

SPECIAL REPORT FOR CHURCH LEADERS

# Building a continuous church



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## ENGAGING PEOPLE: IT'S NOT JUST FOR SUNDAYS ANYMORE.

Once, the idea of church revolved solely around Sunday morning. People would show-up, park in their favorite parking spot, find their favorite seat in the sanctuary, sing some hymns, hear a sermon, then head home where they'd set down their Bible and not pick it up again until the next Sunday morning when the routine would start all over again.

Not anymore.

Today's thriving, vibrant, fast-growing churches are places where people are engaged in one another's lives continually throughout the week and around the clock. That kind of connectivity comes naturally because it's the way their lives work outside the confines of their spiritual walk — they text, chat, e-mail, Twitter and Facebook at all hours of the day, why should their interface with the church be any different?



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out the week.

### Lonely, busy, hurting people — people who long for community.

People today are busier than ever. Their commutes are longer. Their kids are involved in umpteen different activities and sports. And they're working longer hours to make ends meet. As a result, their spiritual lives fall by the wayside — Christian or not.

For those who already know Jesus, many know deep down that plugging-in throughout the week is how they can grow deeper in their faith and become connected to others, but the time commitment often is viewed as “just one more thing” to fit into an already busy schedule. Still, there is a longing, nagging desire to know and be known in a local group of fellow believers that doesn't go away.

Similarly, for those who aren't Christians but who venture into the church (research by UScongregations.org shows 10% of newcomers fall into this category) looking for spiritual answers, they too share a similar hunger to belong. To have their needs heard and to be part of a caring gathering of fellow human beings.

And regardless of whether they're believers or not, all people are flesh-and-blood human beings with a deep-seated desire not to be “sold” something or to feel “handled” by a cold, stereotypical “visitor” system.

Bottom line: everyone wants to feel more welcome and find their fit faster so they can connect and stay connected — not just on Sunday mornings, but throughout the week. That's the very definition of a continuous church.

### When things fire on all cylinders, something special happens.

A recent survey found nearly two-thirds (64%) of average church members don't have a strong sense of belonging or feel a part what's happening in their fellowship community. Churches that score better on the "sense of belonging" scale are those who cast an inspiring vision for their future and those whose members are experiencing ongoing spiritual growth.

When people are part of a healthy, connected body of believers, the church grows and its members thrive, bringing about a contagious energy and enthusiasm.

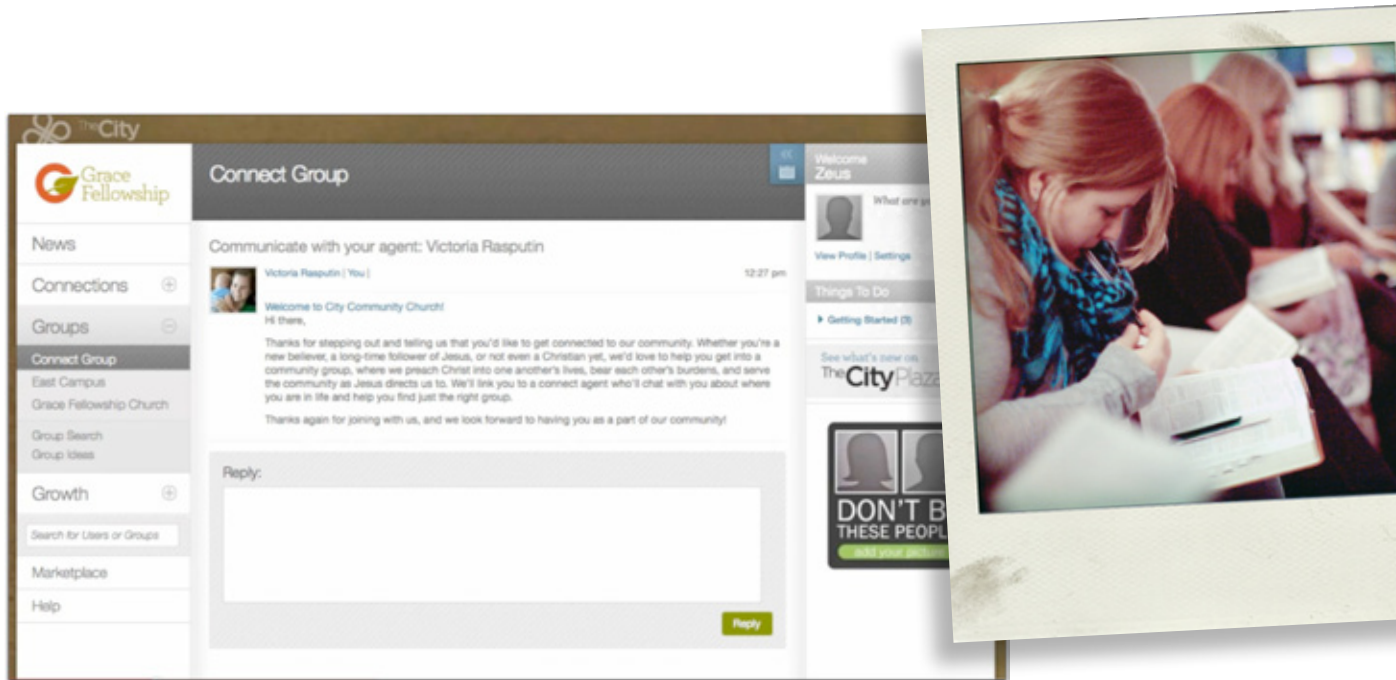


### How to get there from here: things to keep in mind as your community moves online.

It's been said nobody likes change. And nowhere is that more true than in the church. So here are some things to keep in mind as you begin the vital process of migrating from "the way things have always been done" to "the way things need to be done" in order to create a body that's truly continuously connected:

- **Address ministry issues first, technology second:** Shifting communication and internal ministry efforts online won't solve pre-existing problems. It's a way to make healthy ministries even more healthy and more connected. But be sure to address outstanding ministry- and communication-related needs first; creating an online community won't resolve outstanding issues any more than having children will "fix" a marriage. Do what's necessary to begin developing an online, connected mindset among the congregation, but make sure you're building on a sound ministry foundation.
- **Don't abandon existing methods right off the bat:** It's about baby steps. Just because you begin pushing for online connectivity and communication, that doesn't mean you need to immediately stop handing out a bulletin or doing announcements every Sunday, for example.
- **It's not just for the younger members:** To coin a little marketing-speak, you might think it would be the "Millenials" (those born between 1980 and 2000) and "Generation X-ers" (born between 1960 and 1980) who'd be first to embrace online community, and you're probably right. But don't count out Baby Boomers, either. A recent eMarketer study cited by the website [allfacebook.com](http://www.allfacebook.com) (<http://www.allfacebook.com/2010/01/baby-boomers-renew-their-connections-with-facebook/>) showed 47% of online boomers maintain a profile on at least one social network. And in the study, 73% of the group maintained a Facebook profile.
- **Be prepared to hear from the vocal minority.** This doesn't just apply to implementing an online push within the body. In fact, as you probably know from first-hand experience, when it comes to sermon content, music styles and pretty much everything else, there will always be some who aren't happy and they'll make their opinion known. But, as with other things, just remember to keep them in perspective with the sentiments of the rest of the body.
- **Change happens from the top.** Last but not least, understand that even though others in leadership may be all for moving towards online community, if the most senior pastor isn't convinced, true migration to a new way of doing things is unlikely. So make sure everyone is all onboard. From top to bottom.

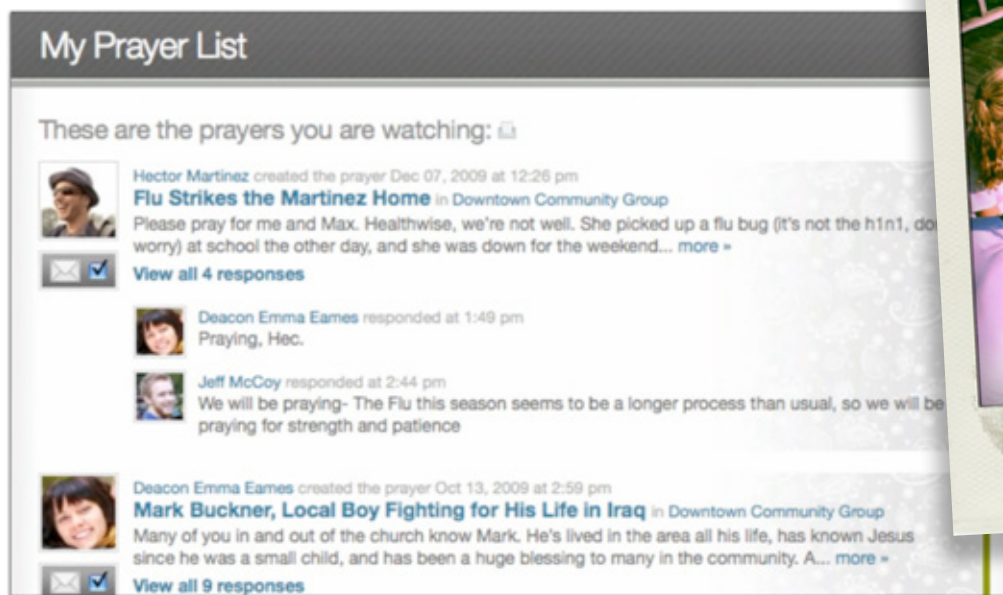
## CASE IN POINT (THREE CASES, ACTUALLY): HOW CONTINUOUS CHURCH IS HAPPENING AROUND THE U.S.



### VINTAGE21 CHURCH RALEIGH NORTH CAROLINA



### North Carolina congregation improves connections with each other throughout the week.


Jason Humphrey, Director of Connections at Vintage21 Church says God had been preparing the hearts of his congregation to become more missional and cites implementation of The City as “a big catalyst for further and more increased involvement.” Humphrey goes on to say, “Thankfully, Pastor Tyler is one of our most active users of The City and frequently encourages the congregation to participate, too. So now instead of just having engagement with our pastors on Sunday, they can engage with each other throughout the week, which is cool. It’s nice to see everyone embracing this tool and seeing activity rise because of increased participation.”






**My Prayer List**

These are the prayers you are watching: ☰

 **Hector Martinez** created the prayer Dec 07, 2009 at 12:26 pm  
**Flu Strikes the Martinez Home** in Downtown Community Group  
Please pray for me and Max. Healthwise, we're not well. She picked up a flu bug (it's not the h1n1, do worry) at school the other day, and she was down for the weekend... more »  
 [View all 4 responses](#)

 **Deacon Emma Eames** responded at 1:49 pm  
Praying, Hec.

 **Jeff McCoy** responded at 2:44 pm  
We will be praying- The Flu this season seems to be a longer process than usual, so we will be praying for strength and patience

 **Deacon Emma Eames** created the prayer Oct 13, 2009 at 2:59 pm  
**Mark Buckner, Local Boy Fighting for His Life in Iraq** in Downtown Community Group  
Many of you in and out of the church know Mark. He's lived in the area all his life, has known Jesus since he was a small child, and has been a huge blessing to many in the community. A... more »  
 [View all 9 responses](#)



**LIVING STONES  
CHURCH  
RENO, NEVADA**

**Nevada church sees people engaging beyond just Sundays.**

Craig Parish, Missions & Mercy Pastor at Living Stones Church says that since implementing The City, the church is now sending 5-6,000 messages per week through their system. That's communication that wouldn't be happening without an online mechanism; in a traditional church scenario, it would simply be impossible. "Members are each accountable for their own data," Parish says. "We use The City in a way that matches what we are trying to do elsewhere to get new members involved... there is so much communication between ministry heads, church leaders and our members... everyone is continuously engaged – not just on Sundays."



**LIFE POINT CHURCH  
ALBERTVILLE  
ALABAMA**

**Alabama church uses The City to help members be the church as it shifts focus from Sunday morning.**

At Life Point Church, Lead Pastor Matt Brooks says he and the rest of his leadership team want members to continuously be the church instead of just going to church one day a week. “What happens on Sunday is less significant than what goes on in their lives throughout the week,” he says. And The City has been an integral part of achieving that. “The City enables us to communicate better. As we shift the focus from Sunday mornings, more communication is necessary. We’re reviewing our communication strategy and how to best engage the congregation; The City is a big part of that.”



Become a continuous church by putting Monday through Saturday to work for your congregation. Not only will people feel more connected and the overall health of your congregation improve, ultimately the Gospel will be spread more effectively. For more information or to get answers to questions you may have, visit [www.onthecity.org](http://www.onthecity.org).