



# Make A Meal Of It

Create a place of  
welcome in your  
neighbourhood  
through food.

**Fun**

**+ Meals together**

**+ Friendship**

**+ Neighbourhood**

**+ Community**

**It all adds up to**

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**Livability**

**Does your church want to grow community connections?**

**Do you want to create a place of welcome in your neighbourhood?**

**Are you looking for fresh ideas to bring life to your lunch club or meal ministry?**

**'Keep on loving one another as brothers and sisters. Do not forget to show hospitality to strangers, for by so doing some people have shown hospitality to angels without knowing it.'**

**Hebrews 13**



## **Why not Make A Meal Of It?**

### **A simple way to tackle community isolation**

This pack is created by a partnership of organisations called Christians Together Against Loneliness. It brings you ideas on why holding a community meal helps, how to get started and how to build connections that include everyone.

A community meal is a great way to extend the warm welcome of a church into the neighbourhood. Eating together is the bread and butter of community life, and when a church extends a welcome, everyone can benefit. Whether as a 'one-off' or a regular event, the chance to meet, share and chat together can offer a chance for genuine connections and new friendships.



## Who is it for?

A meal event presents an opportunity to make contact with older members of the community who may be at risk of isolation. Bereavement, or family and friends moving on can result in limited contact with others – yet churches are often in a great place to help, by drawing people into a community. Many churches offer weekly chances to meet and eat together. Make a Meal of It can provide an opportunity to make it special – and for the whole community to get involved.

The resource pack we've developed is designed to encourage us to think through the best ways to connect with those who may be older and isolated. We hope it will spark conversations and activities across the generations, and that there will be something for everyone – from those planning an afternoon tea, right through to those aiming to deliver a three course extravaganza. It's all about making connections and sharing God's love.



# Connect + Support + Celebrate



## Preparing to Make A Meal Of It

### + Have a meeting!

Gather a group to share your vision for connecting with those who may be older and isolated. Do you need specific roles? Who is making community connections? Who is providing support with transport? Who will co-ordinate the food? Who is in charge of publicity? Might you partner with another church on this?

### + What would work best?

Quality connections trump large numbers every time. It doesn't have to be big to be effective. If you're a small group, a sandwich tea which is beautifully prepared with flowers and napkins can create a warm welcome.

### + Who should be there?

Ensuring there is a diverse guest list will lead to a more vibrant event and ensure that no-one feels 'labelled as lonely.'

### + Think about your key message

Make sure that your event invite sounds inviting and inclusive. Don't make an example of people in the wording. Messages like below might be useful to use:

'We're running a meal at church to celebrate our community. We really want to welcome older people that we don't usually see at our events. Could you help us extend the invitation?' or 'Join us for our "Make A Meal Of It" event. A celebration for all ages.'

### + Transport - can you collect people?

Are there access requirements you need to be aware of? Will local cab firms provide a discounted rate?

### + Talk to those who will know who to invite

Older members of a congregation are often key connectors. The 'active retired' often volunteer with those who may be isolated. Talk to GP Practice Managers, U3A groups, AGE UK groups, the local Voluntary Sector Group. Also, local landlords and shopkeepers could be just the people to help you invite those they see that no one else does. Why not ask them for an introduction, or ask them to hand out a flyer?

### + Plan beyond the event

What are your next steps? We would encourage everyone to think about contact beyond the event. What other activities do you run each week that you can help others access? Would a quiet communion or a tea club present an opportunity to link people in?



## Make A Meal Of It together

### + Everyone gets involved

Aim for a spirit of 'together and with' rather than 'doing this for you.' Make sure that everyone helping gets a chance to sit and chat with those who are coming along if they want to. This might take careful planning, but will lead to greater connections.

### + Create conversations

Encourage everyone to get involved in a talking game using prepared 'chat cards' that offer a way of breaking the ice, where both parties are encouraged to answer to get to know one another. E.g. 'My favourite thing about our community.' 'How long have I lived here.' 'My favourite activity to relax.' It would provide another opportunity for those of different generations to mix.

### + Make it fun

Consider some games tables: playing cards, back gammon, dominoes can be a great way for quieter guests to find a comfortable space to enjoy.

### + Make it crafty

Making simple paper bunting where all generations are encouraged to write or draw things they love about their community. Stringing the bunting, or placing the flags on a noticeboard with meal guests in front could make a wonderful photo moment. Sending a copy of the photo would be a great way to follow up.

### + Invite input

Contributions from within your community can add something special. Would any musicians play some songs or provide some background music? Could both a younger or older person be encouraged to share their hobby?

### + Where faith fits

An opening prayer would be appropriate, or an invitation to a service before the meal could work well in your context. E.g. A service themed around Jesus' feeding the 5000 might prove a helpful frame for the meal.

### + Community connecting

Make A Meal Of It could provide a great opportunity to do some light touch community consultation. If you're considering follow up, think of a key question to ask people: 'What stops you getting out at the moment?'

# Connect + Support + Celebrate



## Make it easy : staying in touch

### + 'Thank you' cards

A handmade 'Thank you' card could be a nice way to stay in touch – you might want to equip the children in your church with craft materials to make these whilst the meal is happening.

### + Tell them more

Think about information you would like to give people. The contact numbers for the pastoral team, services and events coming up may be useful.

### + Organise a group debrief

Did you Make A Meal Of It? What went well, and what could we improve? Is there an appetite for anything else?

### + After the event

Speak to those who helped spread the word, from GP practices to Age UK groups. What is their feedback? Is there anything else they think you could do?



## Christians Together Against Loneliness

We believe you can't tackle loneliness alone, so we formed Christians Together Against Loneliness. Each partner works with isolated and older people. By sharing resources, learning and training, we want to equip churches to tackle this growing issue in their communities.

For more information about how we can help you build connections with older people in your community, just get in touch! The organisations in the partnership are:

### Livability

Livability is the disability charity that connects people with their communities. We tackle social isolation and the barriers that can cause this in the lives of disabled and vulnerable people. Through a wide range of disability, education, training and community services, we promote inclusion and wellbeing for all. Together, we work to see people take part, contribute and be valued. We put the elements in place that all add up to connected lives and communities.

[www.livability.org.uk](http://www.livability.org.uk)

It all adds up to

**Livability**

### Linking Lives UK

works with churches and Christian organisations across the UK to support the establishment of befriending schemes aimed at isolated older people. Local schemes use our tried and tested approach which includes access to key documents and procedures. Other activities and social events can also be developed in local communities.

[www.linkinglives.uk](http://www.linkinglives.uk)



### Pilgrim's Friend Society

We are a charity that provides the Christian love, support and encouragement that older people need to live fulfilled lives. We are passionate about helping people who are lonely, and helping people who are distant from God to come to know him.

[www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk](http://www.pilgrimsfriend.org.uk)



### Parish Nursing Ministries UK

is a Christian charity which helps local churches appoint nurses, who in turn support people and communities towards whole person healthcare. This is care for the person's overall well-being, incorporating body, mind and spirit.

[www.parishnursing.org.uk](http://www.parishnursing.org.uk)





## The Salvation Army

The Salvation Army exists for those who do not belong to it as much as for those who do. In this present day crisis of loneliness the Army welcomes all and everyone to all their church and community activities across the UK, which include friendship groups, befriending, lunch clubs, choirs, especially for older people. The Salvation Army longs to win this war on loneliness with the weapons of love, time, relationship and faith.

[www.salvationarmy.org.uk](http://www.salvationarmy.org.uk)



## The Gift of Years

from BRF (Bible Reading Fellowship) inspires, equips and enables communities across the UK to improve the spiritual lives of older people. The programme is developing Anna Chaplaincy to Older People, an ecumenical, community based model of chaplaincy offering spiritual support to older people and their relatives and carers – irrespective of whether individuals have a strong faith, little, or none. We take time to listen to the older persons stories, spend time together and ease their feelings of being alone. Our Messy Vintage resources offer a practical way for churches to use Bible based craft activities to reach out to older people and is a great resource for a 'Make A Meal Of It' event. Go to [www.thegiftofyears.org.uk/messy-vintage](http://www.thegiftofyears.org.uk/messy-vintage) for more details.



## Torch Trust

Torch Trust is committed to blind and partially sighted people who can often feel isolated and lonely even in crowds of people. We want to inspire churches to really welcome and include blind and partially sighted people into their communities.

[www.torchtrust.org](http://www.torchtrust.org)



## Care Home Friends

Equipping the church to tackle the loneliness of the elderly in care homes, through trained volunteers spending time and building friendship with residents.

[www.carehomefriends.org.uk](http://www.carehomefriends.org.uk)





**It all adds up to**

# Livability

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**In partnership with:**

