

# Church Leadership Guide: Stages Of Response To Coronavirus

## An Emerging Church Practice Resource

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Stage	On The Ground Conditions	Emotional Experience	Spiritual & Congregational Needs	Primary Leadership Activities	Pastoral & Lay Leadership Styles
First Stage -Lap 1	Suspending In Person Gatherings	Shock, Fleeting Denial, Adrenaline Rush, High Alert, Excitement	Direction & Guidance, Action, Adaptation, Innovation, Assurance	Guiding, Directing, Calling To Action, Presence, Positioning, High Activity	More Directive, Command Center Operations
Second Stage -Laps 2-3	Living In Social Distancing	Fatigue, Sadness, Longing For Community, Discouragement, Frustration	Theological Hope, Perseverance, Endurance, Sustaining Strength, Sabbath Rest & Renewal, Accepting Discomfort, Companionship, Basic Needs	Faith-Story Connecting, Call To Hope, Permission & Blessing to Rest, Confidence, Listening Coordination Basic Needs Ministry	Less Directive, More Collaborative, Pacing Collaboratively With Lay Leaders
Third Stage -Lap 4	Easing Social Distancing & Reengaging	Fatigue, Stressed, Eagerness, Excitement, Joy, Relief	Community Connecting, Celebrating, Worship & Essential Rituals, Continued Awareness and Basic Needs	Timing Discernment, Risk Assessment, Faith-Story Connecting, Shifting Church Practice, Direction & Guiding	More Directive, Focused Decisioning With Lay Leaders
Fourth Stage -Post-Race Debrief	Lifting Social Distancing With An Eye On Tracking The Virus	Joy, Relief, Sadness, Depression, Anger, Hunger For Normalcy	Comfort of Normalcy Through Ritual, Rest & Renewal, Spiritual Centering & Strengthening, Reflection, Integration, Basic Needs	Risk Assessment, Faith-Story Connecting, Facilitating Reflection-Sorting-Reshaping, Leading Process for Emerging Church Practice	Less Directive, Spiritual Guides, Process Facilitators

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In recent weeks, we have walked with many pastors, churches, and denominations as they respond to this Coronavirus Pandemic. From our vantage point, clearly there is much variety in responses and in the stages of response. Through listening closely and engaging conversations with church leaders, perspective is rising, resulting in this chart. The purpose of this chart is to help church leaders align their activity with the stages of the experience and the needs of their congregations. We hope it will help you lead your church to live into its best self during this Coronavirus Pandemic.

### Guiding Analogy – Like Running a Mile Race On The Track, 4 Full Laps

Explanation of the guiding analogy will be helpful. Before track and field converted its distances to meters, the mile run was four complete laps on the track. Runners learned to the rhythm of this particular race, making strategic moves. These rhythms are useful in describing what our experience and how we can lead effectively.

Lap 1 – When the gun fires, runners jump off the line with bursts of adrenaline fueled energy, sprinting ahead to establish position. They couldn't run at this swift pace the entire race, yet do so for much of the first lap before settling into their ongoing pace. This lap involved great excitement, high energy output, and exciting maneuvering.

Lap 2-3 – This stage is the longest stage in the race. The runners settle into their pace, while also starting to feel the discomfort of oxygen deprivation. Their adrenaline is gone, breathing hard, persevering with hope. They are working hard and uncomfortable, yet they know this won't last forever.

Lap 4 – Though fatigued and depleted, the runners accelerate with their final kick, leaving everything out on the track. There are strategic moves to make, starting their sprint at just the right moment. Their thinking and judgment can be fuzzy, since they have been exerting for so long. There is great relief in crossing the finish line.

Post-Race Debriefing – Every skilled coach pursues opportunities to debrief after races. This is when runners are settled enough to reflect on their experience, identifying the positive and negatives, considering what to integrate from the experience.

### Uses of this Church Leadership Guide

Whatever stage we are in, having a roadmap for the journey is comforting. Maps also give us direction for planning our next turns. We encourage pastors in all size churches to discuss this Church Leadership Guide with church staff and lay leaders, aligning your leadership with the apparent needs in your church. No roadmap is totally accurate, so adjust this one as needed.

### *ReShape: Emerging Church Practice In A Volatile World*

- A Book, Coming July 2020 from Pinnacle Leadership Press
- A Transforming Church Initiative from Pinnacle Leadership Associates for harvesting, conserving, and integrating the growth resulting from life disruption, Coming July 2020
- A Learning Experience for church leadership, Coming August 2020