

A FRESH START
at Strengthening Relationships
in Your Church



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Practical Resources for Churches

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REAL CONNECTIONS:

Ministries to Strengthen Church
and Community Relationships



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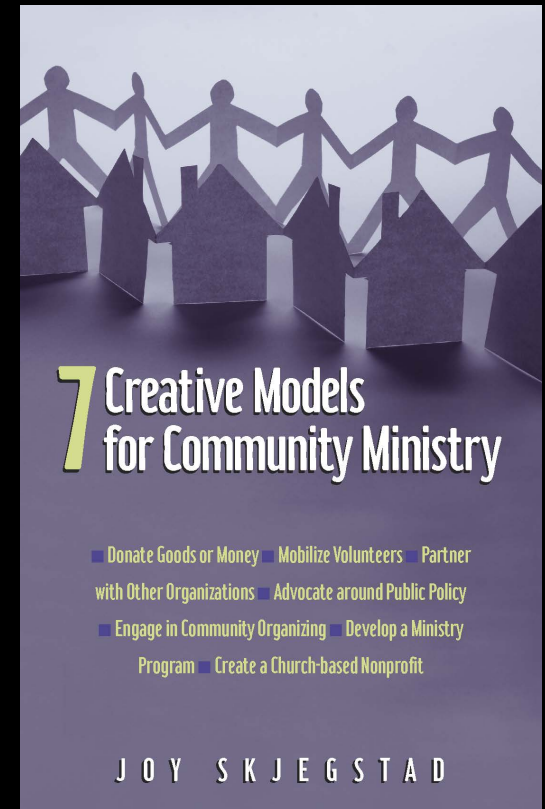
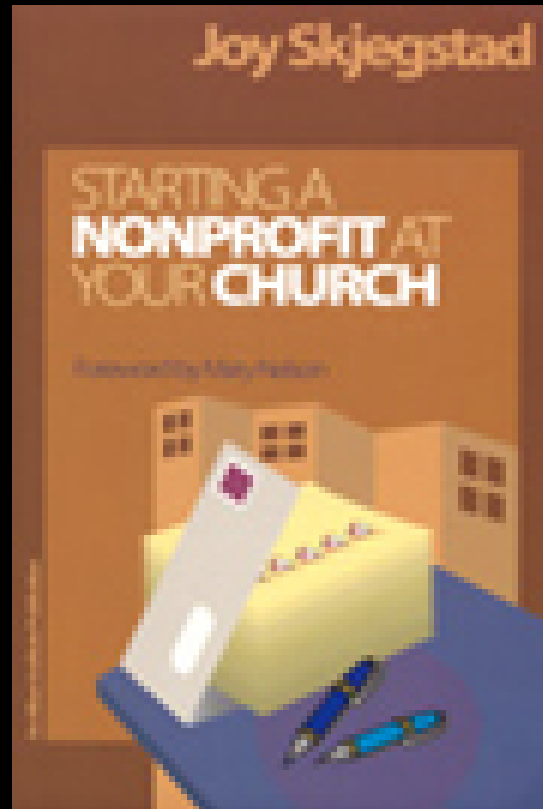


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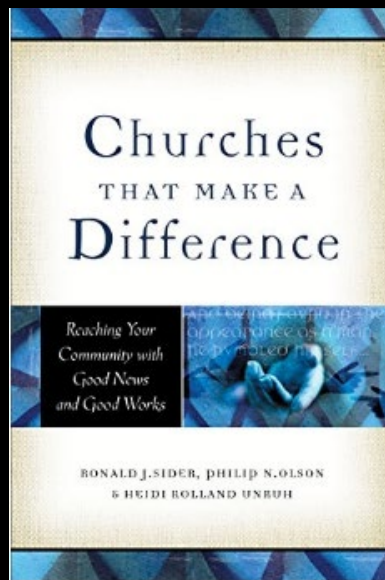
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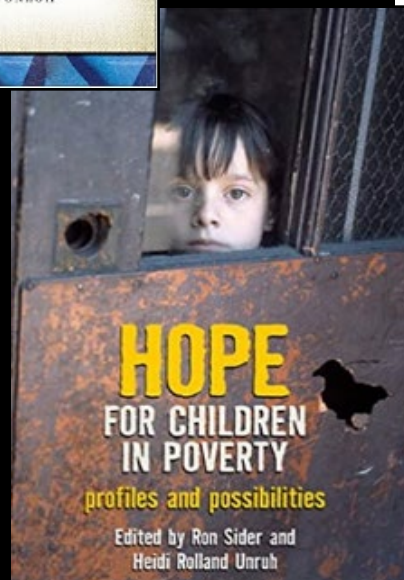
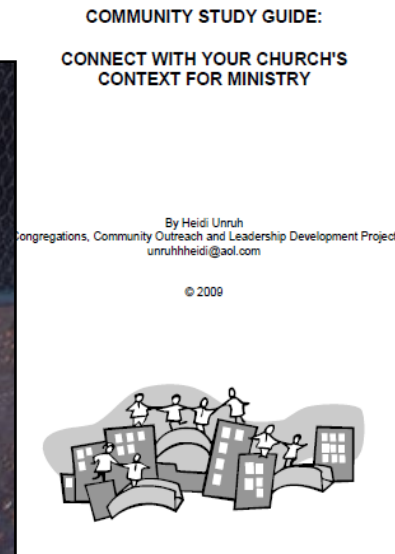
Joy Skjegstad is a national speaker and consultant on nonprofit management and ministry development. She has more than 30 years of experience starting and growing nonprofit organizations, with a special focus on faith-based groups, and youth and community development.



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Congregations & Community Outreach Project



Coming alongside leaders and their good ideas, so good works can shine! (Eph. 2:10)

What Are “Real Connections”?

- Deeper than acquaintances
- Intentional effort to get to know someone
- Curiosity, openness, caring



Four Rooms of Relationship



Coffee house



Living room



Laundry room



Emergency Room

Church Can Be a Lonely Place



The Busyness of Church Can Get in the Way of Relationships



Too Busy
Being Busy

But Your Church Can Become Relationship-Rich

Strong Relationships Are Key



What a Relationship-Rich Church Looks Like:

- A hub of mutual care
- A fellowship where socially isolated individuals can find friends
- A bridge during a time of division
- a catalyst for community listening and collaboration

What We Believe

Everyone should have a friend at church



What We Believe

Everyone can learn how to make friends and build real connections



The Importance of Real Connections

Relationships are a major factor in why people choose to attend and stay at a church



Putting Relationships in the “Driver’s Seat” Strengthens Your Church

- People’s gifts are recognized and utilized more
- People are more engaged
- More points of view and life experiences are heard
- More trust to deal with conflicts

Strategy: **Re-Convene with Intention**

Provide space and time for people to process their “Covid year”



Strategy: Re-Convene with Intention

Provide venues for people to listen deeply to each other, providing a list of questions



Strategy: Re-Convene with Intention

- Stories of struggles, joys, griefs, God's provision
- Include in worship, at events, perhaps using the arts



Strategy: A Focus on Listening



Strategy: Focus on Listening

Spend time listening to the congregation as you make post-Covid plans

- One-on-ones
- Focus groups
- Coffeehouse style—small group discussions
- Training compassionate listeners
(ex. Stephen's Ministry)

Strategy: Build Relationships into Metrics and Plans

How do we measure success at our church?



Strategy: Build Relationships into Metrics and Plans

Build relationship focus into your church's vision and mission

Mission

Change the world. Make Disciples who
Bless others, Belong in community,
Believe in Jesus.

Vision

We are a Community-oriented Christian Church.
We intentionally develop relationships with God
and neighbor, one person at a time.

Values

We are:

- Externally focused
- Boldly taking risks
- Genuinely welcoming
- Intentionally sharing our faith stories
- Lovingly caring for one another

Strategy: Build Relationships into Metrics and Plans

Include relationship-focused activities and programming in your church's plans



Strategy: Build time into regular meetings for people to connect



Strategy: Build time into regular meetings for people to connect

- Start meetings with relational check-ins
- Learn to ask questions
- Encourage leaders to get to know people outside of meetings

Strategy: Re-Configure Special Events to Focus on Relationships



Strategy: Re-Configure Special Events to focus on Relationships

- Set aside time for connection
- Providing questions or talking points
- Fun icebreakers
- Select activities that lean toward connection (games, etc.)
- Talking over food

Strategy: Develop New Small Groups

- New groups are a way for new people or irregular attenders to plug in
- Offer new small groups regularly—short-term and more permanent



Affinity Groups

- Life experience and life stage
- Vocation
- Activities that people enjoy
- Geographical location
- Interest in the same cause



Service / Mission Groups

Community involvement with an intentional focus on building relationships



Support Groups

- Exs: Grief, divorce, mental health, addiction, exercise and nutrition
- Can build a bridge with the community



Intergenerational Groups



Strategy: Equip Church Members to Build Deeper Connections

Storytelling project: Ask life story questions and discover something new about a church member you may have known for years.



Strategy: Equip Church Members to Build Deeper Connections

Circle of five: Select five people you trust and invite them to be part of your support circle.



Strategy: Equip Church Members to Build Deeper Connections

Mentoring friendship: Seek out someone who has had a similar life experience or build an intergenerational connection.



Strategy: Equip Church Members to Build Deeper Connections

Provide getting-to-know-you questions:

- What is your favorite time of day and why?
- What's something you do well that makes you happy when you do it?
- When life gets to you, what picks you up?
- What's something people might be surprised to learn about you?
- Tell a story about a friend you had as a kid or teen.

Strategy: Equip Church Members to Build Deeper Connections

Provide getting-to-know-you deeper questions:

- What would you be doing in five years, if it was totally your choice?
- What color comes to mind when you think about your childhood?
- What's a challenge you've faced that you've made progress on?
- What is your first memory of learning about God?
- Tell a story about a time someone was really there for you.

Strategy: Reach Out to Disengaged Attenders

- Go to them, don't ask them to come to you
- Try different ways to connect, e.g. social media



Strategy: Reach Out to Disengaged Attenders

Ask about strengths and interests



Strategy: Reach Out to Disengaged Attenders

Include them in opportunities to serve



Strategy: Reach Out to Disengaged Attenders

Address barriers to connection



Strategy: Help New People Connect

- Being friendly is good, but not enough



Strategy: Help New People Connect

- Invite people to be connected outside of Sunday service
- Be a matchmaker (introduce people to others in the congregation)
- Have designated Bridgebuilders who look for people who are new or isolated

Strategy: Strengthen Relationships with Youth

- Engage around causes
- Older youth mentoring younger youth



Services We Can Provide

Training on:

- Helping church members develop “Real Connections” with one another
- “How to Talk to Strangers”
- Bridgebuilder ministry to engage new people
- Listening well
- Connecting with people who are hidden and hurting
- Getting to know your neighbors--at home and around the church

Services We Can Provide

Consulting / Coaching to Help You:

- Plan how to become a more relationship-rich church
- Facilitate deep listening in the congregation and community
- Develop new community ministry strategies
- Engage lay leaders / church members in community ministry

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