

5 Tips for Connecting with a Local Church



**The
Forgotten
Initiative®**

We love the Church!

At The Forgotten Initiative (TFI), we want to see people everywhere supporting the foster care community and experiencing Jesus together.

We believe this will happen when we engage local churches in the work to care for the foster care community. If we, as TFI, support the foster care community, but we don't bring local churches with us, then we ultimately fail. Justice without Jesus is injustice.

We are not a church, but TFI is a ministry that can help local churches carry out their mission, and that excites us! It's a chance to encourage churches to do what they are already passionate about.

We want to help churches carry out the great commandment to love God and love others (Matthew 22:36-40). We want to help churches carry out the great commission to “go therefore and make disciples” starting in their own neighborhoods (Matthew 28:16-20). We can help one another.

The vision of TFI is one way to walk out the church's calling for a particular group of people—a group we love and care about, the foster care community. In supporting this community, we know the church will be drawn closer to the Lord.

How do we get started though? How do we approach churches as TFI?

1 Start by preparing your heart through prayer.

Be intentional to pray for your local churches.

Pray for the health of the church, that the leadership would love God's Word and experience Jesus deeply. Pray that this love for the Lord would be evident in the life of the church members and those that walk through the doors. Pray that the Lord would protect your local churches and that they would remain firmly convinced of their need for Christ and his love for the church.

Be intentional to pray for your own heart.

Pray that you would have a faithful testimony where you declare the great mystery of Christ as evidenced by your life. Pray that you would walk in wisdom, would always be gracious in your speech, and that the Lord would guard your heart from temptation to sin. Pray that you would always stand in awe of the greatness of God and give thanks for all that He has done.

Then, be intentional to pray for opportunities for the church and TFI to partner together.

We'll get into the details about what that partnership could look like in a bit, but first, just pray that TFI would be able to encourage the church in their mission. Pray for a relationship to develop, one that would be mutually beneficial, rooted in Christ. Pray that the church would see the foster care community and grow in awareness. Pray that the church would be moved to action to care for the foster care community.

2 Learn more about TFI.

At this point in the process, remain big picture.

You don't have to have all the details of the ministry worked out, but you do need to know the heart of what we do here. Gather as many details as you can. We'd recommend these resources to help you continue to learn more:

- [The TFI Vision Video](#)
- [The TFI Vision Booklet](#): Read about the mission and vision of TFI. Get to know the foster care community. Read how the ministry started. See the biblical call to care for the forgotten.
- Check out [TFI's Core Values](#).

Understand what TFI is not.

We're not a church. We're a ministry designed to come alongside a church. We want to point people to Jesus and to a local church that they can plug into. We want to support the church, not distract or take away from what it is already doing. We want to find areas where the church and TFI intersect and can benefit one another. We're praying for a movement; we're not trying to push an agenda. We want to work with the church so that we can best care for the foster care community based on the needs in the area.

3

Learn more about the church.

Set up a meeting to talk with a church leader.

Reach out by phone or email to see if you can schedule a time to talk to someone about an idea you have to serve the foster care community. Take the meeting, regardless of who it's with. It may be that you'll start with a secretary or maybe you'll be directed to a church leader, like an outreach coordinator. Don't be discouraged if you meet with someone other than the senior pastor, and don't assume that the senior pastor is the only one making decisions for the church. Go where you are directed and humbly learn. If phone or email don't work, drop in with treats or something in hand to encourage the church staff to ask in person if you can set up a meeting. Be clear on how long you'd like to meet or ask how much time they have available to give so that you don't end up with differing expectations.

Enter the meeting with a mindset that you're here to learn, even if it's your home church.

Don't enter with assumptions. Do your homework. Look through the church's website. Read all you can about the church. How is it set up functionally? What have they recently been teaching through? What is the church's identity? What makes them unique from other churches in the area? If you want to build a relationship with a church beyond this one meeting, then you have to make a connection. You do this by getting to know the person you're meeting with.

Use this list of questions as a guide to your conversation:

Church

- Tell me about your church. Does your church have a particular vision?
- What do you feel like your church does well?
- What is your church's interaction with the community outside of your walls?
- What is your hope for your community?

Personal

- What prompted you to get into church leadership?
- How long have you been here?
- What do you love about what you do?

Foster Care

- What's your knowledge or interaction with the foster care community personally and as a church currently? (This is a big one! It gives you an insight into where you need to start the conversation about TFI. You might be surprised to find that they know very little or a lot! What might, at first glance, look like resistance to get involved might actually be lack of clarity about who the foster care community is.)
- Do you have anyone in your church that is part of the foster care community—agency workers, foster parents, biological parents, or children in care?
- Do you have any ideas or particular interests in serving the foster care community in a specific way?

Prayer

- How can I be praying for you as a church leader?
- How can I be praying for your church?

4 Find areas of mutuality between TFI and the church.

Once you've determined who you are and who the church is, then you can find areas that overlap. Make sure you walk away from the meeting understanding what a win looks like for the church and for TFI. Then you can help the church see where you overlap. You don't have to have the full plan about how you will work together in the meeting. Take the pressure off of yourself. But do have a plan about how to follow-up. Set a second meeting to discuss some practicals based upon the conversation.

Be true to who you are, and make sure you have the right expectations of one another. Don't drift in who you are as TFI and try to make more mutuality than there actually is. Otherwise, you'll find yourself serving in ways you didn't intend. Part of the Advocate role is to merely point at places the church is already serving to show them where there are areas of mutuality so that they can also support the foster care community. If the church has strengths in a particular area, think through ideas and then connect about ways they can use those strengths to meet actual needs in your community. Don't do a project just because of a church's strengths either. We'll talk more about connecting with an agency to find actual needs.

5 Show gratitude.

No matter the outcome of the meeting with the church leader, be kind. Honestly thank the leader for their time and for being able to get to know them a little better. Pray for the church based upon the discussion you had. Don't set an ultimatum for the church or harbor any bitterness if the church needs more time or doesn't share mutuality with TFI. If you get a no to partnering, it doesn't mean you've failed.

It's okay to ask for clarity on the next steps with the church. Have a plan to follow-up if they are open to hearing more. Work closely and respectfully with the church leadership regardless of who you meet with from the church. Send a handwritten thank you note that shows you care about their church, not just about their partnership with TFI.



Helping you support the foster care community through
awareness, encouragement, and advocacy.

TheForgottenInitiative.org



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