



Introduction

The professional practice of pastoring after COVID-19 will and should look different than before the Corona Virus outbreak. Carey Nieuwhof in an article titled 10 Predictions About the Future of the Church and Shifting Attendance Patterns believes that a seismic shift is hitting the church right now on the scale of Christianity after Constantine and also the invention of the printing press. He suggests the following:

1. The potential to gain is still greater than the potential to lose.
2. Churches that love their model more than the mission will die.
3. Attendance will no longer drive engagement; engagement will drive attendance.

(Read full article here: <https://careynieuwhof.com/10-predictions-about-the-future-church-and-shifting-attendance-patterns/>)

The Foundation for all that follows:

Although the professional practice of pastoring will, and should look different post COVID-19, two things remain the same. One, the personal practice of pastoral soul health remains as it always has, dependent on personal rhythms of soul health, i.e. prayer, meditation, weekly Sabbath. The old adage remains, healthy minister, healthy ministry. Second, church growth will

continue to be founded on what it has always been founded upon, that only God draws, convicts, converts and conveys people into His kingdom. The bottom line is **RELAX!** Pre-and post-Corona, God is still our foundational source for personal and professional success. Therefore, we must honor these two immutable dynamics; One, continue to personally prioritize care for our soul, Two, professionally develop skills that nurture the souls of our people. With that being said, we offer the following.

INSIGHTS AND OBSERVATIONS

1. The present crisis provides the potential for an awakening. What are we going to do if God sends us a harvest?
2. This pandemic has given Pastors and leaders an incredible opportunity to re-evaluate everything (a reset), allowing us to really reconsider what is necessary to effectively Pastor and grow the church (spiritually and numerically).
3. If any leader returns to their ministry without taking full inventory and then making proper changes - that is poor leadership.
4. EVERY church (regardless of size) should consider a relaunch of their ministry as we return.
5. We will see PHASES of reverse social distancing... initially, we went from LARGE to SMALL gatherings - soon we will go from SMALL to LARGE. This could allow many of our (smaller) COG churches to meet back in person sooner than others. However, each church must be prepared for these phases.
6. We didn't have much time to plan for the quarantine, but we do have time to plan for our return. We need a range of ideas and options because we don't know what the return guidelines will look like or when that might be. It may look something like this: PHASE 1 = 10 people, PHASE 2 = 50 People. PHASE 3 = 200+ people PHASE 4 = Large Gatherings. We can't let students miss an entire school year, so I believe PHASE 4 will happen before the return of school. During the summer months - we could see continued restrictions.
7. The events of 9/11 forever changed the way we travel...COVID-19 (may) forever change the way we gather in large numbers.

8. Passover - The emphasis was on the family. No need for temple worship or priestly leadership. Every head of the family was the priest, sacrificing a lamb for those in his household. The house became the central place of protection (from the deadly plague) and ministry (the sacrificial lamb and the Passover meal itself). House churches may be an outcome of this crisis. Will the current church accept or reject this new wineskin?
9. Ephesians 4:11,12 - “The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.” We must return to this original intent for New Testament leadership. We exist to equip them; they do not exist to serve us...
10. With the restrictions placed on public schools many parents have become “home-schoolers.” Some may not return to the public school system. Churches may want to become an umbrella for home schooling...
11. Church Revitalization? Are we prepared to accelerate this process?
12. Crises will be opportunities to be catalytic-crisis allows us to make shifts that people will accept more readily than before the crisis.
13. Future pandemics are probable. Will you be prepared for the next cycle, the next outbreak?

LOCAL CHURCH RE-ENTRY STRATEGY

A Re-Entry Team has been formed focusing on Pastoring in a Post-Pandemic Culture. The following are considerations and recommendations based upon the current crisis. They are grouped into five categories:

- 1) Soul Health
- 2) Facilities
- 3) Schedule
- 4) Finances
- 5) Community and Connectivity
- 6) The Virtual Church

1. SOUL HEALTH

Considerations:

- How is your soul? Beyond our soul being saved, how is your soul being stewarded? Not your congregation's soul, but your soul. How is your soul? The horse of your soul must come before the cart of your congregation's soul.
- Too many Christians, and more poignantly too many ministers leave their soul health to chance. They quietly hope to get lucky in soul at a conference, revival, new church growth book or webinar. Most ministers have been well trained for church growth, but not for soul health.
- Be clear, CHURCH GROWTH DOES NOT EQUATE TO SOUL HEALTH. Working for God does not mean you are close to God. How is your soul?
- Right now, personally and professionally we are experiencing the acute stress of a pandemic. This additional stress piles on the already unique and dangerous stress of ministry. Post-pandemic will cause post-pandemic-stress-symptoms. Do not let the devil get a foothold in the weariness of your well-doing. Take care of your soul.

Recommendations:

- Because the *Clergy Burnout Survey* (pre-pandemic) reports more than 65% of ministers are on the verge of or in full blow burnout we're offering the following **ONE-STOP SHOP** for resources to establish renewal zones, margin creation, Sabbath, etc. as preventative measures to protect and nurture your soul.
 - www.ministryoasis.com
 - <https://www.facebook.com/groups/ministryoasis/>

2. FACILITIES

Considerations:

- The church may need to keep step with measures the world is taking in order to remain relevant and caring. Will churches need an infrared temperature device or sanitation stations or masks available just like some churches have ear plugs available?
- People will probably be wearing masks at church...creating unique dynamics.
- Cultural dynamics like the active shooter scenarios change the way we do some things at church. How much impact will this pandemic have on the church?
- What will insurance companies require of churches to show due diligence?

- We may have to have limited capacities in our buildings.
- How are we going to comply with social distancing?
- People need a comfort level that when they come back everything is clean and sanitized...this may be an ongoing thing we need to do.
- Capacity of church sanctuaries is going to go down. The 80% rule of being full is going to go to 60%.
- Guests have always asked, “Is it safe, is it safe for my kids?” Those questions will increase. THIS IS GOING TO BE HUGE WITH GUESTS.
- Janitorial people may need to be licensed in the future.

Recommendations:

- Churches need to develop a Health Team. Just like church shootings created the need to develop security teams, COVID-19 create a need for churches to develop Health Teams made up of medical professionals within the congregation.
- Hire an outside company to come and sanitize the building.
- If you have multiple services, develop a plan to clean between the services on Sunday.
- One church will not have handshakes, hugs or any other greeting...their greeting is going to be squirting hand sanitizer on every person’s hands who walk in the building. Decide ahead of time how you will handle the “greeting time.”
- Make sure the facility is CLEAN SMELLING. Have hand sanitizers and anti-bacterial wipes readily available.
- Consider multi-site even if you never have before. Some churches will not make it. Church property will become more available. If you have been in the market to get a facility, be on the lookout.

3. SCHEDULE

Considerations:

- What is the physical plant schedule (depending on restrictions)?
- What is the online schedule?
- The opportunity exists to change our scheduling.

- Pastors will need to overcome their fear of multiple services.
- We may need to go to multiple services because of social distancing.
- Offering an early service just for seniors may be an option to address any concerns they have of rejoining the congregation.
- Special consideration should be given concerning children's ministries.

Recommendations:

- If you were considering adding another service before this pandemic, plan to reopen with that service in the schedule.
- Optimize your online schedule to offer more opportunities for virtual gathering than your physical gatherings.
- Be prepared to adapt the physical gathering schedule to accommodate any restrictions placed on the size of gatherings.
- When it comes to Children's Ministry follow the local school systems guidance. If they're not having school, you shouldn't offer that ministry right now. If they social distance to x number in a class, you should try to do that as well... even if you have to do multiple meeting times for the kids. Kids ministries is a big challenge because most aren't prone to social distancing to begin with.

4. FINANCES

Considerations:

- Finances can actually increase during this crisis.
- Stimulus money will be tithed upon because tithers are going to tithe.
- Scott Sheppard (Pastor of Cornerstone Church in Athens, Georgia) says to his congregation, "You're not giving to Cornerstone, you're giving through Cornerstone..."
- People outside of the church will give to churches who are meeting needs in the community.
- Budgets will never be the same.
- Cash Giving will fade quickly.

Recommendations:

- It is vital that every pastor develop different avenues of giving: mail-in, online (through the website), text-to-give, Church App, etc.
- Cast a vision and encourage people to give towards it (the vision), not to help keep the church afloat.
- Get a fully-funded emergency fund (3-6 months of income/expenses). This will take time and discipline, but it's possible!
- Adopt a need in the community and encourage people to give towards it (feeding hospital workers, food boxes for those in need, masks and face protection shields, etc.)
- Share the ways people can give on all your social media platforms (have it listed at the bottom of your posts).
- Create training videos on your social media platforms teaching people how simple it is to give online.
- Connect with your top givers every week.

5. COMMUNITY AND CONNECTIVITY

Considerations:

- Evangelism opportunities are huge right now.
- It takes 21-40 days to form a habit. A “habit” is being formed to stay at home. How will we re-engage people?
- A new church plant just before the outbreak of the pandemic was getting some new families through hosting parenting classes (no advertisement about church-just helping families...)
- Small groups through Zoom...how can we keep that going? This is one of the greatest opportunities we have.
- Communication - phone calls/connectivity.
- We will always have Zoom groups from this point forward.
- Attendance used to be king/viewership.
- Engagement is key.
- The personal reach into the community is the major impact that can be made.

- Re-entry pathway - Drive thru Sunday night - 1 hour service, Kids Ministry teams handing out bags for kids...every car will get a card handed to them asking them to go to various places in the city to pray around the city - the purpose is to get people re-engaged...
- That (connectivity) is the biggest need in culture right now. People are starved for it.
- Pastors and churches that do that well will absolutely thrive in this environment.
- Community Outreach will actually move to the community. The church will go to the community more than the community will come to the church.
- Community is our advantage - they can get great preaching and singing anywhere...

Recommendations:

- Offer online classes for parenting, home schooling, exercise, finances, grief share, mental illness help (specialized) and other community needs.
- Use freeconferencecall.com for those who will not drift into Zoom Church. Drop the audio file so they can listen to the message (good for seniors). Use www.gotomeeting.com as an option.
- Set up a system so every person in the church gets a phone call every week. “Pastor Scott wanted me to call you and share several things about...”
- Make sure connectivity is happening across every ministry and platform.
- Develop a strategy for chats on every platform. Make sure your staff and leaders are talking to everyone during the service being streamed, offering prayer, answering questions. Have a live host on all your streaming services to engage people who are watching.
- Engagement is KEY!!! This also increases Facebook algorithms. Make the church experience real-be intentional about engaging people.
- Adopt a ministry opportunity outside the church that is in the community. It may be a hospital, food service ministry, first responders, etc. Think about feeding them or providing snack boxes to employees.
- Do community outreach in neighborhoods through your people. Make sure the elderly are taken care of and have their prescriptions filled. Focus on the underserved and the people in need.

- Drive-thru services have been a way to rally congregations. Since entertainment is shut down, rental companies have nowhere to send their large LED screens. You can get them very reasonable. Travis Johnson got a fixed LED screen on the side of the building at Pathway Church in Mobile, AL for two months for \$9,000. The drive-thru creates a tremendous sense of team and unity - people were honking their horns...you cannot create that type of synergy online.
- “Pray and Go.” Stop in front of a home, pray for them, and then leave a door hanger that says, WE PRAYED FOR YOU.
- Decentralize ministry out of the building and into the community.
- Transform your small groups into points of contact in neighborhoods all over your city.

6. VIRTUAL CHURCH

Considerations:

- Digitize everything.
- Virtual church EXPOSES the church to all of its good and bad.
- Concern that many pastors are not prepared for the digitized world-pastors are still doing.
- 2 hour services online are too long. People will not watch that long. It may not be wise to simply take what is done live and put it online.
- How can we do things in bites? Two songs, then a powerful question followed by another song...30 minutes of power bites.
- Move from the couch to the table-engage. Ask three or four questions that need a response at the table at the end of the online experience.
- Media positions will be needed more on staff.
- Online bulletin.
- More people can be engaged online than in person.
- Have a once a month online Zoom service...
- Online Campus pastors - Life Church (Craig Groeschel) offers a free online platform for churches. They have grown from 3,000 churches using their online platform to over 23,000 in five weeks.

Recommendations:

- Developing an online presence is a must. A leader in Scott Sheppard’s church is offering to set up a one-page website for COG pastors...free of charge! (One-time setup)
- Host a “virtual lobby” experience after the “live stream” is over. People join in and hang out.
- Delete the printed bulletin and go online with your announcements.
- Create pathways for online/Zoom viewers to connect with a prayer/altar counselor if they prayed for salvation or a specific need.
- Put your Growth Track online and a class for new believers online.
- Get on social media every day. Do not worry about saturation! This is a crisis and the sheep need to hear from their shepherd—promoting giving links...share, share, share...we are gathering people every day!

CHURCH FACILITIES

A. PREPARATION

1. Deep clean your entire church. Where will germs be transferred? Consider shampooing carpets, sanitizing pews, bathrooms, doorknobs, light switches, and microphones.
2. Pay attention to the nurseries, preschool and children’s areas. Consider removing everything nonessential from the room to limit surfaces for potential contamination and do a thorough cleaning in between uses. All toys and furniture should be sanitized.
3. Post signs about not shaking hands and doing non-contact greetings.
4. Tell your congregation through flyers on the doors, email, and social media about how you’ve prepared the church for their arrival. Be sure to use the words “clean, safe, and mindful of health needs and issues in preparation for a non-touch

experience” or something similar. Also say that if they are sick, then they should not be present and can join online instead.

B. SERVICE TIMES AND LOCATION

1. Keep an online meeting option for those who are afraid or unable to attend your service in person.
2. You can offer multiple services to encourage a greater chance of social distancing. One way to ensure your services are evenly spread is to have people sign up for a service. You can use Facebook events and have people mark which event they'll attend.

C. AMENITIES: COFFEE, BULLETINS, AND SANITATION STATIONS

1. Restrooms: You must decide whether you will allow restroom usage at this time. Should you decide not to open restrooms, the length of your service should be limited to one hour or less.
2. Do not hand out bulletins. Go to a digital format. Community Church Builder is a great website for this. <https://www.churchcommunitybuilder.com/>
3. Give careful thought and attention to coffee stations / group meals at this time.
4. If you choose to keep your restrooms open, post signs about washing hands in bathrooms with appropriate guidelines for doing so.
5. Provide Sanitation Stations throughout your facility. Provide good, visible signage and display hand sanitizer, hand wipes, etc.
6. Supply masks for those who may not bring one. This will increase comfort levels.

D. STAFF: GREETERS AND VOLUNTEERS

1. Provide security and enlist ushers to be both inside and outside greeters. Instruct them on how to greet post-quarantine: NO hand shaking or hugs.
2. If your bathrooms are open, have greeters monitor the bathrooms to ensure hands are washed and social distancing is followed.
3. Consider a temperature check on all staff and volunteers.

E. SUNDAY SCHOOL AND SMALL GROUPS

1. Encourage people to move directly into the sanctuary and not mingle in close proximity to each other.
2. Consider whether you will have Sunday school or small groups. Make sure you're communicating if and when these classes will resume. Online via Zoom video may be our best option here.
3. Consider dividing your groups to maintain the social distancing standards if you have small groups.
4. If you do have class, please know you should clean the doorknobs, water fountains, and other high traffic areas in between uses.

F. PRESCHOOL AND CHILDREN

1. Parents and guardians will not want to bring children if they are not 100% certain that the environment is safe. Make your policy public.
2. You may consider not opening preschool and children on the first Sunday back.
3. Pre-register children to limit how many are in any room at a time.
4. Limit leaders in the preschool and children's areas to those who do not have pre-existing conditions and/or are over 65 years old.
5. Consider extra volunteers to help in the preschool ministry where some children may suffer from separation anxiety after only being with parents for a long time.
6. Have only one person handle child check in stations and do not pass the check-in device.
7. Do not let parents past the drop off point.
8. Have a check list of what's been cleaned and when in each room.
9. Develop a list of procedures for your volunteers. Train them on this list through Zoom prior to the first meeting.

G. WORSHIP SERVICES

1. Celebrate the return!

2. If your people are from the same household, they can sit together. Consider spacing out other groups.
3. Avoid handouts. Project all announcements digitally or on screens.
4. Change the way you offer communion. Avoid passing a plate or bowl.
5. Avoid passing microphones on the stage.
6. Continue offering online giving options. Have stations in the church where people can drop offerings instead of passing a plate.
7. Come up with a fun way to greet others in a no-contact way.
8. Consider dismissing in an orderly way to ensure there is social distancing.

Pastoring in a Post-Pandemic Culture Church Assessment

1--I'm There

2--I'm Getting There

3--Not There Yet

SOUL HEALTH	1	2	3	COMMENTS
Create a <i>Soul Health Plan</i> .				
Establish renewal zones daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly & annually.				
Join a Covenant Group of other like-minded ministers.				
Establish a weekly Sabbath routine.				
Read something for personal soul health, not professional development.				
Plan to attend a soul health retreat.				
Request from your regional office their sabbatical program.				

CONSIDERATIONS

- Soul health does not just happen. Soul health is an intentional set of routine practices or rhythms.
- As your congregation's role model for the soul, you set the standard. No better time for a soul reset than during a quarantine.
- Check out www.ministryoasis.com for soul health resources to raise all the above numbers to "1".

FACILITIES	1	2	3	COMMENTS
Develop a team of Health Professionals within the congregation.				

Hire an outside company to sanitize facility.			
Write an action plan to clean between services.			
Write an action plan to handle greeting time.			
Hand sanitizers, anti-bacterial wipes (masks if required) available throughout the facility.			
Consider multi-site (properties will become available.)			
Contact your insurance about possible new requirements.			

CONSIDERATIONS

- People will probably be wearing masks at church ... creating unique dynamics.
- People need a comfort level when returning, everything clean and sanitized (ongoing process.) Sanctuary capacity may change from 80% to 60%.
- Guests will want to know their children are safe. (This concern will be magnified.)
- Janitorial people may need to be licensed in the future.

SCHEDULING	1	2	3	COMMENTS
If you were considering adding another service before the pandemic, plan to reopen with that service in the schedule.				
Optimize your online schedule to offer more opportunities for virtual gatherings than physical gatherings.				

CONSIDERATIONS

- Be prepared to adapt the physical gathering schedule to accommodate any restrictions placed on the size of gathering.
- When it comes to Children's Ministry, follow the local school system's guidance. If they are not having school, you shouldn't offer that ministry right now. Children will not practice social distancing.

FINANCES	1	2	3	COMMENTS
Provide multiple giving opportunities for congregation (website, cash app, church app, text-to-give.)				
Cast vision for people to give toward mission (not just to pay rent.)				
Emergency fund of 3 to 6 months of income/expenses.				
Adopt a need in the community (feeding hospital workers, food boxes for the needy, providing face protection.)				

Share ways people can give on all your social media platforms (have it listed at the bottom of your posts.)			
Create training videos on your social media platforms teaching people how simple it is to give online.			
Connect with your top givers every week.			

CONSIDERATIONS

- Finances can actually increase during crisis.
- Tithers will always tithe.
- People will give to churches who are meeting needs in the community.
- Budgets will never be the same.
- Cash giving will fade quickly.
- "You're not giving to Cornerstone; you're giving through Cornerstone..." Pastor Scott Sheppard

COMMUNITY AND CONNECTIVITY	1	2	3	COMMENTS
Offer online classes (parenting, home schooling, exercise, finances, grief, mental help, and community needs.)				
Use <i>freeconferencecall.com</i> for those who do not drift into Zoom Church (drop audio file), use <i>gotomeeting.com</i> as an option as well.				
Set a system up where everyone is called once a week (Give direction on what is said.)				
Make sure connectivity is happening across every ministry platform.				
Develop a strategy for chats on every platform. Leaders should be talking to everyone during the service, offering prayer, answering questions. Have a live host for all services to engage people who are watching.				
Adopt ministry opportunities outside the church that are in the community (hospital, food service ministry, first responders, etc.)				

COMMUNITY AND CONNECTIVITY (cont.)	1	2	3	COMMENTS
Do community outreach in the neighborhoods through the church (Ex. Elderly is taken care of ... have their prescriptions picked up and delivered.)				
Drive-thru services create a sense of team and unity.				

Pray and Go. Conduct prayer walks, pray for homes and leave door hangers - "We Prayed For You".			
Decentralize ministry out of the building and into the community.			
Transform your small groups into points of contact in neighborhoods all over your city.			

CONSIDERATIONS

- Evangelism opportunities are huge right now. It takes 21-40 days to form a habit. A "habit" is being formed to stay at home. How will we re-engage people?
- Develop a plan to keep small groups going / fresh.
- Communication - phone calls and connectivity/engagement are the key.
- Zoom is here to stay.
- The personal reach into the community is the major impact that can be made. Community Outreach will actually move to the community. Community is our advantage - they can get great preaching and singing anywhere.

VIRTUAL CHURCH	1	2	3	COMMENTS
Develop an online presence. Make quality a priority.				
Host a "virtual lobby" experience after the "live stream" is over. People can join in and hang out for a while.				
Delete the printed bulletin and go online with your announcements. Consider changing the name of it to something like "Worship Guide".				
Create pathways for online/Zoom viewers to connect with prayer/altar spiritual guidance (salvation/spiritual need.) Virtual altar calls are possible with Zoom groups.				
Put your Growth Track online, classes for new believers and membership classes.				
Daily presence on social media (People need to hear from their shepherd.) Share! Share! Share!				

CONSIDERATIONS

- Digitize everything.
- Virtual church exposes the church to all of its good and bad.
- 2 hour service online (Taking what was done live and putting it online.) How can things be done in bite size pieces? Two songs, then a power question followed by another song and 30 minutes of power bites.

- Move from couch to table to engage. Ask 3 power questions. Have a monthly zoom service.

SPECIAL THANKS ...

Contributions to this document were made by the following individuals:

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