

Mailed checks are always a reliable alternative to online giving. However, the security afforded by online giving gives churches the confidence of knowing the tithe will enter their account with little to no risk. If you receive checks by mail and your mailbox is unlocked, ensure that your mail is routinely and promptly checked to prevent mail theft. If your church is small and local, it might be wiser to have givers drop by the office and leave their tithe with a staff member.

If you have annual givers, they may be apprehensive about giving online because of larger transaction fees, reducing the amount of their gift. They may also be reluctant to cover that fee if the option is applicable. If necessary, consider asking your annual givers to move up their timeline and make their gift earlier.

Tips for Gathering Online for Digital Church Newcomers

1. **Practice and preach punctuality.** Connect to a video chat about five minutes ahead of time to mediate the risk of being five minutes late.
2. **Be mindful of your surroundings.** Try recreating your office space if facilitating a meeting from home or create a comfortable, welcoming environment in your office.
3. **Plan for tech problems.** Find someone talented with technology (beyond yourself!) to help with any issues on the video conference while it's ongoing. You can cut down on issues ahead of time if you are able to utilize a wired connection instead of Wi-Fi.
4. **Watch your voice.** Mute yourself when not talking or if you are typing. If you are talking, don't type - people will hear every keystroke. If you can, wear headphones with a built-in microphone to reduce background noise.
5. **Over-organize.** Take notes on attendance if you aren't recording the meeting (or even if you are). Requiring registration ahead of time will also help you distill who is showing up, at what times, and help you organize best practices for your church later on.
6. **Facilitate, don't dominate.** Community guidelines for online interaction are an effective tool to remind members that online meetings can still be a sacred space. Create room for key leadership to help guide meetings effectively.
7. **Take your time and be patient.** Body language is harder to read online and it is difficult for people to keep up, especially if there is lag in the video conferencing system. Try operating a little more slowly.
8. **Focus on clarity.** Keep information shared in meetings light and informative; present text-heavy material ahead of time for folks to familiarize themselves with or share them during the meeting via chat, email, text message, etc.
9. **Respond frequently in chat.** Silence is good in limited measure in person but can be deafening online.
10. **Breathe.** Breath prayers to start and end your meetings (by yourself or as a group) will help stabilize you and prepare you for facilitating spiritual time.

Stories from the Community:

Testimonies to Ministerial Thriving During COVID-19

Lance Hanbey, Associate Minister at Unicoi Christian Church

I am the Associate Minister at Unicoi Christian Church in Unicoi, Tennessee. I am a current graduate student at Emmanuel Christian Seminary at Milligan University and work at the church part-time while attending school. Over the last few months, like many, I have had to navigate a massive communication shift at school and especially at the church.

I contributed to this guide from my own personal experience of navigating a tight budget and learning how to pull off a live streamed service at a moment's notice. I hope and pray that this guide will be beneficial and helpful as you navigate the world of church during COVID-19. I believe that God can use even our fumbling attempts digitally to communicate powerful truth and change lives for Christ and advance the kingdom!

Being the young guy on staff at 26 years old with an older demographic congregation, including a leadership team in that demographic, I was faced with the challenge of shifting all of our operations at the church online. With the COVID-19 outbreak in mid-March 2020, our leadership decided to cancel our in-person services. I was suddenly tasked with live streaming on Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights for our programming every week.

I am not an A/V (audio/visual) go-to guy or expert. However, being younger, I do have a decent grip on computers and technology, more so than the rest of our leadership team. Thus, I was tasked with transitioning us to live streaming and have been doing a massive amount of research over the last few months on the best and most efficient methods. Our church is smaller, averaging around 30 people on a Sunday. This means that we did not have much of a budget for audio-visual production. I have many friends at larger churches that already had extensive live streaming set-ups, while we started live streaming with just my iPhone.

I can't tell you how many phone calls I have made of the last few months to friends of mine that work at other churches: pastors, youth ministers, tech and audio teams, etc. My saving grace in learning how to live stream was because of the people that were willing to come alongside me and help. I was given \$1,000 dollars for my first budget to upgrade our live streaming set-up at church. After calling many of my friends who worked at larger churches I quickly realized that their \$50-60,000 budgets and productions were way out of reach. The lens alone for the cameras they were using was my entire budget for a live stream. What God did with Unicoi CC through live stream, however, was to grow our congregation's reach through our online presence, even on a budget. Through our new system, we meet new worshippers online.

I am more than willing to answer questions or help in any way I can. Feel free to reach out to me at lancehanbey@gmail.com and my cell: 360-367-1850.

Jon Toler, Associate Minister at Oak Grove Christian Church

Oak Grove Christian Church is a small church of about 30-40 members that is located on Powder Branch Road only a couple of miles from Milligan University. Here are some of the ways that we have adapted during the pandemic, and what we plan to do to expand our ministry during this time.

During the early part of the pandemic we canceled services like most churches and put our material online like most churches. The main difference for us was that we chose to use Google Drive rather than Facebook Live, Zoom, YouTube, or other options. This allowed us to have one static link leading to subfolders for each type of material. (I'm not including that here because it now has material unrelated to the pandemic.) This choice was somewhat out of necessity, but has worked out for us as a one stop shop for anything that we produce for our members.

We picked up individualized communion from the Christian bookstore and distributed that to our members during the shutdown time and my wife and one of the other children's leaders sent letters to the kids every couple of weeks (somewhat similar to the kind of letter you would send to kids who go off to camp).

We had [daily prayers](#), [weekly services](#), and a [spiritual emergency kit](#) that we put together using surplus material from the children's department. Any church would be free to use those resources and I can share what's left of the supplies on a first come, first serve basis.

As far as ways to improve for next time, I hope we are able to have members of the congregation record their prayers, have our worship team record public domain hymns, and have our leadership team record communion meditations so that any services during a shutdown period would be more inclusive. We also intend to have a devotional prepared, which to this point is only partially complete. Our church will be able to meet at a safe distance under a pavilion if needed until the weather breaks this fall.

Blessings,
Jon Toler

Additional stories from the community will be added to this handbook over time. Come back and check our website for updates to this guide and more!