

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

Welcome

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To the church field podcast, insanely practical conversations with real pastors and real church leaders to equip you to lead healthy and growing churches. Hey, what's up everyone. Welcome back to the church fuel podcast. Right now, this podcast is being recorded. Not many churches are meeting in person and for sure, small groups, aren't usually meeting in person. So today we're going to talk about how to use online small groups to reach new people. And with me today is just, it's just Michael and I it's just us. It's just us, which is awesome. We don't need no guests. We don't need no guests. We know what we talking about up. We should definitely,

Michael Lukaszewski ([00:51](#)):

We should, we should have guests, but we're talking about small groups. So, so like the podcast, this is like a small group. We don't have outsiders here. It's like this just us.

Meagan Ranson ([01:00](#)):

It is a small group is a small group, two people can that, does that count two or more?

Michael Lukaszewski ([01:06](#)):

Yes. Two or more. Where, where two or more gathered. There is a podcast. There is a pocket. That's, that's what, it's an a message. That's the message translation.

Meagan Ranson ([01:15](#)):

So I'm really excited to talk about this today because I think one of the things that, you know, this whole pandemic has really shown is how important community is and small groups. There's one of the art, like is one of the ways that I've really experienced community and a church setting. But it's just not as simple as it used to be. For sure. I know some people are still like, you're still getting together with your small group, right?

Michael Lukaszewski ([01:38](#)):

Yeah. Our small group is still meeting. You know, but it's interesting. Everybody's different. Every state's different people have different different risk tolerances and so different weather. Yeah.

Meagan Ranson ([01:49](#)):

You could be outside for a lot longer than I could be,

Michael Lukaszewski ([01:52](#)):

You know, a month ago, our small group met outside our fire pit, so we were outside spread out. But we definitely had some people in our small group that aren't, that aren't comfortable meeting as well. So just like many churches. So, you know, everything's different now. Yeah. You just kind of figure it out.

Meagan Ranson ([02:06](#)):

If my small group tried to meet outside, we turned into snowman pretty much

Michael Lukaszewski ([02:09](#)):

Because you live in the F in the Tundra, the Tundra, the Arctic circle. Yeah,

Meagan Ranson ([02:14](#)):

Absolutely. And it's awful, except the summer's amazing. So okay.

Michael Lukaszewski ([02:17](#)):

For that one week, you know, it's pretty amazing. We have one loss

Meagan Ranson ([02:20](#)):

Wait that one week at the end of July is really stellar

Michael Lukaszewski ([02:24](#)):

And that's why we're willing to put up with 47 weeks of ice and snow and sleep.

Meagan Ranson ([02:28](#)):

At least it's pretty, you know, it's pretty, we have pretty, pretty winters. They're just really cold and we cannot be outside for most of the year. But other than that, it's fine. Like we're totally fine. Totally fine. Okay. So let's talk about let's talk about the small group thing. How have we used small groups in the past? Let's start there. What is Walker flipped like?

Michael Lukaszewski ([02:48](#)):

So it's funny. I did a video for a for a small groups conference, not too long ago online conference and talked about this and a lot of churches of think of groups as a discipleship strategy, right? So if you, so to kind of borrow the language of a funnel, right. Come to the service like everyone. And then when you want to get more involved, you can join a volunteer team or getting a small group. And if you get in a small group or maybe a Sunday school class, that's like where the discipleship happens, that's where relationships happen. And so we kind of go from like big church to small group, and that's usually an act of, you know, kind of growing. So the church service is like the doorway in, but to the house and the small group has been kind of like a living room where you can have conversations and grow and that's it, you know, it's not black and white, but that's tended to be kind of how churches think about small groups in classes as much more on the discipleship.

Meagan Ranson ([03:42](#)):

Yeah. It's kind of like the third or fourth step. Once you decide to go to the church.

Michael Lukaszewski ([03:47](#)):

Yeah. Like come to the service or, you know, maybe come to a new member thing. And then like, when you really want to get involved, you know, joining a small group, that's kinda go deep. Right. So it's like the it's always this next step. That's kind of out there and that's super common, super normal. You might be listening to this and go, yeah. That's how we use our small groups. And you could still use them that way. Yeah. That's not bad.

Meagan Ranson ([04:10](#)):

There is a new way that you could use small groups. How are you seeing churches use small groups now? What are some of the new things that are coming out?

Michael Lukaszewski ([04:17](#)):

Yeah. So when you think about the I always liked this framework. It's a little weird to think about, but, and you can just Google this, like the jobs to be done framework and what that framework teaches you. It was kind of popularized by a, by an economist of all of all things talking about business, but they're always, they're so they're so crazy. But they talk about like, you hire a company or a product to do a job for you. Like, you don't want the thing you want the job done. So you hire, you know, he talks about this. Like you're not going to a restaurant, you're hiring a restaurant to meet a need that you have for it's a transaction. And so you think about what, what jobs are pastors and churches just trying to do right now? What we're trying to do, two things we're trying to, you know, get more people like go into all the world and make disciples.

Michael Lukaszewski ([05:04](#)):

So we're constantly trying to do outreach and get more people. And then we're trying to help those people grow. And so in, in the, in the Bible terms, you know, Christian terms, this that's evangelism and discipleship, and we just said, churches have kind of thought as small groups as a discipleship tool and what we're realizing with this kind of digital wave that sweeping over us, that digital has created a new opportunities for us to use small groups as an outreach tool. It's not just to help people grow. You can actually use a small group strategy to reach new people,

Meagan Ranson ([05:39](#)):

Right? Because people can find, so the rest of, if you just have your weekend service, people can find information everywhere. Right? Google is very broadly used. Youtube is very broadly used. They can watch messages anywhere they can. But what they're looking for is community.

Michael Lukaszewski ([05:55](#)):

And think about that when you, your church people maybe your shirt's hasn't met in person in a while, or it's definitely different, even if you are, but it's like, what do you miss most about the old ways? Nobody says, I miss hearing the sermons in person or, you know, I miss the building. Nobody says that. They say, I miss seeing the people. That's what people say. And so one of the things that's really suffering in churches is the community and the relationship. It's not the information, a webinar video and online service is a great way to consume information. It's very efficient, but it's harder to do community that way. But what churches are realizing is like, Hey, we have to be in the community business. And we, if this is the, if this is the way we've got to figure out how to use our online strategy and the tools that we have to kind of build community online and small groups can be done that way. It's different. And, and put aside, is it better or worse? Like that doesn't matter. It is what it is. It's an opportunity. It's a tool. And what we're seeing is that churches are now beginning to embrace. Hey, we can start new small groups and reach new people that it doesn't have to just be step three, four, five on the discipleship side, that it can be a way to kind of reach out and find new people and reach into new people's lives.

Meagan Ranson ([07:14](#)):

I love that. We're figuring out how to do things differently. That's so fun to me. I love that. Now, some people might be a little skeptical about how this, like, what this sounds like and how this would work. So

let's talk about what you need to do when you're launching small groups for outreach, what are the, what are the, what are the things we need to do to do this?

Michael Lukaszewski ([07:33](#)):

So I would, I break it down into three steps and there may be more there. You can do less whatever, but just to keep it simple and keep us going. Right. So the first thing I would do three. Perfect. Right? Yes. It's always three. You can't have four steps. That's weird. It's three

Meagan Ranson ([07:48](#)):

Steps are weird. There's

Michael Lukaszewski ([07:50](#)):

Totally weird. You need to have three steps. And if you need more, you better go to five that's right. That's seven would be okay. Write that down. Three, five or seven odd steps. That's our, that's the first of three steps is okay. So you're going to create a small group for the purpose of outreach and find new people. All right. So the first thing you've got to do is get to choose the right topic. So just saying, Hey, we have a small group is probably not going to attract new people. Hey, our church has a small group that meets on Tuesday night. People are gonna be like, well, it's a small group. So you want to, you want to actually make these topical. So when you're using small groups and the discipleship side with people who are already taking steps towards your church, they already know some of the people they already know what's up.

Michael Lukaszewski ([08:35](#)):

You can use words like small group and they just want to go. But when you're trying to get brand new people, you need to lean a little bit more into the topics. So I would say, find a topic that would be of interest to people who live in your community and create small groups around that. And so perfect example of this, and these are happening all over the place is book clubs, right? It's just a book club. A book club is a non-church version of a small group. Yeah. But they have a topic they're getting together and it's talking about a different book every time they get together, or they're talking about one book every week for a number of weeks. So the book is the topic.

Meagan Ranson ([09:13](#)):

So funny. I never thought about a book club as a small group, as a non-church version of this, but you're so right.

Michael Lukaszewski ([09:19](#)):

And why do people go to that? They like the people it's the top they've got there's a little bit there's enough content to hold it together. Like no one, if it was a book club and it was like, we don't have a book, we're just talking about stuff. No one would go. So they got a, they got a book to give enough structure to make it make sense. Thank you, category. Right. Glue that holds it together. Yeah. But then it becomes about the people and the environment and, you know, it's like whatever.

Meagan Ranson ([09:42](#)):

And the cool thing about this is that you can use outside resources. Like if you wanted to do something about finance, you could have the walk through some sort of like financial plan, you know, like you can

resource other curriculum for it. It makes it super easy for people who are going to be leading the pack, leading the small group.

Michael Lukaszewski ([09:58](#)):

So w so how your child would do this? What topics are of interest and would, would the people that live in your community, where do they need help? And those are the topics I would say, I would start six weeks or eight weeks or seven weeks, or, you know, a couple of months on a topic and maybe it's finances. Like you just mentioned, maybe it's parenting. You know, maybe it's, I, it could be a book level quite honestly, but it's something like a topics holding it together. I heard an example from one of our church, Joel members named Chris and pastor Chris w did the strategy. He started a brand new small group. So it was not an existing one. It was all gonna be all new people, which there's something to that. Right. So everybody's new, no one knows each other yet.

Michael Lukaszewski ([10:43](#)):

But he started a brand new small group and he, it was on parenting. And he said, it's for parents of young kids. And it was going to meet at eight 30 to nine 30 at night on zoom. So after little kids would go to bed and it was an hour long on zoom, a little bit later than kind of a normal small group of start parents. Right. Get them kids to bed and then come on zoom call. And he posted about it on next door, like for his neighborhood. Oh my gosh. You know? And so it's like, he's using a topic, he's addressing a topic that people need help with. Cause they're drowning, you know, and parenting decisions. It's on zoom. It's late at night and go into where people are gathering and talking about stuff to say, Hey, y'all want to come to this. And it's a small group for outreach purposes.

Meagan Ranson ([11:34](#)):

I love that. I think that's fantastic. Okay. So the first step is choose the right one,

Michael Lukaszewski ([11:38](#)):

Choose the right topic. And I can put an action step here with this. If you don't know what topic to pick I would, I would get a little study of your community. And if you go to [churchill.com/kyc](http://churchill.com/kyc), K Y S D S C stands for know your community you can run a free report. It's like a 13 pages that tells you all about like what people are struggling with who lives around you. You can put it, you put in your address and choose a radius and I'll give you this beautiful report. It's all free. To tell you kind of what's up with people. And that's where I would mind for these topics. So that's number one,

Meagan Ranson ([12:13](#)):

The report is fantastic. We'll put the link for that in our show notes. So you don't have to write it down. If you're driving or doing dishes or whatever, we'll put in our show notes, you can go check it out later. That would be amazing. That would be something all right, what's next. So choose the right topic.

Michael Lukaszewski ([12:27](#)):

She's at topic number two, choose right format. And we've kind of already alluded to this. So many people talk about how everything has changed and it has everything has changed. But change doesn't have to be bad. You know, change has changed. There's good change, bad change. So a lot of the change that churches are going through right now that is negative, right? There's a lot of, there's a lot of loss. There's a lot of change. There's a lot of that kind of stuff. However, inside of that, there are a few opportunities. And so if you look for the opportunities, you'll find them. And so if you're trying to reach

new people, let's use Patrick Chris's example, six weeks on parenting, eight 30 at night posting about it on next door. Here's the deal. Digital format. Zoom is actually a better environment, a better format for this new people. People are in the comfort of their own home. You know, they don't have to go into somebody's house and wonder if it, you know, what, if it's safe or not. Right. So digital is actually a great tool to use for this is a great format because of a low barrier to entry. Yeah.

Meagan Ranson ([13:33](#)):

Yeah. You can use that to build trust so that when you are able to meet in person, you've, you've already connected. They already know that you're normal. Well, not normal relatively.

Michael Lukaszewski ([13:43](#)):

Right. So, so this format right. Is really important. And I would say, you know, a lot of us, we like to talk about, it's not the same, you know, we're not the same. Zoom is not the same. I know it's not the same, but you can be like really good first step and first format to kind of kick off a new group. And so just because you don't prefer, it doesn't mean we shouldn't use it.

Meagan Ranson ([14:08](#)):

I've been thinking about this since you and I first talked about this about just how to, how to do this and implement it in our, in our own church. One of the things I was thinking about that would be really fun and this could be a totally dumb idea, but if I did a little small group with some, with some women or whatever, and I sent them all like a coffee mug with like tea in it, and then every time we met, we like, like, we like quote unquote, shared a cup of coffee together while we're meeting, you know, like there's just fun things to do like that. That's like fun makes it fun, takes like, you know, all my gosh, another zoom call, but like, you know, adding some sort of like personalized touch in there where we can feel connected. Cause we're doing the same thing together. Or, you know what, like if you're going to do a book club, for example, you could send the book with a handwritten handwritten notes or maybe some popcorn and you can all share popcorn together while you're on the zoom call or something less noisy,

Michael Lukaszewski ([15:03](#)):

Make it a thing, right. Something less noisy. Yeah, you can make it a thing. And sometimes I think we just looked down on something because it's digital and we, that stigma needs to go away. Right? I mean, I didn't fly to Michigan and you didn't fly to Atlanta to do this podcast, this, this podcast recording, we chose the right format to do this, you know, so we're not going away. We can't be in the same room. So therefore we can't do it. Now, this works better in this format. It's more accessible, it's easier. And it's not all that there is. Right. But this is, this is a good format. So I say all that to say a digital small group that lasts six weeks on a topic, zoom is a positive, like it, that is a, that is a great opportunity. And let's just view it as an opportunity, not whining complaining that we can't do it at the building on Tuesday night. Yeah.

Meagan Ranson ([15:52](#)):

I love that. Which that brings us right to our third or third thing. Right.

Michael Lukaszewski ([15:55](#)):

Third thing, the third and crucial point is I would make these the right length. Right? So the right link for these small groups as outreach, digital, small groups happening online, they need to be short. I would

say six weeks is great. I would say 12 weeks is, is that the top end of where you should be? Right. Plus somebody doesn't want to talk about parenting for 12 weeks. They're gonna be like, I got other issues

Meagan Ranson ([16:21](#)):

As a seven on the Enneagram. I love a lack of commitment. So having a defined lanes is awesome. What, and whatever context to me, but especially if it's going to be digital, a defined length is like, Oh, okay. I can wrap my mind around that. Yeah.

Michael Lukaszewski ([16:39](#)):

Wants to sign up for something that's indefinite. Right? people need start dates and stop dates that helps people get it created, helps them create space and categories. You see, people think I can do anything for six weeks. If I don't like the people, I don't have to see them all week seven. You know, it's, it's, it creates a accessible environment for people to step into. And what you can do is you can transition it. So you get to the end of six weeks. I know our, our small group when we started our church, small group our church provides us like starter curriculum that helps everybody share their story. And it's like six or seven weeks long. And they, they teach you as a leader. They're like, Hey, at the end of six or seven weeks however long it is, the group decides if they want to keep continue to meet.

Michael Lukaszewski ([17:23](#)):

And you know, and then from there you talk about whatever you want. It's like kind of up to you and there's some support, but, but it's like, here's a little format, here's a little structure, here's the end date. And then you reach the decision point. And so creating an option to transition to, Hey, I know we got together just to talk about parenting for six weeks, but now that this is over, would, y'all like to go for another six weeks and talk about something else. And there's a little bit of relationship built. There's a little bit trust bill. And if people want to keep going, keep going. Yeah. So short-term maybe the option to continue if you want. I think that works really great.

Meagan Ranson ([17:58](#)):

I love it. I think it's all fantastic. And I think this is a really great unique method that we can employ right now that will help keep our church connected to each other and bring people from the outside in. And then when we're able to meet in person, we've already created this beautiful network in our community, in our neighborhood that we hadn't haven't done before. And I just, I love that.

Michael Lukaszewski ([18:22](#)):

Yeah, that's great. And I think the, the kind of overarching principle here is what if we could take something that's typically been used on the discipleship side of the jobs to be done. And it kind of put a little tweak on it, right? New format, new links, new topic, whatever, and bring it over. And it now becomes a tool for us to reach out and find new people and bring them into the life of the church. And it's this it's something where we already may be good at. We already, we already have, but we're just using it for a slightly different purpose. So we're not reinventing, not launching a whole new ministry department, new step. Like this is what we just described is not expensive. Right. you don't have to do a hundred of these. You could do one, right. It's accessible. You could try it. If it doesn't work, what's the worst that can happen. That's true. You know, that's fair. If somebody, you complained on next door about the trash cans instead of the small group, I mean, that's the worst.

Meagan Ranson ([19:17](#)):

Oh, okay. Well, as we wrap up, is there anything that you haven't said yet that you think we're missing that you think would be helpful?

Michael Lukaszewski ([19:23](#)):

I want to reiterate one thing lists should always have three or five points again. They should not be clear, no numbers. That's the number one takeaway.

Meagan Ranson ([19:39](#)):

Oh my gosh. Well, I hope this episode has brought some sort of value to you. If nothing else, you know, to only use odd numbers when you are making lists we would love to hear from you, if you have ideas for using small groups for outreach, drop them in the comments you know, find us on Facebook and let us know, and also leave a review for us that would help people just find out about church, feel and share with your friends. We would love for them to hear this as well. And we have one more episode left in the season. Can you believe that? I can't believe it. I know. I can't believe it. This is our next to last episode for season two, about reaching people online. The very last episode drops the week after Christmas. So be sure to catch it. It's going to be a good one. They're all amazing.

Meagan Ranson ([20:22](#)):

Can it be a good one?

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

Okay. Well, we will see y'all after Christmas.

Meagan Ranson ([20:28](#)):

Yeah.

Meagan Ranson ([20:34](#)):

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