

Meagan Ranson ([00:00](#)):

Meagan Ranson ([01:34](#)):

Hey, what's up, everybody. Welcome to season two of the church fuel podcast. I am your host, Meagan Ranson. And with me today is our church fuel founder and fearless leader, he's fearless, Michael Luckaszweski.

Michael Lukaszweski ([01:45](#)):

I always love that when we call people fearless leaders. Like one time I want to, I want to be called to as like the fraidy cat leader. Who's afraid of everything. That'd be amazing,

Meagan Ranson ([01:54](#)):

But no one wants that. That's why no one says, that yeah. Yeah.

Michael Lukaszweski ([01:57](#)):

I'm excited about season two. This whole series is going to be great.

Meagan Ranson ([02:00](#)):

Yeah. This season, we're talking about reaching people online beyond the, like you should be online and beyond the, your live streams should look different than your in person service and more into how to effectively minister to people using online platforms and tools.

Michael Lukaszweski ([02:16](#)):

Yeah. I love that. So I feel like where we are in our culture right now, we've kind of got some basics down of like what you just said. Yeah, we should be online and we should have a website. I mean, okay, what's next? How do we do that? And so I love that today, Meagan, you and I get to be joined by Bobby Williams. Bobby is our community director here at ChurcFuel. He is one of our ministry coaches. He's kind of, he's kind of the head coach. He's really the head coach. Um, and so he works with all of our coaches, worked with our pastors, but he's also a lead pastor at Ridge church in Tennessee. And they're doing some pretty amazing stuff. And one of the things that they're doing is they have moved their membership class or they're implementing a membership class, that's all virtual. And so the class is online,

Michael Lukaszweski ([03:00](#)):

The classes on demand. And as we talk about like, what does digital 2.0 look like, I thought we got to, we have to talk to Bobby and see how he's doing it at their church.

Speaker 4 ([03:09](#)):

Yeah. I, I absolutely love this idea. Now a membership class to me has like three things. It has information doctrine and expectations. So even if you don't have a formal membership class, you probably have something similar to talk about those topics and to get people connected. So this idea is something that we can all use right now and in the future.

Speaker 3 ([03:30](#)):

Yeah, totally. I love that. And so when we even talk about a membership class, uh, I mean, I grew up in a Baptist church where if you wanted to join, you came forward at the end of the service and they presented you to the congregation and everybody said welcome. And it was like a formal process. Some churches have an informal process. Some churches have membership. That's like front and center and it's like a big deal. Some put it at the, at the back and it's not a big deal, but you know, this takes all different kinds of flavors, um, all different kinds of styles. But I think one thing that our community at Church Fuel knows how to do is contextualize. And so you, you take what we're talking about today and you fit it, you know, your church and you fit it in and we can learn from everybody. And so, um, that's what we're going to talk about. So Bobby's with us, Bobby. You good, man. How are ya?

Bobby Williams ([04:14](#)):

Hey, hi. Hello.

Meagan Ranson ([04:19](#)):

I wrote, I wrote that in our episode notes and he's reading verbatim.

Michael Lukaszewski ([04:24](#)):

They say Bobby quote, Hey, hi, hello. But also at the very top, it says the format of this episode is a casual conversation. So I was like, yeah,

Meagan Ranson ([04:34](#)):

I just wanted him to have options. Okay. You're prepared, Meghan. It's great. He can say hello. And however many ways he wants,

Bobby Williams ([04:41](#)):

How many people like that. I like to be able to just say, you know, hi, what's up?

Michael Lukaszewski ([04:47](#)):

How many ways could you say hello? Like 10.

Bobby Williams ([04:51](#)):

Yeah. Kenesha walk. That's it. That's it. That's it.

Michael Lukaszewski ([04:57](#)):

So Bobby let's, uh, let's talk about membership class digital. So at, uh, at Ridge where you guys doing membership class, uh, in a different way before what we're going to talk about today?

Bobby Williams ([05:10](#)):

Yeah, we, uh, we were, um, uh, you know, we we've been on quite the journey when it comes to membership. So, uh, probably like a lot of, uh, our listeners and a lot of, a lot of people that use church fuel. I mean, we, we've never really called it membership. We've always called it partnership. And um, the reason why we call it partnership instead of membership is, you know, like you could be a member of a gym and you pay a membership, but when you go into that gym and something breaks, you don't have to fix it.

Bobby Williams ([05:42](#)):

Like it's, it's not your responsibility. Right. And so, but being a part of a church is so much more than, than just being a member of a church. Like we want, we want you to be a partner. We want you to feel like you have ownership that you are in this with us together. And so we've been on this journey for a long time with, with our church. And so we started with like everybody else doing in-person partnership type classes and, you know, participation would be a sporadic at best. And so we just said, you know what, there, there has to be a better way.

Michael Lukaszewski ([06:16](#)):

Yeah. I like that.

Meagan Ranson ([06:18](#)):

The things that Michael and I were talking about before we started recording was all the variations of a membership class, which I think, you know, most people would probably be aware of all of the variations, but like, maybe we could just take a second and talk through if I don't have a membership class or a partnership class, maybe I don't have anything. Maybe I just have something that tells people the history of our church. Like what, what exactly entails a membership class? What entails a partnership class? What, what are so as we like dive into the way you're executing this, what exactly are you executing?

Bobby Williams ([06:50](#)):

Yeah, that's, that's a great question, Megan, I think, and you mentioned this in the intro, you know, there's information, there's doctrine, there's expectations. And I think those three categories are critical to a partnership for, for anybody, a part of a church, because if, if I'm joining or becoming a part of a church, I want to know what I'm getting into. I want to know what I'm a part of. I don't want to just haphazardly show up to a place and have no idea in the way that it's structured, no idea in the way that it's organized, what they believe, you know, why they do what they do and how they're going to do it. Maybe I'm just weird. I don't know, but I just let them know the way that things work, because if I'm going to be a part of something, I want to know my part in that process.

Bobby Williams ([07:38](#)):

Um, and so, uh, for us, I mean, you know, for, or I would say really for anybody that doesn't have a partnership or membership in their church, like this is just a good process for the church as a whole to let somebody know, Hey, this is, this is what you're part of. And this is how you can make a bigger impact than just showing up on a Sunday or, you know, for a lot of people right now, you know, just tuning in online, uh, to be a part of something like you, you have a role to play. And we think that most people want to actually make more of an impact than just showing up on Sunday.

Michael Lukaszewski ([08:16](#)):

Yeah. I think that's a good, a good call out. Bobby is the idea of just somebody raised their hand and saying I'm in, you know, so to me, that's, and we can have a whole nother episode about like biblically or theologically, like what is membership? What does being a part of the body of Christ..Doesn't have to be official or can it be unofficial? I there's a lot of things that we could talk about about that, but I see a very practical value of having some kind of system or process or whatever, to be able to say, who is officially a part of this. Now, a lot of churches have bylaws or whatever that require that are state some of these things. And so for some churches, there, there is a, um,

Michael Lukaszweski ([08:56](#)):

a Finished line, probably the wrong word. There's a description of like what a member is and what they're supposed to be. And so we're not trying to get into theologically, what is a member in this podcast? But we are trying to say, here's what it w if you've defined that, or maybe your bylaws define it, or you want to have some way for people to raise their hand and say, I'm officially a part of, you know, XYZ church. What can that look like in a digital age? And so whether you have a new member class, whether you have a, uh, class pre=membership, whether you just have a growth track, whether you have a class for guests. I mean, I think what we're about to talk about in these next 10 or 15 minutes is going to apply to that.

Bobby Williams ([09:36](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. I agree.

Michael Lukaszweski ([09:38](#)):

So you shifted, you mentioned, you know, we were having these in person things and attendance was sporadic and you basically rebuilt this, uh, for online participation. And so, I mean, I think I can probably guess what led to that decision, right. There's not a lot of options otherwise. Um, but what else went into that decision?

Bobby Williams ([10:00](#)):

Yeah, so that, that was a decision that we were, um, we hadn't made pre COVID. So before COVID even happened, we were already talking about this because we knew that, uh, it just made a little more sense for us to raise the bar to what it means to be a partner in our church, but lower the bar as to how to actually go through that process. So we were already talking about that and it just made sense as you know, the world that we live in and it's highly digital. I mean, how many of us actually wait for a show to come on TV to actually watch it anymore? Right. I mean, everything's on demand, Netflix, Hulu, whatever it is, right. YouTube. And so it made sense to just say, you know what, let's make this an on demand type of process, and we'll let people work through it in their own time. Maybe it's on their lunch break. Maybe it's later in the evening, maybe it's first thing in the morning, but it gives them an opportunity to do it at their own pace, uh, certain times of the year. And then we sort of have a back end process to put a bow on all of it.

Michael Lukaszweski ([11:11](#)):

I love that. So you said, raise the bar on what it means to be like a partner, which I love that. Um, cause we're not talking about watering down stuff for like, you know, you're, you're actually clarifying those expectations and raising the bar, but then he said lower the bar on like how to do it, like making it more accessible. So I love that picture of just, we can simultaneously make something meaningful, but also make something accessible to where people are. That that is great.

Bobby Williams ([11:40](#)):

Yeah. I've just, and we've done this too. We we've gone through that whole thing where, you know, we said, okay, you know, it's going to be a six week process, you know, two hours a day on a Saturday morning. And uh, you know, there's not childcare, you know, all of those things and who, I mean, honestly, who can do that?

Michael Lukaszweski ([12:01](#)):

Yeah,

Bobby Williams ([12:02](#)):

Everybody. I mean, I'm a parent with two, two young kids and they're involved in things. And so Saturday mornings, like we're just, we're busy, so it doesn't matter Sunday evening

Michael Lukaszweski ([12:11](#)):

Lazy. So, you know, it's like, you don't want no, I'm just kidding. Totally true.

Meagan Ranson ([12:16](#)):

Clearly he doesn't do enough.

Michael Lukaszweski ([12:18](#)):

but if he wants to go fishing, Bobby wants to go fishing. So it's like, I ain't got time for a membership class on Saturday. I got to go fishing. So that's when they buy it. They only buy it on Saturday morning. Um, so what does that online class look like? Like what does it look like structure wise? Uh, is it videos? Does it last a certain number of weeks? What's it look like now?

Speaker 3 ([12:42](#)):

Yeah. So it's all video and, um, the way that we do it is we have what we call an open enrollment time. So it's kind of thing, insurance open enrollment, like your healthcare insurance, right? There's certain times of year that you can get into this process. And so for us, that, that happens once a quarter or four times a year, uh, January, April, July, October, uh, is what we call an open enrollment period for our partnership classes. And there's a reason why we do that. Uh that's because, uh, after they watch all of the videos that are part of the process, uh, we have something, what we call an after party, which is, uh, currently right now, it's the only, in-person part of the partnership that we do. Uh, but we're actually sort of toying with the idea of making that a, a video, a thing as well.

Speaker 3 ([13:33](#)):

But the after party happens at the end of the quarter. So March, June, September, December, and once they go through the whole process of watching, uh, the videos and, um, which are really short, like 10 or less minutes, maybe 12 minutes at tops, each video, um, they, uh, they show up to the, to the after party, which is exactly what it sounds like. It's just a, a big party where we celebrate the fact that they've gone through this partnership thing. They, they ask any questions that they might have. And we just celebrate the fact that, Hey, we're, we're all partners together.

Michael Lukaszweski ([14:07](#)):

You made it, you made it here, but how many, how many videos?

Bobby Williams ([14:12](#)):

Uh, there are three sections of that with a total of 10 videos.

Michael Lukaszweski ([14:17](#)):

Okay. And then what, what are some of the, what, like, what are the sections? That's a, that's a, that's a great breakdown.

Bobby Williams ([14:23](#)):

Yeah. So section one is called who we are. Uh, so we talk about, uh, you know, this is our story. This is what we believe. And we have, uh, just a couple of videos we say, okay, here's, uh, here's our closed hand issues. So these are the essential things that we believe as a church. And then here are our open-hand issues. Uh, the things that we believe that you may believe differently, but, you know, we can all just agree to disagree on and it's okay. Like, we'll just, you know, we'll be fine. Uh, so section that's section one, section two is what we do. Uh, so we talk about why we exist, uh, our, you know, our mission, vision values. Uh, and then we, we talk a little bit about our structure and strategy. Um, so we, we have a strategy and say, you know, we're gonna, uh, we're gonna deliver the word, disciple, the believer and deploy the church.

Bobby Williams ([15:15](#)):

And we talk about what it means to, to go through that process. And then we ended with a video where we say, this is what you should expect from us. Um, and in that video, we, we tell them, you know, as, as leaders and pastors, and as this church, that you're a partner of, here's what you can expect from us then, you know, things like, uh, you know, caring for the needs of the church, uh, doing our best to listen to the Holy spirit and do what he says, um, you know, follow the obligations of covenant partnership along with our partners. So it's just kind of saying, Hey, we're a partner just like you are and send us the things that we're asking you to do are the things that we're going to do. I love that.

Michael Lukaszweski ([15:56](#)):

So, so, so three sections, 10 videos when they sign up at the beginning of the quarter, can they, do they just watch them at their own pace? Um, are they all available? Um, they have like the three months to kind of go through it and then they come to the after party. How does that work? Like logistically?

Bobby Williams ([16:12](#)):

Yeah, so they have a, uh, just a really basic, uh, form that they'll fill out at the end of each video. And it, uh, on that form, it just asks them to list from the video that they watch. So they'll put the name of the video in, and then we asked them to give us three things, three takeaways from that video quiz.

Michael Lukaszweski ([16:35](#)):

Sorry, you failed.

Michael Lukaszweski ([16:37](#)):

Yeah. Is there, is it a pass fail? Do you grade it? How does that, what does that work? It is a pass fail.

Bobby Williams ([16:43](#)):

We just send them a meme that says you have been denied are the weakest link.

Michael Lukaszweski ([16:51](#)):

That's funny. So, so when they, when they sign up, I mean, are you using any kind of like, uh, interesting technology or you're just sending people links? I mean, I felt like make simple or complex or anywhere in between, right?

Bobby Williams ([17:03](#)):

Yeah. It's totally simple. Yeah. We, we just put it on a, um, an unlisted YouTube page and, uh, so they, they have the link. So you can't, you can't find the YouTube page by searching for it or anything like that. And so we just send them a link to the, to the videos, um, in sections. And so once they finish a section, we'll send them the next set. So they could literally go through this process and in three hours or less.

Michael Lukaszewski ([17:29](#)):

I love that. So, you know, it's, it's interesting, but you know, today where we are, when you're, when you're trying to communicate information and I, I know a membership class or partnership class or whatever is more, there's more to it. And you described right. We make, we get people together afterwards. Um, I was talking to one pastor about, and they're like, well, we require an interview with somebody to become a member. And I think that's a great idea, but you could still walk them through the videos to communicate the stuff that they need to know, right. A video, particularly a 10 minute video is a great way and efficient way to just tell people something. Um, it's so much more efficient than them having to get in their car, figure out what to do with their kids come up and just sit and listen for, for a long time. So you can, you can do all this and you could still put a personal conversation at the end or the beginning or the middle. Like you can design a process that's primarily digital, and then still makes sense of the personal stuff. If, if you need to, and go ahead, Megan,

Meagan Ranson ([18:29](#)):

I was just going to say, recognizing the importance of like, when, you know, Emerson feels totally safe and comfortable for everyone, but recognizing the importance of community. If you do all of the like class stuff online, then your in person stuff can be completely focused on relationship building.

Michael Lukaszewski ([18:46](#)):

Oh yeah. Yeah. And that's that that's so fun, right? Because I mean, you think about church. I mean, what people love about church, that a lot of things about church, but when you really get down to it, if it, if church is only coming and sitting still and quiet in a row and looking forward to some, somebody talk for 30 minutes, that's like the most inefficient system in the world to communicate information. But once the church is, it's not just that, right. It's corporate singing, it's seeing each other. It's, you know, it's all that, that, that community, that relationship, all that stuff goes into it. And that's what makes it feel like an experience. So what Bobby's describing is, Hey, we found a way to communicate all this stuff that we need to communicate, um, efficiently, conveniently to the people, making it more accessible to them.

Michael Lukaszewski ([19:35](#)):

And then, yeah, if you want to put, put in a, if you want to put a get together in there or an interview, then you can just do that and you don't have to sit there and go, well, let me tell you what all this stuff is. Cause they've already there. You know, that that's right. Yeah. Go ahead, Bobby.

Bobby Williams ([19:49](#)):

Well, I was just going to say part of, part of that process for us too, is we ask on the front end, we say, and we don't make it mandatory, but we say, Hey, we would love to hear your story. Like, how did you end up, you know, here at the Ridge church, how, you know, what brought you here? Um, you know, how did you, uh, how did you become a Christ follower? You know, those types of things. And so we asked for them to, to share their story, which is sort of our way of, of an interview, but we're not taking

that and saying, Oh, well, you know, it sounds some holes in your story here, check out. We did some background work and that's not a workout.

Meagan Ranson ([20:25](#)):

That's not a pass fail.

Bobby Williams ([20:28](#)):

Right. But then the other, the other part of it is, is at the end of these videos at the end of each video, like we're not just leaving people out on their own and saying, Hey, watch these. And then you don't get to talk to anybody until you come to the after party. Like, you know, they are, uh, given an opportunity to, to connect with someone on our team and ask any questions

Bobby Williams ([20:48](#)):

That they have anytime they want. And then we're also checking in with them and saying, Hey, have you signed up for, you know, partnership? You know, a couple of weeks ago, just wanted to check in on you. How's that process going? You know, are you been able to watch the videos, those kinds of things, to get some feedback from them. And that's sort of is like that, you know, like a lot of us are doing right now, like where it's, it's that flipped classroom, right. Where you're sort of watching, you know, the information through video, but then you're having in-person discussion in class. Right. Um, and it seems to work out really well for us.

Michael Lukaszewski ([21:23](#)):

Yeah. I love that. So I get this, I mean, you, you mentioned this, but I think it's worth calling out, like, this is something that you were considering pre COVID and COVID kind of makes this more of a okay, well, yeah, let's try it this way, but this is also something that you're, you're obviously looking at, even when you can have in person stuff safely in mass, again, that this may be something that stays on the, that stays on the radar. Am I reading that right?

Bobby Williams ([21:49](#)):

Yeah. That's, that's absolutely right. And it really kind of came about because we started having quite a few people connect with us again, pre COVID, uh, you know, they would watch online, but they would be, uh, you know, uh, an hour and a half away or, you know, even several States away from us. Uh, maybe people that had had been here then had to move at some point for their job and that kind of thing. And it really became one of those things where we started to talk about, ask the question, how can we continue to have these people who live in Ohio? You know, not in Tennessee, be part of our church and maybe even at some point, you know, plant a new church where they are in their home or, you know, something like that, but the carry the DNA and the culture with them. And so that's sort of where that conversation came from.

Michael Lukaszewski ([22:38](#)):

I think you're, you're, you're providing an example of what I think is a very important principle for church, um, in the next and the next season, however, you know, years, years ahead is this, this blending of digital there's digital, there's physical, you know, blending this stuff together. And that there is a way to communicate information that doesn't require people always coming up to the building. And in many, many cases, not in all cases, we're not talking about a replacement. We're not talking about any of that, but if we're primarily communicating information, then there are so many tools. I mean,

there are free tools that you can use to create online courses. And I don't know why churches don't do more on online courses for Bible training, for membership, for, you know, just stuff like communicating information. Like an online courses is a great way to do that. Obviously we do that inside of church fuel. We don't make every pastor who wants to learn from Churchill, come to Atlanta and learn in the room. We're like, that's not, that's not a scalable solution for primarily communicating information. So it's an online course. I mean, there's webinars, there's, there's, there's so many ways create information

Michael Lukaszweski ([23:46](#)):

And make it accessible to people in your church that are used to access it that way. Yeah. Yeah. And so, you know, volunteer training that I don't, why can't we create, you know, courses for, to train volunteers. And again, I'm not talking about replacing the one-on-one I'm talking about communicating information of course is a great way to do that. And whether it's membership or learn more about us or whatever, and then like you said, Meagan, when you do get together, it can be all about, let's get to know you let's ask questions. Let's, let's go deep, you know? Yeah, yeah. Because we've got some of this stuff covered. Yup. I love that. So your videos and some resources, Bobby, like, can people check some of that stuff out? Like are some of those things available or even inside of church fuel, like when this, when this is kind of available, I mean, obviously your church people are gone through it, but you know, like for what this looks like, is that something that people can see?

Bobby Williams ([24:44](#)):

Yeah, absolutely. We'll, uh, we'll make it available and put it inside church fuel and give people access to check that out. We're in the process of, uh, sort of just testing it right now. And so we have a few tweaks that we want to make and, uh, we have some people in our church going through it to make sure everything is on point. And so it will officially launch in January, but we will, we will make, uh, we will make these available inside a church fuel way before that.

Michael Lukaszweski ([25:12](#)):

Yeah. I love that. And one thing I know about you just from knowing you for, I don't know, long time, 10 years is I love how quickly you iterate. I love how quickly you get something up. I love that you do not allow the complexity of something to go, Hey, we can shoot these videos and we can put them on private, YouTube channel, like you're solving and your people, your team are solving the problems. You just mentioned testing stuff with some people and we're like, we're going to do it. Um, I love that spirit. And that to me is an attitude that churches and pastors and church leaders need to embrace this next season of like, let's try some stuff in a different way.

Bobby Williams ([25:46](#)):

Yeah, that's it, it doesn't have to be complicated. That's the thing, you know, I think sometimes especially, especially as churches and pastors, sometimes we just make things way more complicated than it has to be in it. It really doesn't have to be there. There's so much technology out there that can make these things super easy and really accessible to your people. And so don't complicate it. It doesn't have to be,

Meagan Ranson ([26:11](#)):

That's a great rule of thumb. Don't complicate it, keep it simple. Keep it simple. Um, well, if you, if people have questions for you, Bobby, and they want to ask more and learn more about this online membership class, uh, where what's the best place to reach you.

Bobby Williams ([26:26](#)):

Yeah. So, uh, you can, uh, get me a Bobby. Uh, that's what the why, by the way, please don't spell my name with an E

Meagan Ranson ([26:34](#)):

Female. Is that the female way to spell it?

Bobby Williams ([26:36](#)):

That's the female way. Yeah. And every time I go to Starbucks, I've known these at Starbucks for 15 years and they still go, yeah, that's right. So it's Bobby, Bobby with a white church fuel.com. And if you have any complaints, it's Michael L.

Michael Lukaszewski ([26:58](#)):

I'll forward them to Bobby. I've got a filter set up.

Meagan Ranson ([27:03](#)):

Awesome. Thank you so much, Bobby, for taking the time to chat with us about the really cool things that you're doing over at the Ridge church. And, uh, if this is your first time listening, we would love, or even your second, second or third or 17th time, we would love for you to leave us a review that just helps more people hear about the stuff that's happening here at church fuel and the conversations that we're having with pastors and, uh, make sure to check out churchfuel.com. Thanks so much. Take care, everybody. Thanks for joining us this week on the church field podcast, make sure to visit our website church field.com or you can subscribe to the show on iTunes, Stitcher, Spotify, or via RSS so that you'll never miss a show. And while you're at it, if you found value in this, we would love and appreciate a ratings on iTunes, or just simply tell a friend about the show that would help us out too. And if you like what you hear, you might want to check out our church, feel membership members get everything, and we would love to connect with you. Thanks so much for listening and we'll see you next week.