

# Strategically Engaging *the Church*

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*A guide to engaging your local church to  
encourage community flourishing*



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# INTRODUCTION

At Care Net, we believe that “life decisions require life support” and that the transformation of the gospel is God’s instrument to provide life support to women, men, and families to empower them to choose life for their unborn children and abundant life for their families.

James 1:27 compels all Christ-followers to care for orphans (children without fathers) and widows (women without husbands). This is core to the missional ministry of pregnancy centers as well as to the mission of the church.

Ideally, pregnancy centers act as missionary outposts in the community to a specific group of people: those who are making decisions about pregnancy and those who are walking out those decisions. And if the pregnancy center is a missionary agency, then ideally every single Christian church in the community is a “sending congregation,” thus a supporting church.

But we do not live in an ideal world. One of the greatest concerns of pregnancy center leaders in the Care Net family is inadequate support from local churches. According to the most recent data available from Care Net affiliates, centers reported having active support from nearly 49,000 churches, only 41% of which were available to offer some level of ongoing discipleship support to clients.<sup>1</sup> That is an average of 20 churches supporting each center. Yet, there are about 400,000 Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox churches in the United States. This demonstrates the great need to cultivate and activate more healthy partnerships between centers and local churches.

Building parish and church support is an integral and ongoing part of successful ministry to women and men facing pregnancy decisions. By creating a vibrant church engagement program, a center will have a much greater impact for Christ in the community. To accomplish this goal, a new approach is needed: one in which centers come alongside local churches to help them accomplish their God-given mandate to make disciples of all nations. And, along with that, to be a prophetic voice in the community, seeking justice and showing mercy by protecting the unborn and their parents from abortion, and strengthening families.

Before you begin this process, your staff and board need to honestly examine your hearts. **Are you eager to bless local churches, or do you just want them to get on board with your agenda?**

Look at the question from their perspective: If you are not willing to invest time in getting to know them, why should they be willing to invest in you and your center?

The optimal situation is one of mutual support, in which the collaboration benefits both the center and the church.

*The church is the only institution that is ideologically aligned with God's perspective on life and structurally capable of dealing with a post-Roe environment in a God-honoring way.*

– Roland Warren

Care Net Affiliate pregnancy centers have a unique opportunity to equip the church in this restorative, Gospel-centered mission with compassion, help, hope, and discipleship. Consider making church relations a priority, prayerfully discussing this partnership at board and staff meetings, developing and implementing a well thought-out plan, and trusting the Lord to bring the increase. This resource is designed to help any center build an effective church engagement strategy.

<sup>1</sup> Care Net internal survey of more than 1200 affiliated pregnancy centers, 2023.



## CHAPTER 1

# ENGAGING THE CHURCH IS VITAL

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*“Two are better than one, because  
they have a good return for their labor.”*

ECCLESIASTES 4:9



*We have a community list of churches that we pray for and then send a note to them letting them know we have prayed for them... We want them to know we are honored to be partnering with them doing Kingdom work!*

– Director at a Care Net Affiliate Center

*Our team made a habit of asking our church leadership what we can do for them. Oftentimes we forget that our centers are there to serve as a resource to our communities. This is a good reminder that we are not just asking for handouts from churches. We want to be a resource for them as well.*

– Former Executive Director

Churches value the ministry of pregnancy centers but are not always engaged. As a center, you need to make churches aware of opportunities to become involved. Your church outreach approach must be based on the assumption that most pastors and priests favor what you're doing, but they don't have sufficient knowledge about pregnancy center ministry to know how they can help.

You have two objectives when you approach churches:

- To help church leadership see that sharing the gospel and discipleship are as integral to your mission as it is to theirs.
- To show easy ways that the church can partner with you in ministry.

## Getting Started

The overwhelming majority of your center's budget likely comes from members of local churches. Your budget may also include regular and special gifts from local churches, but the church can partner in ministry with so much more than just financial gifts.

Every Care Net pregnancy center should consider developing a church outreach and engagement strategy. Church outreach and engagement should be a high priority because it expands your center's voice within your community exponentially. The best way to connect with a church is to find where the vision of your center matches that of the pastor and church. The best way to do this is to give one team member primary responsibility for church engagement, and deputize the staff, board and volunteers to support the specific goals related to this objective.

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MANY ABORTION MINDED PATIENTS REPORTED A RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION:  
24% CATHOLIC | 17% MAINLINE PROTESTANT | 13% EVANGELICAL PROTESTANT

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## Six Reasons Engaging the Church is Important

1. **We need the spiritual support of the church.** Abortion is a spiritual battle that has been fought over and over again throughout history going back to Old Testament times (Jeremiah 19:5). Since the first image bearers — Adam and Eve — listened to the deceiver's voice, the enemy has carried out a proxy war against God by attempting to destroy those who bear His image. Because we are involved in a spiritual

battle, we need spiritual covering. Your center needs the intercession, counsel, and support of the local church community. And your churches need your support to them through prayer. Consider creating a prayer calendar where your staff prays for your churches by name on a rotating schedule. Send a card to your church leaders letting them know your staff has taken time to specifically pray for them.

**Because our primary mission is to share the gospel and make disciples, the church is our natural source of accountability and support.** Care Net is not a mere social service organization. Our family of pregnancy centers does more than save lives — they work to save souls. Since 2008, over 2.1 million people have heard the Gospel in a Care Net pregnancy center.<sup>1</sup>

- 2. Abortion happens in the church.** According to a Guttmacher Institute survey of women who had abortions, “Many abortion patients reported a religious affiliation — 24% were Catholic, 17% were mainline Protestant, 13% were evangelical Protestant, and 8% identified with some other religion. Thirty-eight percent of patients had no religious affiliation.”<sup>2</sup> Care Net’s own research revealed that 4 out of 10 women and 5 in 10 men surveyed were actively attending church at least once a month at the time of their abortion.<sup>3,4</sup> We need to be involved with the church because the church needs us to be involved. Attention needs to be drawn to abortion in the church and resources need to be provided to church-going women and men who are making pregnancy decisions. Your center can provide a valuable extension of the church’s ministry in your community. Additionally, the church can become the healing place for women and men with abortions in their past through abortion recovery and care ministries when equipped through the local pregnancy center.
- 3. A pregnancy center can never have too much church support!** As church support increases, church members become invested partners in ministry, and the impact of both the pregnancy center and the church grows. As centers come under increasing attack, it is vital for centers to partner with the church to create a culture where women and men faced with pregnancy decisions are transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ and empowered to choose life for their unborn children and abundant life for their families. Churches also are the main source for new staff and volunteers at the center.
- 4. Solid church relations provide opportunities for the ongoing discipleship of spiritually interested clients.** Centers must have good relationships with local churches so that they can connect spiritually-interested clients with strong churches. A pregnancy center can support women and men who choose life for one or two years after the birth of their child, but the Church has been called by God to disciple, love, and care for converts for their entire lives.
- 5. If we don’t reach the church, abortion advocates will.** Planned Parenthood has a Clergy Advocacy Board that publicly stands with them to show that members of the clergy “have supported Planned Parenthood for nearly 100 years because of our shared goals...”<sup>5,6</sup> Centers need to reach out to churches with a message encouraging a holistic life ethic, sexual responsibility, holiness, and forgiveness. Only when we humbly and intentionally work together can we show our communities a better way of living: for God’s glory and not our own convenience. Effectively reaching and engaging local churches

<sup>1</sup> According to internal statistics through 12/31/2015.

<sup>2</sup> Jerman, Jenna. Jones, Rachel K., Onda, Tsuyoshi. (2016, May). Characteristics of U.S. Abortion Patients in 2014 and Changes Since 2008. Guttmacher Institute, 2016.

<sup>3</sup> Green, Lisa Cannon. (2015, November 23). New Survey: Women Go Silently from Church to Abortion Clinic. Care Net. Retrieved from <https://www.care-net.org/churches-blog/new-survey-women-go-silently-from-church-to-abortion-clinic>

<sup>4</sup> Study of Women Who Have Had an Abortion and Their Views on Church. Care Net. LifeWay Research.(2012, November). Retrieved from <https://www.makinglifedisciples.com/about/care-nets-lifeway-research-and-abortion-related-statistics/>

<sup>5</sup> But the goals shared between abortion advocates and their clergy supporters are not those of abundant life for women, men, children and families through Jesus Christ.

<sup>6</sup> More Information found on Planned Parenthood’s Clergy Advocacy Board, found here <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/about-us/our-leadership/clergy-advocacy-board>

# CHAPTER 1



is dependent on having a solid strategy and executing it well. Implementing a targeted plan creates accountability for each task completed. In the following chapters, we hope to provide ideas that will inspire and inform your center's church outreach and engagement strategy. Here are some resources to help you equip pastors and leaders in your local churches: [store.care-net.org](https://store.care-net.org)





## CHAPTER 2

# ENGAGING THE CHURCH IS CHALLENGING

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*“Whether you turn to the right or to the left, your ears will hear a voice behind you saying, ‘this is the way; walk in it.’”*

ISAIAH 30:21



## *We must go to churches with our hands full!*

– Raul Reyes, President and Founder, Life Equip Global

Every center in the Care Net network wants to engage with the church. After all, we are missional outposts of the local church in our communities. Yet, it is not uncommon for centers to feel that their efforts to engage with churches are ignored and sometimes even rebuffed. This can be discouraging. It is important to understand that low-effort attempts at engagement will typically be low-impact as well. Many centers attempt to reach churches through mass mailings or generic emails. Although well-intentioned, these attempts face many challenges and are usually not effective in reaching disengaged pastors and church leaders.

## Getting Connected the Right Way

In a burst of enthusiasm, centers may decide to end their church support woes by sending 500 messages to every church staff member that could possibly be interested in supporting their work. The envelopes have a computer-printed label and letters or emails that begin with “Dear Pastor...”

When this approach fails to produce new supportive churches, center leaders may feel discouraged. However, there are some very good reasons why this message may have not gotten the attention hoped for.

Pastors get an overwhelming amount of print and electronic mail. Think of how much mail your center gets: all the appeals, all the sales circulars, the mailings from prospective adoptive parents, the bills, and the donations. Every staff member of a church, especially pastors, receive a similarly high volume of mail on a daily basis. If a church leader poured over pounds of mail and dozens of emails every day, they would never get to plan, pray, counsel, study, and prepare for the next week’s service.

Instead, in medium and large churches, mail and email are commonly screened by an assistant. In very small churches, clergy may hold another full or part-time job, in addition to ministry responsibilities. In either case, apart from relationship, a “Dear Pastor” message is likely to be discarded.

- A pastor’s schedule does not leave much free time. Many clergy members prepare at least one sermon a week. Besides this, they may have responsibilities officiating at a wedding or funeral, leading a bible study or other training for church members, or facilitating a small group. They might also plan budgets, organize church events, meet with other pastors, and engage in community outreach. To manage time well, many church leaders plan counseling days, study days, and days for appointments and visits. If your communication arrives on a study day, or during an especially busy week, it could very well become dated before the pastor even sees it.
- A letter or email does not leave much of an impression. A pastor will likely not respond negatively to your message, and may even have a favorable view of what you do. But, a glance at your letter, may not motivate the action you are hoping for. The pastor may be intrigued, but then set your message aside with the best intention of returning to it later. In the press of the week or month ahead, later might never come.

Letters or emails alone usually will not get centers very far. They do little toward getting churches involved, especially as an outreach. Ministries that send out “prospect” letters to build their donor list usually experience a response rate well below 2 percent. Prospect letters to pastors might be only slightly more



effective. However, as an introductory tool, letters and emails do have a purpose, and by using them as a first step of a strategic church outreach and engagement plan, you can maximize the response your center receives.

**Although this common approach often is met with challenges, there are other effective ways to engage the churches in your community. Let's take a closer look.**

## How to be most effective

Many centers try the email and letter approach, but get frustrated when they seem to have little impact. Often the ministry leaders who disappoint you are also disappointed by you. This can be difficult to consider, but if a pastor shares your core values, then the problem could actually be how you're presenting the center's ministry. To be effective at reaching out to pastors, you have to think like them, get to know their world, and know how to motivate them to respond.

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TO BE EFFECTIVE AT REACHING OUT TO PASTORS, YOU HAVE TO THINK LIKE THEM.

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## The Pastor's Breakfast

Many pregnancy centers have had great success at engaging ministry leaders through periodic breakfast meetings. However, these breakfasts are usually more effective at sustaining the support a center already has than generating new support. One way to increase participation of new pastors is to engage supporting pastors willing to network on your behalf to get more pastors involved.

Remember to use this time to update these church leaders about the ministry you are providing. As many of them will be church/personal donors or volunteers, they will want to know the success of your ministry in their community. Share a client story and remind them of the "why" for this most important ministry. The client story could be a well-crafted video used at a previous event.

Additional challenges with attracting clergy to a breakfast can be overcome with careful planning. Consider these options:

- If breakfast attendance is waning, hold a brunch or luncheon instead of a breakfast. This can work better for ministers who have regular morning meetings, prayer, or study times.
- Plan and market the event in a way that underscores its importance - not only for the center - but as a way for clergy to network with others who share their passion for discipleship, justice and mercy ministry.
- Include a headline speaker - who can draw others to the event. All pastors speak professionally, so keep the remarks brief and include plenty of opportunities to build relationships.
- Ask the pastors with whom you have the best relationships to invite another pastor from their own or a similar denomination to the event. In this way, they can be ambassadors and advocates for clients and their unborn children. Recognize those who invited someone else at the event.



- Invite those who co-labor with the pastor, such as their spouses and leaders of key ministries in the church.
- Hand-address event invitations to the event and always include a personal note. Use nice invitations and unique size or shaped envelopes, such as A7 instead of #10. If you hand deliver it, speak to the person who receives it and thank them for all that they do at the church. If you gain favor with them they could help advance your future messages. Follow up with a phone call to help your invitation stand out. Be very clear that this is not a fundraising event.
- Offer an incentive for attendance, such as a free resource or gift certificate (donated by a local business) or a gift certificate for a good online christian bookstore. It does not have to be a large amount, \$25 often covers the cost of one or two books.

Plan the event carefully, but keep it simple. Offer a meal catered by professionals or volunteers. Focus on blessing and encouraging those who come. Give them practical examples of the way their work as spiritual leaders equips center team members and how their financial support allows the center to share Christ's love in the community. Further, remind them that their churches are essential in connecting interested clients with ongoing spiritual support and discipleship. **This event is not the time to ask for funds.** It should be used solely to build community and strengthen church relationships.

## PRAY! PRAY! PRAY!

Another alternative is to invite a pastor to host devotions and pray for your staff. One center discusses how effective this was for them:

"The best connection we have made with our area churches is by inviting a different pastor to our office to do a devotion for our staff and volunteers. We do this before we open each week. If they have never been here before, then they also get a full tour of our facilities. Once they have been here, and see what we offer, they are more willing to participate in our events and activities."

Pick a day when your center can invite partnering churches, or even potential partnering churches, to pray for your center and clients. This will allow the pastors to get a front-row seat on the inner workings and needs in your center.

## Work Smarter

As a pregnancy center, you need to know and explain how your ministry intersects with the church – what you have to offer and how you can help them fulfill their own calling in Christ.

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KEEP IN MIND THAT WE DON'T WANT TO SIMPLY USE THE CHURCH FOR ITS VOLUNTEERS AND FINANCES, BUT RATHER TREAT THE CHURCH AS A PARTNER.

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Keep in mind that we don't want to simply use the church for its volunteers and finances but rather treat the church as a partner. We are a local outreach of the body of Christ in our community, and we offer churches the opportunity to accomplish an essential part of their mission: sharing the gospel in word and deed as they partner with us. We should not come begging but instead demonstrate the blessing that their church can participate in, ministering to these men and women in need. Partnering with your center will not be a drain on the resources of the church but an opportunity to make the church stronger. Most pastors didn't go to seminary to learn how to help pregnant women and men in crisis. By providing a model and

avenue for ministry, you can take a major burden off the pastor's shoulders. A pastor often realizes the need, but doesn't have the time or resources to fill it on his own. When presented with the structure and resources, he may jump at the opportunity to become involved.

## Nine Reasons Why Churches Respond

*"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us."—1 John 5:14 (NIV)*

1. **You've prayed!** The importance and need for prayer can't be stressed enough. Your board meetings and center staff meetings should include frequent, specific prayer for your supporting churches and for favor in developing partnerships with other churches in your community.
2. **Your center is committed to sharing Christ.** You can't say this too much when you talk with church leaders and pastors. Evangelism is an important part of the Christian faith and an integral element of both the church and pregnancy center ministry. Mention how many women and men are hearing the gospel, and how many are responding positively. Additionally, address the need for churches to continue providing spiritual support to interested clients on an ongoing basis. Discuss how you desire to connect your clients with local churches, including theirs, to disciple clients long after their need for a pregnancy center ends.
3. **You're offering realistic, Christ-centered alternatives to abortion.** Your center provides churches with a unifying, biblical response to abortion: to offer compassion, hope, and help to individuals making decisions about pregnancy, marriage, parenting, fatherhood, and more.
4. **You're doing practical things that will positively impact the church and the community.** Your center teaches sexual integrity, offers pregnancy tests, provides education and supplies for those who continue their pregnancy, and ministers God's healing grace to those who seek abortion recovery care. Most churches believe in these activities but don't have the resources or time to bring them under their own roofs. You help meet this very real need.
5. **A member of the church is a volunteer, donor, or board member of your center.** If a member of the church is a donor, volunteer, or board member, they are likely already a passionate advocate for your work. Consider inviting them to serve as a church liaison as well. In this role, he or she can represent your center to the pastor and the church, often better than someone outside of the church, drawing attention to events, prayer requests, and employment/volunteer opportunities.
6. **As an affiliate of Care Net, you are associated with our history of Christian leadership on life issues.** When reaching out to churches, it may be helpful to remind them that you are not on your own. Not only do you partner with local churches, but you are equipped with national best practices and are an affiliate of a ministry that has been a leading compassionate Christian voice on life issues since 1975.
7. **You've studied the church as an individual organization.** You know who is involved in making important decisions and who oversees community outreach and who leads ministries for women, men, students, and young adults. You've identified two or three ways your center can help the church advance its mission, and you can briefly articulate that to the pastor or ministry leader with whom you are meeting.



8. **Your center introduces the church to a new way to address abortion (growing full ministry partners - as presented in the next chapter).** Many churches avoid addressing abortion in any way because they view it as a secret or private issue. But by framing the issue from the standpoint of providing compassionate care, gospel-centered ministry, and visible life support, your center brings a new avenue for ministry and discipleship. For centers that do not have a high-quality educational program designed specifically for the church, you can introduce them to Making Life Disciples (MLD) a 12-session curriculum, developed by Care Net that equips the church to offer compassion, hope, help, and discipleship to anyone considering abortion. As church members become more informed and engaged in this issue, their passion to support and partner with your center is likely to grow as well (Appendix A). With MLD we want to invite you to see the church as a **ministry partner that you as a center support and equip** and not merely a partner who supports your centers ministry.
9. **Your center leadership, board, and staff have proven themselves worthy of support.** People believe in people more than they believe in organizations. The center executive director and members of the board need to form relationships on a personal level and demonstrate their capabilities as ministry leaders. Develop a visible presence in your community that lets them know your center team members are effective in helping women and men facing pregnancy decisions.

Although engaging a church can seem challenging, remembering that you both are working for the betterment of the Kingdom grants great peace in the pursuit. Don't be afraid to keep reaching out in a productive way and expanding your network. Don't despise small beginnings - our King walks with us! (Zechariah 4:10 & Haggai 2:1-5)



## CHAPTER 3

# EXPANDING YOUR INFLUENCE BY EQUIPPING MINISTRY PARTNERS

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*“Let the wise listen and add to their learning,  
and let the discerning get guidance.”*

PROVERBS 1:5

*When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. Then he said to his disciples, "The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field."*

– Matthew 9:36–38

This section presents the approach to church partnerships practiced by the Positive Options pregnancy center in Holland, Michigan, which we call the “The Community Life Model.” Their current church partnership page can be found at: [www.makinglifedisciples.com/partners](http://www.makinglifedisciples.com/partners). Learn more about the model used at Positive Options in Holland, Michigan in this excellent webinar from August 1, 2023: [affiliates.care-net.org/Education](http://affiliates.care-net.org/Education).

In order to have a fruitful discussion, it is essential to define terms. We want to present a definition of “full-ministry partnership” that relates directly to who these partners are and what they do. Our definitions will focus on shared ministry activities and how much they align with the vision (who we are) and mission (what we do) of pregnancy centers. Each one of us serving in pregnancy center ministry is an answer to prayer! As laborers in His harvest we seek to expand His kingdom as we reach the lost and disciple fellow and future Kingdom citizens.

## Why Do We Need a Different Approach to Partnerships?

Care Net affiliated pregnancy centers have grown to over 1,200 centers being supported by over 27,000 volunteers. These centers do fantastic work to meet the needs of women and men faced with pregnancy decisions. The support from their church partners in prayer, material support, and volunteering at centers have made all of our life-transforming work possible.

In our previous version of this e-book, prioritizing partnerships was based almost entirely on the financial support churches could provide to sustain the ministry work of the pregnancy center.

The criteria listed for a top-tier (tier one) church was that they faithfully provided financial support for the center. The action steps relating to growing and expanding their partnership were almost entirely related to the capacity to give financially. As important as giving is, the partnership of our churches must go beyond their ability to provide for pregnancy centers financially. **Because our ultimate desire is to see people’s lives transformed by the Gospel of Jesus Christ, we must re-imagine the possibilities of equipping our churches as ministry partners doing Kingdom ministry work.**

## Our Desire to Equip the Church is Driven by the Pressing Need We See

*“Care Net’s large national study of women who had abortions found that two out of five women (and five out of ten men) were attending church at least once a month during their first abortion. This means that too many women (and men) are walking out of our churches on Sunday morning and into abortion clinics on Monday.*

*Our research also found that most women (and men) did not feel their church had any resources to help with their unplanned or unexpectedly complicated pregnancy decisions. Others feared judgment from the*



*congregation should they find out about the pregnancy. Accordingly, there is a critical need for churches to minister to the abortion vulnerable.”*

*– Roland Warren, President, Care Net*

## Defining a Full Partner

We want to view full partnership using a tier system that ranks partners based on active, shared ministry as it directly aligns with the mission and vision of your ministry. It will prioritize equipping partners with a ‘hands full’ perspective. We don’t want to go to our potential partners with empty hands expecting them to fill our needs. We go to them to bless them with the treasures God has given us. As pregnancy center ministries and domestic missionaries, one of the greatest gifts we can provide our churches is to equip them for the work of ministry – Pro Abundant Life ministry.

## What Made All the Difference in Holland, Michigan?

In 2016, Positive Options, a Care Net affiliate in Holland, Michigan, planned to add services to their center. Here is their story:

“...after an administrative listening prayer meeting where God spoke clearly this message of “go get my bride,” to our executive director and leadership staff. Organizational goals were shifted to what it would mean and look like to serve Christ’s bride, the Church, and to make engagement and connection with the Church a priority in every area of our service. We didn’t exactly know. We trusted the process hidden in the directive. Our executive director and board of directors prayed and planned, and in July, voted to create a position, ‘Director of Best Life Community’ which would become a new and central program piece of church engagement efforts within the ministry.”

What they saw the Lord leading them to do as they planned new services for their center was add the church. Rather than the pregnancy center being the sole solution to the abortion crisis in any given city, they saw the opportunity to mobilize their churches to active ministry. They desired to make the church the “first and safe place” for discussion about the gospel and abortion and for the pregnancy center to come alongside them for support in this central discipleship mission field. They began to focus their church engagement toward equipping their local churches to become active ministry partners.

## A Practical Roadmap for This Ministry Partnership

Positive Options approaches this equipping role with a four-step process to grow relationships to become full ministry partners through strategically engaging, connecting, equipping, and growing church teams.

1. **Engage** – Build awareness and invite churches and organizations to learn more about their mission and vision (emails, letters, phone calls, and marketing materials).
2. **Connect** – Create a variety of in-person interactions to see firsthand the work the Lord is accomplishing in this mission field and to invite conversations – allowing ministry leaders to see the need and envision how they can help support the mission and vision (center tours, church presentations, walks for life, prayer meetings, and any planned event to meet with churches and organizations).



3. **Equip** – Training provided by the center and through volunteers and staff to equip organizations, individuals, and churches to do ministry (classes and instruction provided to individuals in the church to equip them for reaching women and men facing pregnancy decisions; supporting those in need of abortion recovery; and preparing the younger generation to make wise choices relating to sexual behavior).
4. **Grow** – Help full partners to flourish – empower individuals and churches in a variety of shared ministry activities and foster ongoing growth and development (the kinds of ministry activities that churches can do relating to all the services your mission and vision imagine as possible).

To see examples based on Positive Options current church partnership opportunities, visit: [www.makinglifedisciples.com/partners](http://www.makinglifedisciples.com/partners)

## Adopt a Tiered Approach Based on Shared Ministry Descriptions and Activities

It will be helpful to visualize these tiers of partnerships based on current shared ministry alignment and the possibilities for ministry expansions. We first want to describe each tier with simple definitions relating to the level of shared ministry mission and vision. Next, we will consider the activities of each ministry partner based on a set of shared responsibilities.

	Ministry Tier Definition	Partnership Responsibilities
<b>Tier 1</b>	These partners’ core mission aligns with the pro-life ministry. We share our core values and faith foundations and engage in mutually supportive partnerships at multiple levels (other gospel- centered, pro-life ministries).	Actively engaged in reducing the demand for abortion, upholding the sanctity of human life and often working together on shared ministry activities (could be a church ministry team or organization).
<b>Tier 2</b>	These partners share our core values and faith foundations. We engage in mutually supportive partnerships at multiple levels of ministry (discipleship ministries, rescue missions, addiction recovery groups, etc.).	Agree with our core values and statement of faith. Be in consistent relational connection to our ministry and theirs.
<b>Tier 3</b>	These partners are organizations with whom we are engaged in mutual client referrals and have an ongoing working relationship (each center maintains referral organizations at this level).	Personal contact with representatives at least twice a year.
<b>Tier 4</b>	These partners are organizations with whom we make referrals but have a minimal working relationship (food pantries, WIC programs, etc.).	Meet clients’ needs with excellence, grace, and dignity. You know the organization well enough to trust that they will care for clients lovingly and in a manner that will provide positive life support.



With these descriptions and responsibilities outlined and a four-step approach in view (invite, connect, equip, and grow), we are ready to assess and plan strategically. Seeking the Lord's direction through prayer, knowing your area, and evaluating your own center's gifts and talents are the foundations of any strategic ministry plan.

## Equipped Partners Expand Pro Abundant Life Ministry Activities

Tier 1 partners become first responders in a shared mission field. Not all organizations and churches will partner with us in shared ministry, and a realistic strategic plan will prioritize engagement accordingly. Building church partnerships takes time, and ministry will always flow at the speed of trust. A partnership church has individuals (and ideally a team) who extend the compassionate response of the center into the fabric of church ministry. By equipping these partners for the work of the ministry, we don't replace the pregnancy center, rather we expand the gospel-centered ability to respond in and through each partner church.

### Identifying Potential Church Partners

- **Start with what you have:** Map out all the churches and organizations that currently support you and those you have built connections with individually and organizationally.
- **Make technology work for you:** Search your city and surrounding zip codes online periodically. A simple search engine query for “churches near <your city name or zip code>” can yield previously unknown congregations or changes in church leadership. This is a great way to utilize student volunteers.
- **Attend gatherings of pastors and ministry leaders.** Clergy gatherings are an ideal way to meet new pastors in your community. A pastor who is currently engaged with your center can help you identify when such meetings occur in your community and surrounding areas.
- **Don't forget snail mail and local news sources.** Pay attention to the religion sections of local or community news sources for church advertisements. Many churches also do mass mailings to introduce themselves to those new to their area. Ask your staff and volunteers to bring in any postcards that they receive in the mail from local churches. Research those churches online to learn more about them and how to reach them
- **Build your own church list.** Whenever someone supports the work of your center in any way, find out what church he or she attends. Every banquet, walk for life, other event, volunteer inquiry, or job application presents opportunities to find out about new churches. Use response forms and digital invitations to grow your list of area churches.

### How can you find out if a church is likely to be predisposed toward your center's mission?

The best way is to ask. While you may be able to form a general idea about a church's likely attitude about life issues based on its denominational affiliation, this is only somewhat useful. Many denominations that take a very public stand for life nonetheless include churches that are reluctant to address this issue from the pulpit, let alone from a ministry standpoint. And even denominations with very pro-choice public positions have member churches that are quite pro-life.



If you have a church in your area that is part of a pro-choice denomination, continue to engage with its leaders and congregants. You'll find that many churches in denominations that are in favor of abortion will still support pregnancy ministries that provide life-affirming options. Even if church leaders would not consider themselves pro-life, they may be very interested in the ways you support healthy choices in the community. Discuss your sexual risk avoidance presentations, how you help prepare couples for parenting, and describe how you screen clients for adverse situations like human trafficking and intimate partner violence.

## Keep Records

Once you've categorized churches into tiers, keep individual records. Every time someone has any significant contact with a congregation, including a meeting with the pastor, a phone conversation with church support staff, speaking with a new member of the church, or any correspondence, that encounter should be added to the record you have created for that church. Categorizing and maintaining records can be time-consuming but helpful when he or she is establishing a plan to reach that particular church. It also saves time later by avoiding duplication of efforts and loss of institutional knowledge.

## Using Care Net's *Making Life Disciples* Curriculum to Equip Your Church Partners

Care Net's *Making Life Disciples* (MLD) curriculum equips churches to offer compassion, hope, help, and discipleship to anyone considering abortion. For many churches, this will be an entirely new area of ministry. When a local church purchases *Making Life Disciples*, pregnancy center team members can come alongside them, not only as a referral resource but with wisdom gleaned from years of experience in pregnancy center ministry. The center can help them succeed as they serve women and men in their congregation who are faced with a difficult pregnancy decision.

Study groups can be formed in several ways:

- Open enrollment for anyone in the church. Open enrollment creates a training atmosphere with the most diversity in age and background. The class can be preceded by extensive advertisements to the congregation and pulpit leadership encouraging participation. This is perfect when MLD is broadly adopted by church leadership.
- Targeted enrollment is perfect for members of an existing small group. The study can start quickly because participants have already formed a close-knit community, even if only one group is piloting MLD in their church.

The study can begin at any time. A January launch is often favored to coincide with the observation of Sanctity of Human Life Month, or it can be made available in the fall when new studies often begin.

Churches that are sensitized to the needs of couples experiencing pregnancy at a difficult time are in an ideal position to take additional steps.



## Disciple or Scheduling an Appointment at the Pregnancy Center

Through MLD training, churches prepare to go beyond answering the center's appeals for direct funding to taking an active role in ministry. As church members become more aware of the important work of pregnancy centers in the community, many will sense God's call to give, volunteer, and pray for your ministry. If the church forms a full Making Life Disciples ministry, the ministry team leader will benefit from a close relationship with center personnel. Ideally, churches with MLD ministries will bring clients to the center for testing, ultrasounds, educational classes, and help with short-term material needs while centers can connect willing clients with local churches for long-term support and ongoing discipleship.

This best happens through what Care Net calls "connected referrals." A typical referral might involve giving the client information about churches and other community agencies that may be able to meet her or his needs. A connected church referral involves the extra step of introducing the client—at his or her request—to a specific person at a local church who is prepared to welcome the client. This may involve making a connection between the client and a representative of the church through a phone call, direct message, or in person. Learn more about this approach through our e-book "*Best Practices for Connecting Clients With the Local Church Discipleship*" at: [www.makinglifedisciples.com/discipleship-connections](http://www.makinglifedisciples.com/discipleship-connections).

Care Net always recommends that MLD churches partner with their local center and work closely together to serve women, men, and couples. When your center introduces MLD to the local church and offers to help the church with its mission to serve the vulnerable in Jesus' name, already fruitful partnerships are strengthened, and new center-church relationships are born ([Appendix B](#)).



## CHAPTER 4

# GROWING CHURCH PARTNERSHIPS

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*“So in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others.”*

ROMANS 12:5

*It is all about relationships, every aspect of this ministry. Sharing trust with LOVE.*

– Kim Triller, Former Executive Director of Care Net Pregnancy & Family Services of Puget Sound

Good preparation is essential to good church engagement; it helps you to be focused and use limited resources wisely. Knowing why a church will respond and optimizing the aspects of your center's ministry that coincide with the church's ministry, along with a well-thought-out presentation, are essential components of the church engagement process.

## Strategically Approach Churches

Once you have studied the churches and organizations in your community, know how they are structured, and are prepared to offer meaningful support to the church in accomplishing its mission, you are ready to begin a strategic outreach program. As you do this, set reasonable goals for specific time periods. Don't try to do more than you can realistically accomplish with your resources. Instead, start with a manageable, specific target and expand your circle of support from there.

1. **Send an introductory message** – We've already established that letters and/or emails alone won't work, but as an introductory tool on a limited basis, they can be useful. The purpose of these letters and/or emails is to gain an introductory meeting with the pastor – that's all.

There are a few things you can do to maximize the return on your effort:

- Only send out as many introductions as you can personally follow up with a phone call and a visit.
  - Hand-address each envelope.
  - Never use a "Dear Pastor" salutation. If you don't know the pastor's name, do a little more research before approaching the church.
  - Write the letter or email so that it is easy to grasp the main points at a glance. Use short sentences, one or two-sentence paragraphs, bold typeface, and wide margins to create messages that are quickly read.
  - Mention in the letter that you will be calling and you look forward to discussing how the center can support the church's mission. Be very clear that this has nothing to do with fundraising. This sets the tone for your conversation and prepares the pastor for your call.
2. **Set up a 15-minute appointment** – Any pastor should be willing to meet with a church member for a 15-minute appointment. The most effective approach is to have a member of the congregation set up a meeting, mentioning that he or she would like to bring someone along from the local pregnancy center. Then, follow up your letter with a very short phone call to thank the pastor for being willing to meet. If you don't have a connection with a congregant who would be willing to take this step, consider building such a relationship before approaching the pastor.

If you don't have a relationship with a church member who is willing to facilitate a meeting with their pastor, reach out to the pastor directly to schedule the appointment. You'll likely find most pastors are open to a short meeting.

To have a meaningful conversation in just 15 minutes, you'll need to be organized. You can use the following format to organize your time:

- **First 5 minutes:** Introduce yourself and thank the pastor for meeting. Ask meaningful questions and give the pastor an opportunity to respond briefly. Use their response to transition into a very brief overview of your center's mission, purpose, and philosophy of ministry. Possible opening questions include:
  - What do you know about our organization?
  - How have you ministered to a congregant impacted by an unplanned pregnancy?
  - How do you think past abortion experiences impact your church members?
  - What do you know about <congregant volunteer name's> role at the pregnancy center?
- **Middle 5 minutes:** Now that you have cast a vision for the center's missional ministry, draw a connection between the need in the community and the practical impact your center has made. Share a brief story of a client who made a life decision, trusted in Christ, and/or chose to begin a healthy marriage. Draw attention to summary client service statistics: the number of women and men served, the number of decisions for Christ, etc.
- **Last 5 minutes:** Introduce your leave-behind packet. Use the information in the packet to briefly explain what your center can offer to the church and how their church can benefit from a partnership with your center. Without making any assumptions, address common fears: Some church leaders I speak with express concern that working with the center could polarize church members or politicize the pulpit. We encourage compassionate theological engagement with this issue and view it as a ministry and discipleship issue. We recommend Making Life Disciples as a small group or Sunday school resource to help your congregation catch a vision for equipping women and men in the church to embrace all human life as a gift from God and helping pregnant women and couples to choose realistic alternatives to abortion. Then, ask for a specific response. If the pastor is interested, ask what steps must be taken to begin the process of collaboration. Who do I talk to next? What group should I meet with first? Before ending the meeting, ask if you can pray briefly for the pastor.

After the 15-minute conversation, you should let the pastor know that you respect his/her time and offer to leave, providing your card for follow-up questions. If the pastor invites you to stay, continue the conversation for as long as you are welcome.

3. **Go with Your Hands Full** – Many pastors feel pressure from para-church ministries, community organizations, and cause-oriented groups to use the local church as a platform. With their palms outstretched, these organizations want church members to give their time and money to make the group's dream come true, and they usually expect the pastor to be as enthusiastic about it as they are.

This is not only unrealistic; it is also unfair. The church itself has many ministries and needs. Many pastors guard church resources and encourage church members to direct their energies to internal efforts. We see the life issue as both an internal and external concern. Abortions don't just happen outside the church.



For all of these reasons, effective church engagement depends on your focus: are you presenting what the church can do for you OR what you can offer the church? While most pastors support what you're doing, they face many competing ministry demands. If you ask them to make a sacrifice of time and money without any direct benefits for their congregation, other priorities will likely crowd out your center's needs.

One good way to end a positive "hands full" conversation is to ask for the pastor's blessing. You might say something like this:

*"Pastor, we know your heart is with us. We have the programs, effective training resources, and the tools to help your church reach women and men facing difficult pregnancy decisions with the love of Jesus.*

*If you'll simply give us your blessing to move forward, we would be honored to work with you or someone in your congregation to identify someone in your church who can take ownership of leading a group of your congregants through the Making Life Disciples program. Within the next six months to a year, with our support, you'll have established a comprehensive ministry to women and men considering abortion.<sup>1</sup>*

*By this time next year, you'll be able to say with complete confidence that if any woman in your community or congregation experiences pregnancy as a crisis, your church is ready to stand with her – and the baby's father – so they can choose life. You won't have to worry about what to do if the situation arises – the solution will already be in place.*

*Is this the type of ministry you could support, provided it's done in a way that builds up your church and equips members of your congregation to make disciples of those in need?"*

If the pastor says, "Yes, of course," then you follow with, "That's great, pastor. Thank you very much. Now, what steps should we take to begin the process of helping you establish an MLD ministry at your church? Who do we contact next?"

This conversation model demonstrates that your center is willing to invest time in giving something back to the church. The effort you expend in blessing the church lays a foundation for years of fruitful partnership. When you emphasize encouraging and supporting the church, encouragement and support return to you.

Your center has much to offer the church, including:

- An opportunity for church members to minister to those in need
- A source for pastoral referrals when your center has spiritually interested clients
- Encouragement and prayer support for the work of the church
- Training of church members to become Life Disciples, who make disciples for Jesus Christ - becoming a part of shared ministry through "permission-based discipleship referrals"
- A positive pro-life message to help make the church a safe place for facing unplanned pregnancies

<sup>1</sup> In introducing MLD to churches, we have found it is essential for centers to empower the congregant the pastor identifies so that church owns the vision of MLD and establishes a long-term "Life" or "Life Disciples" team.

- Educational materials and resources
- An avenue for the church to make gospel transformation central to the abortion issue and bring it into the realm of ministry and discipleship

Stress these benefits as you meet with the pastor. Be positive. This is not the time to lay a guilt trip about how the church has been lacking in its response to abortion. You want the pastor to feel that you're lifting a burden off their shoulders, not placing another obligation on their back. Start a conversation and allow space and time for a partnership to develop.

4. **The “leave behind” packet** – Take the time to develop high-quality packets that you can give the pastor to review after you leave. Some centers have found that having as few as three pages of material in their pastors' packets is most effective. Others include more information that the pastor can share with other key ministry leaders. Structure the packet to bless the church by including information the pastor will find useful.

Consider including some of the following:

- Executive Director's business card
- A short cover letter
- The center's mission and vision statements
- The center's church brochure - the training you can provide to equip them for shared ministry
- The center's most recent annual impact report
- A short client story or testimony
- A short volunteer story or testimony
- Quotes from pastors who already support your center
- Information about center programs available to the church, such as sexual risk avoidance presentations for youth or abortion recovery groups.
- Making Life Disciples brochure: Our single-page brochure and other promotional material can be found at: [www.makinglifedisciples.com/kit](http://www.makinglifedisciples.com/kit)
- Top 40 Abortion Statistics in America: [resources.care-net.org/top-40-abortion-statistics](http://resources.care-net.org/top-40-abortion-statistics)
- Abortion and the Church: [resources.care-net.org/abortion-and-the-church-research](http://resources.care-net.org/abortion-and-the-church-research)

If you are not gifted at creating attractive and professional publications, enlist someone who is. Don't let this be said of you:

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IF I ONLY KNEW THE PREGNANCY CENTER BY THE QUALITY OF THEIR CORRESPONDENCE AND MATERIALS, I'D BE UNIMPRESSED. THE PEOPLE THERE ARE OF THE HIGHEST CALIBER, BUT THEIR LETTERS AND DIGITAL CORRESPONDENCE CERTAINLY AREN'T.

– A PASTOR

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## What if I'm still having trouble connecting?

If, even after bringing a church member along with you, you are not getting a positive response, have the church member who is with you make a simple request: *"Pastor, I understand that you have reservations about addressing this issue. However, as a member of this church, I would appreciate hearing you teach on abortion and the sanctity of human life. I know several people in our congregation would be very interested in hearing what you have to say."*

Do all you can to support the pastor's willingness to preach a life-affirming sermon by providing data, articles, and other resources that will help with sermon preparation.

Approach every church presentation with at least three or four different levels of involvement. It's risky to base any outreach effort on one request. A church may not want to include the center in their budget, but could be willing to advertise your events and volunteer opportunities, or allow you to have a display in the lobby whenever the pastor preaches a life-affirming sermon.

You have not because you ask not; after prayerfully planning your approach, don't be afraid to ask.

## Timing Matters

When it comes to church engagement, timing can determine the immediate outcome of an interaction.

For example, December is a very busy time for churches programmatically and is likely a poor time to seek a meeting. Likewise, the beginning of January is too late to prepare for Sanctity of Human Life Sunday/Month. Be strategic in your planning; avoid seasons that are very busy such as Christmas and give them 3 to 6 months notice of opportunities to engage with your ministry. This demonstrates great respect for their schedule.

And if at first you don't succeed... try another way.

"If the front door is locked, find a window." — Anonymous

There's no guarantee that even a well-planned approach will work every time. Here are some alternative approaches you might want to consider as you seek to strengthen your church outreach and engagement:

- **Associate pastors** may be easier to access than the church's senior or executive pastor. They may also be more open to new ideas. If you can positively impact any ministry leader, they can mention your ministry at staff meetings, giving you "in-house" support and backing.
- The first step in engaging a reluctant pastor is to recruit an eager **church member**. Congregational support is often a prelude to pastoral support. If you get a handful of people in an average size congregation asking the pastor to address a specific issue as their spiritual leader, they will likely see results.
- You will often have to attend a **board meeting** to obtain funding, but this is also a good way to identify interested individuals. You'll have to learn the church's system of governance and decision-making. Ask to give the same 15-minute presentation that you would give to the pastor, and bring along similar materials.
- **Pastor's spouses** usually receive fewer invitations than the pastor and may be more open to attending a tour of the center or accepting a meeting. If this issue is close to their heart, the pastor's

spouse can be an influential advocate for your ministry. Spouses may also be less reticent about the church's participation in a community-wide effort.

- Work from the **top down and bottom up** at the same time. Approach the pastors, board, and associates while you build grassroots support among the laity. One of the best ways to create congregational support is through a Sunday school class or adult small group.
- Participants in **men's groups** are looking for the opportunity to grow spiritually, mentor other men, and make a difference in the life of their church. Care Net's research shows that the father of the baby has the greatest influence on a woman's decision whether or not to have an abortion, so men of God must be engaged in reaching these sometimes reluctant dads.<sup>1</sup> Men may be excited to hear that their influence on other men could be the most important factor in whether a woman decides to welcome her baby into life.
- On or near **Administrative Professional's Day**, invite church support staff to a luncheon honoring them. Here is an opportunity to create a supporter on the "inside" who will make sure your appeals and phone messages reach the pastor.
- When **new staff members or elders** join the leadership team in a church you've been trying to reach, meet with them as soon as possible. As they understand the value your center adds to the church, they can be very effective advocates for your ministry.

God calls His bride, the Church, to be on the front lines giving grace, love, and discipleship. And this certainly includes those facing unplanned or unwanted pregnancies. Pregnancy centers have an incredible opportunity in growing church partnerships to change the narrative and share in a transformational vision: thousands of local churches equipped and resourced to help congregants facing pregnancy decisions and to provide ongoing discipleship to center clients. Not replacing the vital work of a local pregnancy center but expanding our Kingdom impact!

<sup>1</sup> Study of Women Who Have Had an Abortion and Their Views on Church. Care Net. LifeWay Research.(2012, November). Retrieved from <https://resources.care-net.org/abortion-and-the-church-research/>



## CHAPTER 5

# MAINTAINING CHURCH PARTNERSHIPS

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*“How good and pleasant it is when  
God’s people live together in unity!”*

PSALM 133:1



*I meet weekly with local pastors for prayer. Every Wednesday at noon. This has been vital for the pastors to come to know me as the director, and our ministry partnership is most definitely Christ-centered.*

– Director at a Care Net Affiliate Center

Once a church is supporting you, you need to foster the developing relationships. Here are some ideas that have worked well for pregnancy centers in the Care Net family.

## Engage regularly with a crucial congregant in every church

The person within the center who has primary responsibility for executing the church engagement strategy must ensure a center team member maintains relationships with a crucial congregant in all churches (based upon the level of engagement desired and realistically supportable). Growing these relationships is often key to the growth of shared ministry.

The crucial congregant is a member of the church staff or laity who has a particular passion for the center's ministry. She or he may or may not be a volunteer at the center but has committed to volunteer for the center by keeping the church prayerfully informed about the ministry of the centers. The center may designate this person's volunteer position as "<Church name>'s <Center name> Liaison" or, in churches with an active Making Life Disciples ministry, she or he could be the MLD Leader. In any case, regular communication with this person is essential to a successful partnership. Besides monthly emails, quarterly phone calls are a great way to check in and see if there is any support your center can provide as they serve their congregation and community.

These church leaders can also be invited to a breakfast or luncheon to thank them for their service and/or included in any event that the center plans for ministry leaders.

## Highlight the church to all your supporters

Whether your center stays in touch with supporters by sending an electronic or hard-copy newsletter, put the spotlight on a supporting church or church liaison in each issue. Tell a story about how they supported a client or share the photo of an MLD graduation. Tell about how this kind of partnership supports clients who chose life for their baby and abundant life for themselves. This helps to generate excitement about doing discipleship.

## Take a pastor to lunch

The center executive and board members can deepen relationships with pastors and ministry leaders at Tier 1 churches by fellowshipping with them over a meal one or two times a year. Feel free to invite their spouses as well, or even invite their family over for dinner instead. One center has even committed to doing a Pastor's Wives Tea and a liaison brunch for supporting churches. Update the pastor on how God is working in the center, sharing stories of clients choosing life, choosing to follow Jesus, or choosing marriage. Ask how you can pray for the pastor's concerns and ask for any ideas on how the center can improve. Like anyone, pastors are more likely to be supportive if they feel they have genuine input into the ministry of the center.



## Give pastors a role in special events

In your public events, include as many roles for local pastors as possible. Invocations, benedictions, and opening homilies all provide excellent opportunities for pastors to show public support for the center. We all like to be needed, and we all find it easier to attend a meeting if we have a role to play in it. Many centers even have different local pastors as board members. This allows them to have a front-row seat to the comings and goings of your center.

## Don't let supporting pastors hear from you only when you need money

Remember, pastors are spiritual shepherds, so contact them when you don't have an immediate need for money or volunteers. Actively solicit their advice. Here are a few ideas for encouraging pastors.

- When you come across relevant and helpful articles, blogs, and books, share copies with your pastors.
- Send them copies of your county or state annual abortion statistics (if available) with a note to say, "Thanks for helping us protect many women, men, and babies from abortion."
- Track the churches that your volunteers attend and how long they have been volunteering with you. Send the pastors of each volunteer a letter or email on their service anniversary expressing your gratitude for them: "I wanted to let you know that Marci DeJones has been volunteering with our pregnancy center for 2 years this month. As an advocate for our clients, she is a true gift to this ministry and an example of faithful service. We are so grateful for the way you and Community Church invest in her spiritual health. Your prayer support undergirds her work with the women and men who come to our center for help."
- Occasionally take a day and make several short phone calls to pastors saying, "I'm calling you to thank you for your support of our Kingdom work. Thank you for helping us to reach women, men, and their children. I just wanted to let you know how much we appreciate you and your congregation. Before I get off the phone with you, I would like to pray with you. How may I pray for you and your church?"

## Pray for the church regularly

Regularly pray for your supporting churches. To make your prayers more specific, call and ask the pastor or church support staff for prayer requests. After your team prays for the church, send them a card signed by those who prayed. This practice lets churches know that you are serious about serving with them.

## Thank church leaders frequently

Pastors and ministry leaders are often taken for granted. Whenever pastors take time out of their busy schedule to talk with you, share a meal, visit your center, or participate in a center's activity, remember to follow up with a personal thank you note. To make things easier, create personalized postcards with your center logo and write a few brief lines expressing your appreciation.



## CHAPTER 6

# RESOURCING YOUR CHURCH STRATEGY

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*“Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.”*

PROVERBS 15:22



*Making contact with the pastors is often difficult as they always assume you are asking for financial support...making contact with them through community events and becoming interested in what is happening at their church has helped me gain a new kind of relationship with them. It is time-consuming, but it does build relationships.*

–Director at a Care Net Affiliate Center

Maybe reading this guide has been a bit overwhelming. Perhaps you have come to the conclusion that it presents some good and helpful information, but you'd like to know who is going to do all the work it requires. If your team is already stretched to the limit, it may be difficult to imagine anyone leaving the center to meet with pastors, much less investing in supporting local churches as they start an MLD ministry.

Some of the ideas can be implemented in a targeted way or added to an existing church outreach plan. But there is no question that developing a new church engagement plan for your center based on these strategies will require a significant investment of time and effort. However, such a strategic plan, if followed consistently, will produce meaningful and measurable results.

In a survey done by Care Net on church engagement, 54% of centers have found that personal visits by a center staff member have been most effective when making a lasting relationship with a local church. One center even stated that “churches seem very receptive when our director visits and shares with the congregation.” While another said that even the connection of a church liaison has been extremely beneficial in connecting with local churches.

You might be surprised at how many profitable relationships can be built by preparing well and then visiting churches just one or two days a week.

**As you build your strategic plan, consider how to allocate personnel to make this relational investment. There are several options to consider:**

- **Free up the executive** – Many center executives have a very full schedule; however, these leaders are the most effective ambassadors for the center. Most lead pastors expect to meet with the center's most senior leader. Ideally, the center can assign a volunteer or staff member to assist the executive with administrative aspects of preparing for meetings with church leaders, freeing her or him up to build these vital relationships. One center director said that “When I sit down with pastors, especially of marginally involved churches, my pitch is to get them to think correctly about partnering with us.”
- **Hire new staff** – In some centers, hiring a new full-time or part-time team member to work exclusively or primarily on church engagement is a good option. Many centers put church outreach on the future “to-do” list, but this is like holding your breath. The longer you wait, the more difficult it becomes. One director stated that “Our biggest challenge was connecting with pastors. Then, we hired a male Development Director, and this has been crucial for making church connections.” Financial and personnel resources will continue to dwindle or remain static year after year, forcing you to put crucial client service growth on hold. Building strong connections with churches is a way to play offense in your fundraising. Such a role could even be a good fit for the pastor of a small church in your area or a retired minister. Whoever fills this role should be personable, self-motivated, and gifted administratively.

- **Recruit board members** – The board can be a great asset in cultivating church relationships. The center may have one board member with the time and skill to play a significant role in executing the center’s church engagement strategy. Or, every board member could be assigned a handful of church relationships to manage throughout the year. Because many board members have other significant professional and/or community leadership responsibilities, board members participating in the church engagement strategy will typically need administrative support from other center personnel.
- **Adopt a team approach** – Managing church relationships is a large job, and it can be too much for just one person — especially if that person has many other responsibilities. Instead of overloading one staff member, create a church engagement team. Assign the primary responsibility for leading the team and ensuring that an effective strategy is created and executed to one paid staff member. Assign administrative tasks to one or two team members. Then, give every other member of the team responsibility for managing relationships with a certain number of churches. Team members can be paid staff, board members, or even volunteers. Some centers have even had advocates within the church help keep connections, saying, “Having people from the church take responsibility to promote our center is very effective.”

Staffing the center’s church engagement strategy is crucial. However, a lack of paid staff should not prevent the center from building church relationships. Instead, center leaders should draw from these and other ideas to find a workable staffing plan for church engagement. When there simply are not enough personnel hours, the plan can be scaled back so that available team members can accomplish reasonable goals. Whatever the center’s capacity, it is important to create a strong plan and then work the plan, week by week, to grow support for the center’s missional ministry among the churches in the communities served by the center.

## Finally, and constantly, draw on the source of all provision

Ultimately, the church is God’s family. The center is on God’s mission. We belong to Him. All the resources we need are at His disposal. As we plan, strategize, and execute, we must do so with complete dependence on our Creator and Sustainer. It is true that we must work, but all of our work must be for His glory. And that is just as true of building church relationships as it is of sharing the gospel with a client.

So, the most important secret of church engagement is not any of the pro tips in this guide. It is really no secret at all. It is prayer. Every part of your church engagement strategy must be bathed in prayer, and God will watch over His work.



## Church Contact Record Template

**To:** Add to a Specific Church Folder

**From:** Who is creating this document?

**CC:** Who needs to be copied in on this information?

**Date:** When did this contact occur?

**RE:** Who did you meet with or talk to from the specific church?

**Your Center Attendee:** Who from your center attended the meeting or participated in on the call?

**Church (specific name) Attendee:** What is the specific name and address of the church contact?

**Objective of Meeting/Call:** What were you trying to accomplish with this meeting/call?

**Background on Purpose of Meeting/Call:** Why was this meeting/call scheduled?

**Summary Notes of Call:** List the salient points of the meeting/call in bullet points for easy review.

**Next Steps/Actions:** Use this section to keep track of follow-up action points.

WHO:	
WHAT:	
WHEN:	
COMPLETED:	



## Church Outreach Letter/ Email Template

[Center Logo] [Date]

Dear Pastor [specific name],

I hope you are well, and thank you for your ministry in our community.

I wanted to reach out and introduce myself. I would love to meet personally to discuss how [put in specific name] might support your church's mission. I know your plate is full, and so I will be sure to respect your time.

That said, I will be calling in the next week to connect and, as per your schedule, set up a brief 15-30 minute meeting to introduce myself, get to know you, and learn about each other's ministries. One of my main desires is to identify how we might serve your congregation in offering compassion, hope, and help to women and men facing unplanned pregnancies, both in our churches and community.

Again, I will be calling you in the next week.

Yours for His Kingdom,

[Your name and position]



## Church Prayer Card Template

[Date]

[Name of Clergy] [Address of Church]

Dear [Name of Clergy]

Your friends at [Pregnancy Center Name] prayed for you and your congregation today. We asked the Lord to bless you and keep you, to make His face shine upon you and be gracious to you, and to turn His face toward you and give you peace (Numbers 6:42-26).

May you feel His presence today and always as you serve Him boldly in your community.

With Christ's Love,

Your friends at [Pregnancy Center's Name]



## More Church Engagement Resources From Care Net

Care Net's **Sanctity of Human Life kit** - updated annually and contains our best offerings to help inform and equip churches: [www.makinglifedisciples.com/sohl](http://www.makinglifedisciples.com/sohl)

**"Four Arguments for Pro-Choice Christians"** - Roland and Vince discuss the biggest questions related to the four arguments of pro-choice Christians. Watch as they walk through the four questions many pro-choice Christians are asking: [www.care-net.org/abundant-life-blog/lifechat-four-arguments-of-pro-choice-christians](http://www.care-net.org/abundant-life-blog/lifechat-four-arguments-of-pro-choice-christians)

**"God's People Want To Know"** - research from George Barna's American Culture & Faith Institute, showing that abortion is the top issue conservative congregations wanted to hear biblical teaching on [affiliates.care-net.org/Education/Center-Insights-Library/Post/2354](http://affiliates.care-net.org/Education/Center-Insights-Library/Post/2354)

**Warren, Roland. Is the Pro-Choice Position Consistent with the Life and Teachings of Jesus?** CareSource. [store.care-net.org/is-the-pro-choice-position-consistent-with-the-life-and-teachings-of-jesus-pack-of-10](http://store.care-net.org/is-the-pro-choice-position-consistent-with-the-life-and-teachings-of-jesus-pack-of-10)

**Campbell, Mark.** (2016, March 16). 5 Fears That Keep Pastors From Preaching About Abortion. Care Net Insider's Blog. Retrieved from [www.care-net.org/churches-blog/5-fears-that-keep-pastors-from-preaching-about-abortion](http://www.care-net.org/churches-blog/5-fears-that-keep-pastors-from-preaching-about-abortion)

**Campbell, Mark.** (2016, October 19). 5 Things Pastors Need to Know About Pregnancy Center. Care Net, Churches Blog. Retrieved from [www.care-net.org/churches-blog/5-things-pastors-need-to-know-about-pregnancy-centers](http://www.care-net.org/churches-blog/5-things-pastors-need-to-know-about-pregnancy-centers)

**Facilitating Biblical Healing, Forgiven and Set Free: Abortion Recovery Study.** CareSource. Retrieved from [store.care-net.org/abortion-recovery-and-care](http://store.care-net.org/abortion-recovery-and-care) and [abortionhealing.org](http://abortionhealing.org)

**Warren, Roland.** (2016, May 18). Why I don't call pro-choice advocates pro-abortion? Care net Insiders Blog. Retrieved from [affiliates.care-net.org/Education/Center-Insights-Library/Post/3397](http://affiliates.care-net.org/Education/Center-Insights-Library/Post/3397)

**Warren, Roland.** (2017, July 20). Moving from Pro-Life to Pro Abundant Life. Care Net abundant Life Blog. Retrieved from [www.care-net.org/abundant-life-blog/moving-from-pro-life-to-pro-abundant-life](http://www.care-net.org/abundant-life-blog/moving-from-pro-life-to-pro-abundant-life)

**DiCaro, Vincent.** (2014, December 14). How Planned Parenthood Deceives Believers About Abortion. Care Net Churches Blog. Retrieved from [www.care-net.org/churches-blog/how-planned-parenthood-deceives-believers-about-abortion](http://www.care-net.org/churches-blog/how-planned-parenthood-deceives-believers-about-abortion)

## From Other Sources

**Life-affirming sermon resources from Vox:** [www.makinglifedisciples.com/vox](http://www.makinglifedisciples.com/vox)

**National Barna Survey Results: American Culture and Faith Institute Study on what Christians want to know about Political Issues**

# making LIFE DISCIPLES™

2.0

## Equipping the Church

In preparation for any mission trip, churches train members to better understand the people they're going to serve.



*Making Life Disciples* is a cross-cultural training to help better reach the abortion-vulnerable, a mission field right in your own church and community.

## WHAT MAKING LIFE DISCIPLES IS

*Making Life Disciples* (MLD) is a holistic, Gospel-centered “basic training” to equip a group of first responders in a church or parish to offer compassion, hope, help, and discipleship to women and men facing pregnancy decisions.

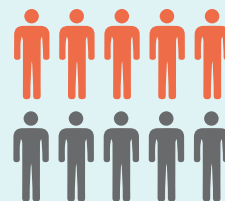
## WHAT MAKING LIFE DISCIPLES DOES

- Equips the church to watch for and reach the abortion-vulnerable in their midst.
- Equips the church with sensitivity to and healing resources for the post-abortive.
- Builds bridges that connect pregnancy center clients with local church discipleship.

## IMPORTANT FOR THE CHURCH

62% of women who have abortions associate themselves as religiously affiliated, with 30% identifying as Protestant and 24% as Catholic.

Source: Guttmacher Institute



MORE THAN

**5 OUT OF 10 MEN**

Were attending a church once a month or more at the time of their first abortion.

Source: Care Net/Lifeway 2021 National Survey

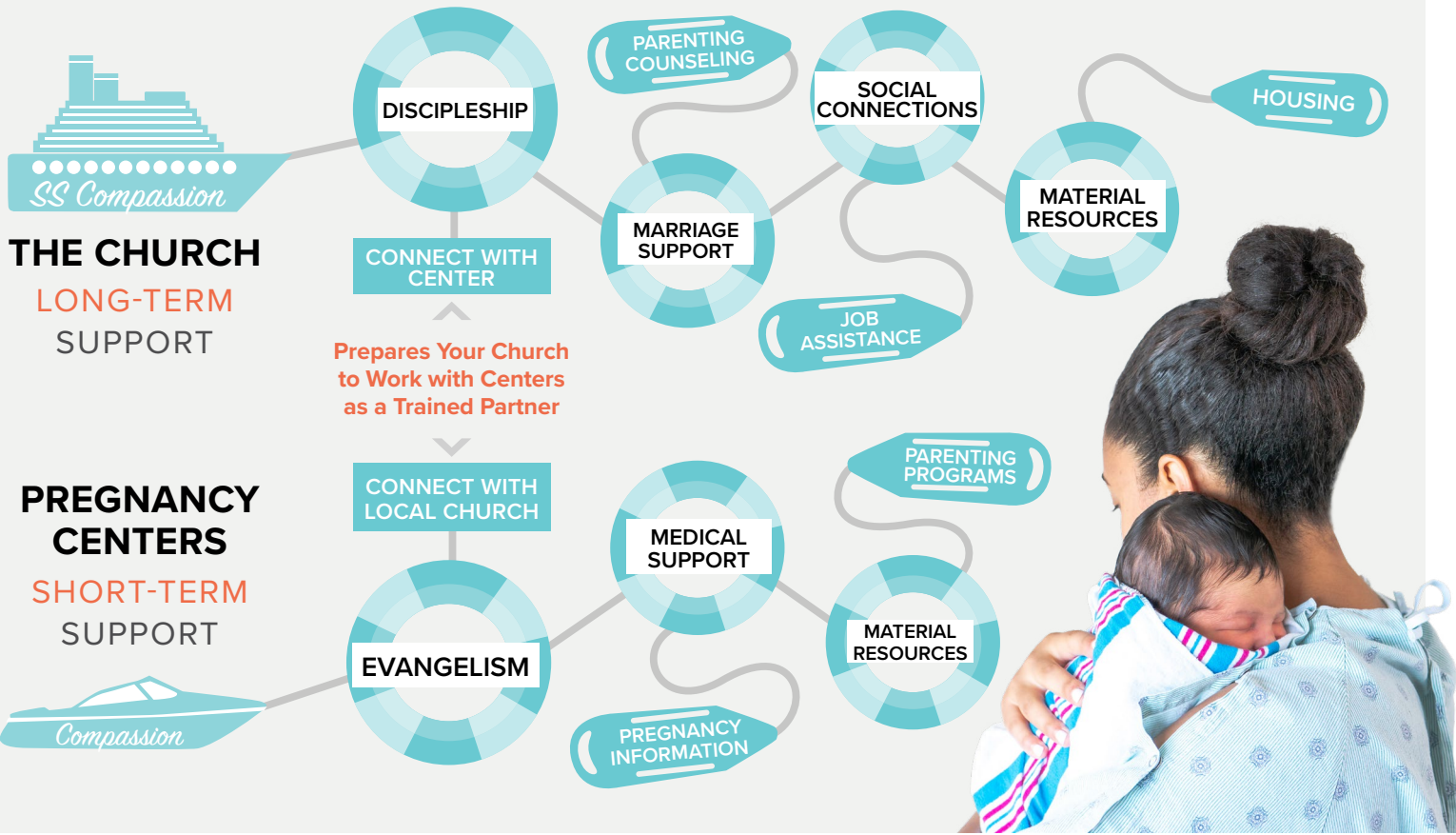
NEARLY  
**4 OUT OF 10 WOMEN**

Were attending a church once a month or more at the time of their first abortion.

Source: Care Net/Lifeway 2015 National Survey



# LIFE DECISIONS NEED LIFE SUPPORT



## 3 EASY WAYS TO GET STARTED

- 1 Prayerfully watch the first session of *Making Life Disciples 2.0* at [MakingLifeDisciples.com](https://www.makinglifedisciples.com)
- 2 Consider leading or identifying someone to lead a life team using MLD as your basic training to get started.
- 3 If you already have some kind of “life team” at your church, consider using MLD to enhance your efforts and take you deeper.



To Connect with Our Support Team Text the Word

**LIFE to 703.653.1107**

Or Email Us at [support@makinglifedisciples.com](mailto:support@makinglifedisciples.com)

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