

## Virtual Resources for Children's Ministries

During this unprecedented time, your church has a unique opportunity to reach not only the adult congregation through internet tools, but also your children and students. It is important to create avenues for all people in the church to feel connected, seen, and supported by their local church. Working together with your staff and/or volunteers to create a unified system to reach your community can result in great fruit for your collective body and your community. Below are a few simple processes that are being used at Westgate Chapel in Toledo, OH. We are working to adapt each week to do this well for our entire church. This document contains tools for Children's Ministries as a part of our church-wide effort to *BE the Church!*

### 1. What does your normal routine look like and how can that translate to the digital world?

What are the normal rhythms at your church? When do your children meet, and what are they doing during those times? Use this as your guide to begin to create a system for "virtual children's ministry."

Westgate Chapel's Westgate Kids has onsite programming ordinarily during both services on Sunday mornings as well as during our AWANA clubs meeting on Wednesday nights. We determined it was best to keep with current rhythms and scheduled Westgate Kids "LIVE with Leah" on Sundays at 9 a.m. prior to our Church-wide livestream at 10:45, and on Wednesday evening at 6:30 during our normal AWANA time.

*This requires only a Facebook account (preferably set up a page dedicated to your church's children's ministry). It is free. Any laptop, phone, or tablet works. This platform is used most by the parents of current children and is the easiest way to get the word out to your congregation.*

### 2. Create a communication plan.

If you have a church database, use the information to email your parents. If you do not, post on Facebook that you are attempting to gather emails to send direct communication. Ask for people to send their email address to you through **PRIVATE MESSAGE or directly to your email account**. Work to maintain safe and private means for people to give you their data.

### 3. Create a Calendar of Events

When you communicate with your families, give them a calendar of events and expected dates for future emails to help them know when to be active on your page and when they should be receiving information. Plan fun digital events and use your page to create community. Be sure to highlight the times that you will be LIVE or available online. Encourage your volunteers and teachers to be active on your page during these times as well. Have them interact, post pics and videos, and comment on things that families are posting. *An example of our calendar can be located on the link at the end of the document.*

#### 4. How to go LIVE

Going LIVE on Facebook is very simple. In the publishing tab, simply click go LIVE and follow the prompts. Important things to remember:

Make sure you have adequate lighting.

Make sure have strong internet connection or data plan to have the best stream available. This might mean asking your teenager to log out of Xbox or YouTube for a bit ☐.

Place your phone or computer at an angle that allows you to be close and easily heard.

Make sure the background behind you isn't creating a distraction.

Smile, be very energetic, and think of the kids on the other side watching you!

Be interactive! Work to read the scrolling names and comments so that you can be interactive. However, when you are teaching, it might be best to have a helper "host" and have them doing the interacting that involves typing. They do not even have to be at your LIVE location. My assistant goes online during our live, I introduce her to the audience, and she works to interact with our kids with replies. Kids LOVE to hear their name called out on a LIVE. Always take a few minutes to say some names you know that are watching! Invite kids to push the icons that best go with your content!

If you are teaching from a purchased curriculum, make sure you have permission to post any items you are showing on your stream. There are great ways to provide content for your kids that are copywrite friendly. We are utilizing the Gospel Project through SharePoint where we can send a link to folders with all the content to our families. Gospel Project has many usable tools to do this well. I am teaching a LIVE lesson, then referring everyone to their weekly content folder for all the added features. If you are using your own curriculum, you can get as creative as you'd like!

Other things to consider:

Keeping the consistency of schedule is important. Work in tandem with the entire church staff so that each ministry can support and champion one another. Having streamlined, church-wide communication is key to not overlap and overcommunicate. If your church is live streaming, make sure you are not posting things during that timeslot. Be the church together as you would always.

Use central locations to communicate central information. If you have a church website, highlight that. You can also use your Facebook page for central info.

You can also use ZOOM to have more interactive times where you can see and talk with kids. This is done through sending a meeting request via email. The ZOOM page can give you everything you need to know to do this very simply. ZOOM calls up to 40 minutes are FREE! We are utilizing ZOOM for life groups, AWANA groups, and various church interactions.

**Below are some links to Westgate's Content and other sites for you to reference:**

<https://westgatechapel.org/update> (this is where we house all the central info for "virtual church")

<https://mailchi.mp/6993648f545b/westgate-kids-connection-plan> (Westgate Kids Parent's Virtual Tools Plan Email- contains a sample calendar of events)

<https://mailchi.mp/032e1fb70e7d/westgate-kids-virtual-tools> (Westgate Kids Parent Email)

<https://www.facebook.com/Westgate-Kids-144387165646943/> (Westgate Kids Facebook Page)

<https://www.facebook.com/westgatechapeltoledo/> (Westgate Chapel Main Facebook Page)

<https://zoom.us/> (Zoom Page)

Leah Broach's email: [leahb@westgatechapel.org](mailto:leahb@westgatechapel.org)