



11 Creative Ways to Follow Up
With People Online



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Does following up with virtual guests feel confusing or daunting?

A guest follow-up strategy has always been an important part of church ministry, but following up with online guests requires us to adjust our standard in-person practices.

Where we once asked people to fill out a card directly in front of them, or required them to give us their information for our children's ministry, we now have to consider how to engage a Facebook user that clicks on a video from the comfort of their couch.

Regardless of your follow-up process, the first step to engaging your guests is getting their contact information.

"We know this: relationship starts when you have people's contact information. If we don't have a phone number or an email or a name, we can't go on a journey with people."
—Ryan Wakefield

In this guide, we'll give you some creative ideas to engage your guests, capture their info, and build a relationship with them.



1 | Engage Guests with Video

Draw a new visitor in with a customized video on your website or in follow-up emails. From a behind-the-scenes look at your ministries to an introduction to your lead pastor, video increases traffic, increases interest, and gives people a connection to your church.

Here's a sample video script with some content ideas your guest may be interested in.



VIDEO SCRIPT:

Welcome to (insert church name)! My name is *(insert name)*, and I'm the *(insert role)* here. We opened our doors (insert date), and we've seen hundreds of people take next steps with God since then. Here in *(city name)*, we operate out of a community center called "The Commons." We have some incredible spaces for you, your family, friends, neighbors, and co-workers to enjoy! Come on; let me show you around!

Normally, we'd have a friendly parking team to help you navigate parking your car. But seeing as how you don't have to go much further than your couch, we've made sure we have greeters during our Livestream instead.

If you have any questions *(insert next step: i.e. jump in the chat, email us, click the button below)* and we'd be happy to connect with you. Even though we aren't in our building, we're still available to chat and connect.

You can find our services online *(insert URL)* at *(insert date/time)*. Together we *(insert service elements: i.e. hold communion, worship together, listen to a message, etc.)*. We believe that gathering together, even online, is vital to our spiritual growth and our emotional health.

If you have kids, we have content just for them. Every Saturday evening, we publish a new video for your family to watch together, and interactive elements to really bring the message of Jesus to life. Our kids ministry staff are passionate about providing a unique experience that engages your entire family, whatever stage you are in.

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For those of you with teens, our student ministry is hosting a Zoom call every Thursday night at 8pm. There our Youth Pastor (*insert name*) teaches a message from the Bible, just like your student would experience during a normal service, and in breakout rooms with group leaders, your student will be able to process with his or her peers. (*Insert student ministry name*) is a place for them to get together with their friends every week, have a blast, and learn about God in a way that makes sense to them.

And we're not going to ask you to raise your hands if it's your first time either. No matter what your story, where you've been, or where you are, you're welcome here.

2 | Live Chat

Whether you're chatting live during your service, or you offer a chat-to-text service, offering a live chat provides an opportunity for new guests to ask questions, request info, or feel a part of the community in real-time. Tools like [Church Online Platform](#) allow you to chat in real time with people watching your live stream.

Keep in mind that any direct communication tool is only as great as the team behind it. So have a person or team of people equipped to engage your guests effectively.

Notice the live chat option for the [Rhiza Church](#) livestream.

The screenshot shows a church livestream interface. At the top, there's a countdown timer for the next event: 05 days, 19 hours, 43 mins, and 06 secs, with a 'Remind me' button. The main video area shows a pastor with a beard and glasses, wearing a floral shirt, speaking. Overlaid text on the video says 'YOU MIGHT BE FEELING A LITTLE'. To the right of the video, there's a 'Timezone' dropdown and a table of upcoming services for Sunday, May 17, 2020. The table lists two services: 10:30 am and 8:45 pm, both for 'Rhiza Church', each with an 'Invite' button. At the bottom of the interface, there's a navigation bar with buttons for 'Chat', 'Notes', 'Schedule', and 'Bible'. The 'Chat' button is highlighted with a red circle and a red arrow pointing to it.

Sunday		May 17, 2020
10:30 am	Rhiza Church	Invite
8:45 pm	Rhiza Church	Invite



3 | Offer a Personalized Introduction to Your Church

In a world of automation, personal touches make a big difference. When you ask guests for contact information, let them know that someone from the church (either a staff member or volunteer) will follow up with them to answer any questions they might have, and to check in.

You might be surprised at people's willingness to give you contact information knowing that it will be used to reach out in a meaningful way, and not just spam their inbox. Being personable and helpful can go a long way.

4 | Follow Up with Guests Using their Preferred Method

Every human is different, and this includes how they prefer to be contacted. By offering a variety of options, you're able to build trust and remove barriers of communication. Develop systems that make this clear through either your ChMS or a simple spreadsheet.

Church Name

Guest Tracker

4/29/20

					Church Name	CONFIDENTIAL
Guest Name	Guest Contact	Source	City	Preferred Method of Contact	Date Contacted	Result
Sally Smith	555-1234 sally.smith@gmail.com	Facebook		Text	3/1/20	Connected to Small Group
Adam Anderson	aanderson@yahoo.com	Website		Email	3/1/20	No Response
Bob Billings	555-4321 billings@gmail.com	Live Stream		Email	3/2/20	Added to email list

Click here for a downloadable [Guest Tracker Excel Template](#).

5 | Don't Forget to Say Thank You

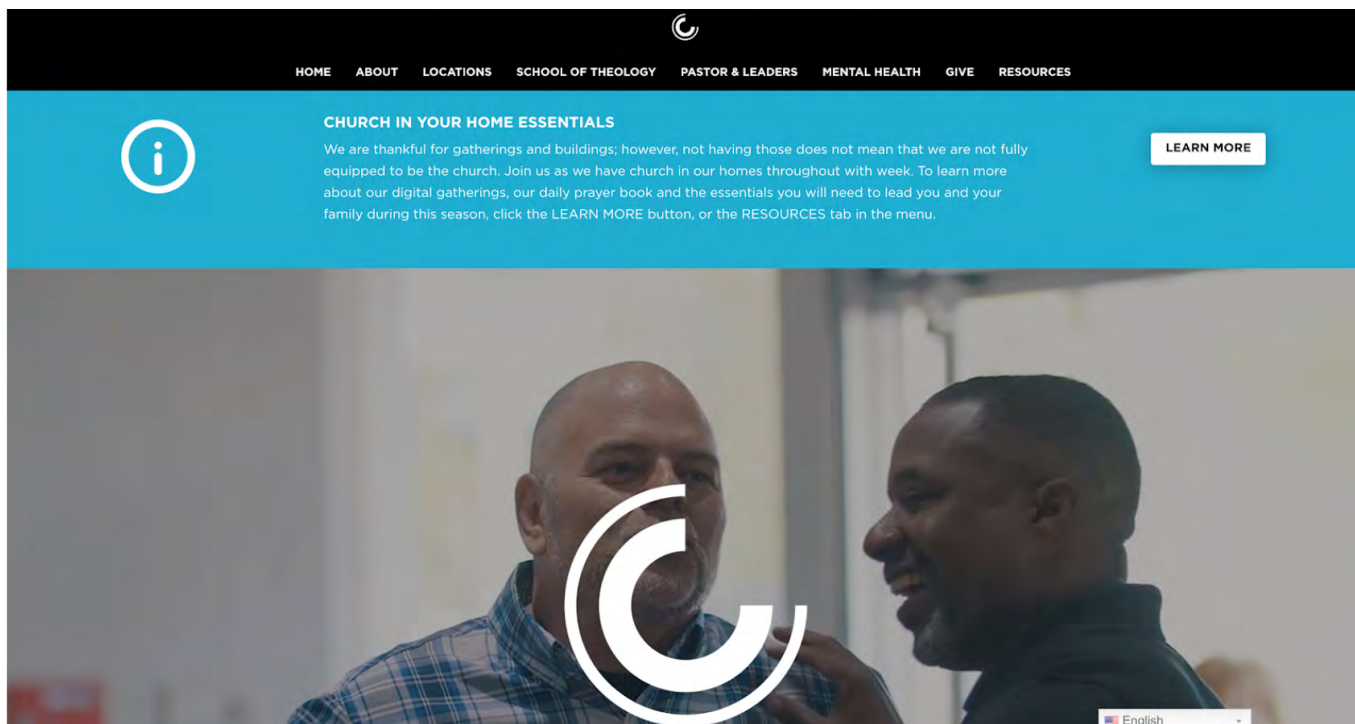
Trust is the foundation of any relationship, and when we use emotional intelligence to connect with people, it not only builds trust, but leaves an impression. A handwritten note or personal phone call puts the emphasis on your guest, and not your content.



6 | Create a Clear Call-to-Action on Your Landing Page

Building a relationship starts with having contact information. Give people the opportunity to connect with you with a clear CTA to “get more information” or “get in touch” on your landing page. Make sure to have clear next steps for when someone reaches out, and that your team is equipped to be informative, helpful, and engaging.

Check out how [Celebration Church](#) displayed their CTA for “Church In Your Home Essentials.”



7 | Do the Hard Work for Them

Remove barriers of communication by utilizing a service like [Text-In-Church](#). Pin a comment in your feed asking guests to text “new” to 78256 (or whatever keyword / number you designate). [Text-In-Church](#) also automates your follow-up system, so that you can spend your time connecting with your guests instead of managing your checklists.



8 | Offer a Coffee Gift Card for New Guests

Gifts for first-time visitors isn't a new idea, but you can also continue to offer this online. Post a QR code in your comments, or have guests send their contact info for you to share the gift card. For higher engagement rates, make sure it's mentioned by either the host or the teaching pastor (or both) as well as posted in your caption or comments.



9 | Utilize a Virtual Church Foyer

If a guest was attending service for the first time in person, a common next step would be a tour of the church and a conversation. Just because your guest is coming to you online, doesn't mean that can't happen. [Grace Church](#) in Orlando, Florida has seen significant engagement through their virtual church foyer. [Download the PDF](#) to see how they do it and how you can host one too.



Serving Opportunities

Join us in serving our city.

[LEARN MORE](#)

Online Foyer

Hang out at discovergrace.com/gather right after our online services at around 11am on Sundays.

[ENTER HERE](#)

Give to Grace

We can't meet, but the mission goes on.

[GIVE TODAY](#)


10 | Use Data to Drive Content

Pay attention to your google analytics, and where your visitors are going. If they're looking for services, make sure it's clear where to find them. If they're looking for contact information, make sure it's on your landing page. Whatever it is that your guests are searching for, design your website and social media platforms to allow for easy discovery.




11 | Have an Online Connect Card

From utilizing a text-in-church service to a google form, an online connect card allows your guest to easily give you their contact information so you can begin the process of getting to know them. For best results, make sure to limit the form fields. Check out this online connect card from [Conshohocken United Methodist Church](#).



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You're welcome here.

Our tagline is "come as you are" and we mean it. Let's get to know each other so we can encourage and walk with you in faith.

Online Connect Card

Welcome to Conshohocken United Methodist Church. We want to get to know you, pray for you and hear how we can share faith in Jesus Christ. We are happy you found us online and during this time we have many ways to connect while being at home that we want to share with you by filling out the form below.



4 Principles for Guest Follow-Up

1 | Keep it Personal

It's easy to send mass emails or generic information, but when your guest is already on information overload, it needs to be personal to be noticed.

TIPS FOR KEEPING IT PERSONAL:

- Use their name.
- Use an "I noticed" statement. Notice what they commented on during the livestream, or if they're new to the area based on the connect card. Send them information about what is meaningful to them.
- Don't send information that does not relate to them. For example: If your guest shared they have a new baby, don't send them information on your student ministry.
- Use handwritten notes when able, or at very least personally sign your snail mail. If you have pre-printed info you mail, add a sticky note message.

It's the little things that make the biggest difference.



2 | Have a Plan

You have enough on your plate, having to think through the process of guest follow-up, especially when you can't see them walk into your building, shouldn't be one of them. Write down what you want your guest's journey to look like, and put it to work. Adjust where there's tension, but the best plan is the one you wrote down.

TIPS FOR PLANNING YOUR FOLLOW-UP:

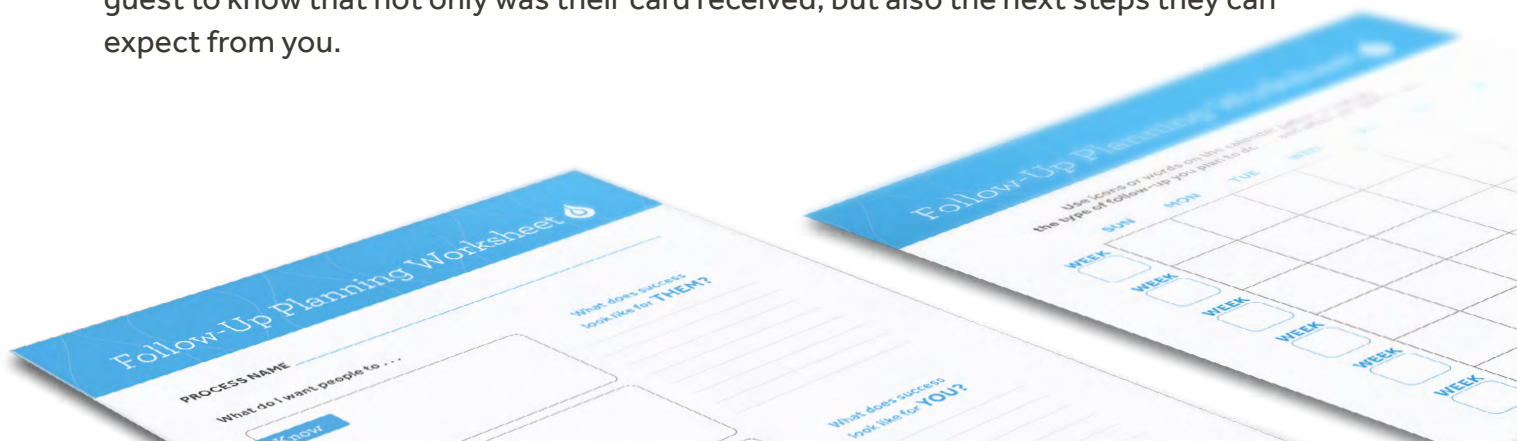
- Decide who follows up and when. It doesn't have to be you, but it does have to be a person.
- Delegate to people who are eager to connect with new people. Your process is only going to go as far as your people take it, so make sure your team is not only equipped but also passionate about hospitality.

3 | Automate. Automate. Automate.

Automation might seem like the opposite of personal, but missing opportunities for connection and people falling through the cracks is the true opposite of personal. When you have a clear plan with automated emails and reminders, you minimize human error and maximize your time to connect with your guests.

TIPS TO AUTOMATE YOUR FOLLOW-UP:

- Create a follow-up calendar using our [Follow Up Planning Worksheet](#).
- When you receive a digital connect card, having an automated email message allows your guest to know that not only was their card received, but also the next steps they can expect from you.





4 | Don't Be Weird

You have a new guest? Keep calm. They don't need to follow your Facebook page or join a small group right away. They need to know what you're about, and who your people are. They need to be invited into community in a way that feels comfortable and welcoming.

If you have a new guest in your home, you may offer them something to drink or show them where to find the restroom. You wouldn't invite them to be in your family photo shoot.

DO	DON'T
Say "Thanks for coming"	Say "Are you coming every weekend now?"
Invite them to come back	Invite them to join the Nursery Team
Ask their name	Friend request them on Facebook
Send a "thanks for coming" letter	Include a tithing envelope
Collect their information	Give them a tutorial on how to get notifications when you post on social media
Connect them with a team member	Ask them to join the team