

## ***Making Small Group Ministries Accessible to People Viewing from Afar***

At our Satellite Luncheon on Feb. 18, 2018, people in attendance thought about the 11 small groups in our church that are listed below. We came up with ideas about how people who cannot physically come to our Vista church can still participate in the ministries of these groups. We thought of people who are Vista members but are currently homebound; our snowbirds; people who are watching us on livestream and want to get involved in the ministries of these groups in their own communities across the country, and eventually – our satellite fellowships.

What follows are the ideas that were generated at the luncheon. These ideas will be shared with the various groups. Each group is asked to choose 1 or 2 of the ideas to explore and then implement. As you read through these ideas, if you have additional thoughts, please send them to Gale Hall at [vistagale@gmail.com](mailto:vistagale@gmail.com).

### **Prayer Shawl**

- 1) Send a pattern for a prayer shawl, lap robe, or pocket prayer shawl in the mail or by email to someone who wants to participate in making a prayer shawl but cannot come to meetings. We can also send yarn hooks/needles in the mail if access to yarn is a problem. We can pick up completed shawls of people who live nearby. We can provide postage and a mailing package to those who live far away to mail the shawl to us to be blessed in church.
- 2) Make a video of the prayer shawl group and post it to our website. Invite people to participate in making prayer shawls.
- 3) Have a place on our website or service to request a prayer shawl or pocket prayer shawl and then send one out to that person.
- 4) When prayer shawls are given out, have the Stephen Minister or whoever delivers it include information about our online worship service. Can also include information about our church.
- 5) Advertise through the food bank that we can provide prayer shawls or pocket prayer shawls to those who need one.

### **United Methodist Men (UMM)**

- 1) Make videos of UMM activities and post to our website.
- 2) People who don't live near us could form an online UMM. The people in that group could commit to performing one act of service in their community each month. Then they all connect with each other in a designated chat room on our website or Facebook group to share what they did, discuss them with each other, and make plans for the next month.
- 3) As part of the Rummage Sale, have a live auction online.
- 4) People can decide to hold a rummage sale in their own community and donate funds to Vista. We can communicate with them by email to help them get going with ideas and to organize the event.

## **Evangelism**

- 1) Get out the word about our Livestream to friends, relatives, and neighbors.
- 2) People could create videos of their own testimonies/faith journeys – or about specific topics of faith - to post on our website. Personal evangelism. These videos could also be created as You-Tube videos with a link to Vista's website.
- 3) Have Bible Study partners connect by email, Skype, FaceTime, etc.
- 4) Bible Study groups at Vista and in other locations could tape their meetings so we can post them online. We can then participate in each other's Bible Studies.
- 5) Offer an online chat to take place right after our Sunday livestream for people who want to stay and talk about the message.
- 6) Offer online membership option with a "Join" type button.
- 7) Form an online grief group with chat or discussion board.
- 8) Share ideas through FaceBook.

## **Prayer Team**

- 1) Have a prayer request box online. Pastor can also offer prayers on Sunday for online prayer requests.
- 2) Have people at Vista sign up to be prayer partners for people who worship online and would like a prayer partner. Can do this in a chat space.
- 3) For people who request prayer online, we can send out a letter of encouragement along with prayer material – through email or in the mail if we have an address.
- 4) Have a church email to reach out specifically to the Prayer Team.
- 5) Have a weekly prayer team online through Facebook, Skype, or other medium.
- 6) Have a group of Vista members who would be available to receive prayer requests throughout the week and respond to them.

## **United Methodist Women (UMW)**

- 1) Have a video on our website for the UMW to share what the group does. Provide support and encouragement to UMW groups in remote areas. Help them create opportunities for women in that area to get together and share common interests and concerns such as crafts, parenting, etc.
- 2) Women could adopt a family in need in the area where they live and get acquainted with the programs in that area that can offer support to that family.
- 3) Plant a UMW "seed" group in remote communities.
- 4) Do a fundraiser to raise money for a charity. Each person who worships online can do their "own thing" in their community around this fundraiser and then pool the money raised to donate to that common cause.
- 5) Livestream a Vista UMW fundraiser.
- 6) Encourage remote groups to have bake sales to raise money as Vista does. Then have a sharing of favorite recipes between the groups.
- 7) Have an online UMW groups through Facebook.

## **Missions**

- 1) Update and expand the missions section on Vista's website so readers can see all of the activities we are currently involved with. Suggest opportunities for people viewing online to share a need in their communities that women can support together.
- 2) Tell the stories of our various mission outreaches through video (such as the Agua Prieta group visit) so people can see what Christ is doing through missions at Vista and in remote communities.
- 3) Share the mission projects that Vista is already involved in online in a "how to do it" format that people can implement where they live.
- 4) Advertise our online ministries in remote communities through organizations with whom we partner such as Family First, Impact, etc.
- 5) Create an opportunity for our online groups and Vista to go on a foreign mission's trip together.
- 6) What kind of translation services might we need for those whose first language is Spanish.
- 7) Sell cards by the bundle online.

## **Stephen Ministers**

- 1) Be an online Stephen Minister. Connect with your person through email, FaceTime, Skype or other online means to talk and pray together. Locate supports in the community on the Internet to share with your person. Essentially, you are providing the services of a Stephen Minister to your person without getting in the car and traveling.
- 2) Create a chat area for Stephen Ministers to talk with and support each other on our website.
- 3) Announce Stephen Minister training online.
- 4) Stephen Ministers can participate as chat hosts or in private chat rooms during the livestream to respond to prayer requests in the service.
- 5) Have a place on the livestream for viewers to talk to a Stephen Minister after the service online and perhaps at another scheduled time during the week.

## **Fellowship**

- 1) Facilitate getting online guests to participate in online games such as Words with Friends.
- 2) Create opportunities for fellowship through working together on a community project.
- 3) Have a Vista talent show. Video the show and post it online.
- 4) Explore "iMeet" as a way to have video meetings with people in different locations online.
- 5) Have a card ministry for people who are online guests.
- 6) Every couple of months, go to remote communities to offer a picnic with music.

- 7) Share recipes or recipe videos online. Create a Vista Friends cookbook.

## **Music**

- 1) Be sure that we include the words to all of the music we sing in our service on the screen so people watching can clearly understand the words and “learn” the songs.
- 2) Have additional music in our service so that other soloists or instrumentalists can participate – along with the children’s choir.
- 3) Our fellowship site can have a Vista planter who initially helps facilitate the singing during the livestream. Then develop a leader from the community to take this over.
- 4) People watching online could record themselves singing or playing an instrument that we could post on our website and have a process set up to choose certain videos for our livestream offering or other special music. (check into copyright issues)
- 5) Can we rebroadcast concerts?
- 6) Encourage those who become part of our fellowship to form their own choir. They could sing along with the Vista choir during the service if we provide them with the music in advance.
- 7) Record a 5-10 minute video of the Vista choir rehearsing to post online.
- 8) Purchase the correct quality mics for the congregational singing during our livestream and be sure that our audio and video are working well.

## **Education**

- 1) Have online classes on various topics with reading materials provided on our website.
- 2) Stream adult Sunday School classes. Include the text of the outline of that class used by the leaders for online visitors to see as they watch. Could also include a chat feature for the class.
- 3) Have online Bible studies. Share Bible stories online. Video arts and crafts projects to share online.
- 4) Prepare Sunday School lessons that can be posted online to be used by teachers/parents at our fellowship site or at home.
- 5) Have an online Christian parenting class.
- 6) Have pen pals for children, youth and adults with those at our fellowship sites and online.
- 7) Socialize with our fellowship site’s youth groups through social media.
- 8) Have a book club on Facebook – or form groups in your own communities to meet together.
- 9) Rebroadcast services at designated times.

## **Bible Study**

- 1) Do a Bible Study with follow-up face discussion and chat questions online.
- 2) Livestream our current Bible studies at Vista.

- 3) Explore these Bible apps and online resources: [www.bible.com](http://www.bible.com) (complete reading plan and then discuss), YouVersion – devotional online application - you can share it or do it with friends, adult and child format; Babel – translates the Bible into different languages; [www.lovegodgreatly.com](http://www.lovegodgreatly.com) - small groups for women; RightNowMedia – online videos and studies – church might pay for a subscription and then free to members?
- 4) Send a Bible study leader to our remote sites for a 6-week program that meets once a week. Parables of the Bible, Women in the Bible, etc.
- 5) We can offer a Bible to be sent to those who do not have one.
- 6) Create classes that defend Christian principles; show scientific reasons for God's presence; share testimonies.
- 7) Have a way for someone to request the Upper Room.
- 8) Walk to Bethlehem – advertise, inform, share.