Tithe.ly

CORONAVIRUS IN CHURCH
–

HOW TO PROTECT & GROW YOUR CHURCH DURING THE OUTBREAK
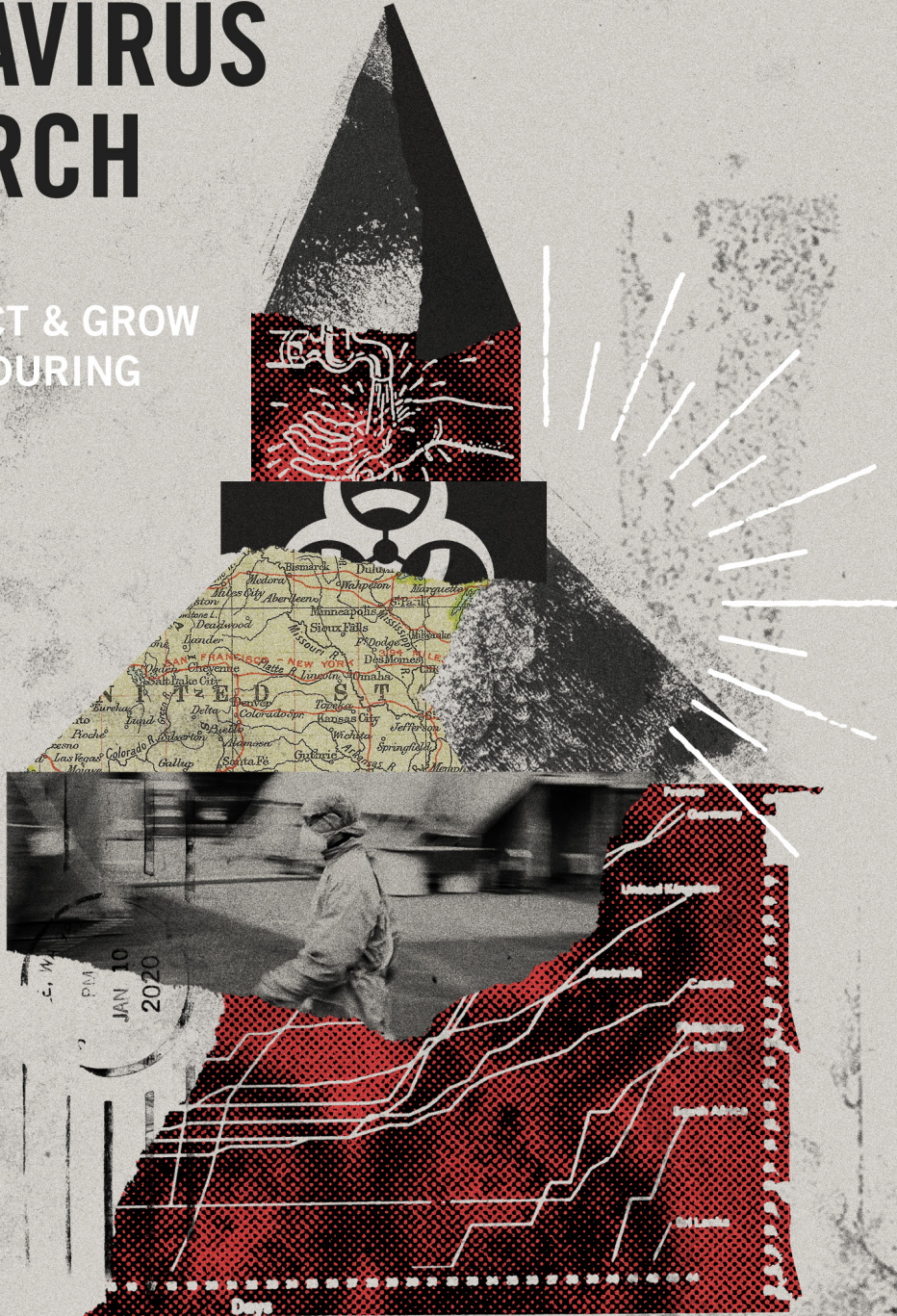
TABLE OF CONTENTS

BE CALM & CARRY ON, CHURCH LEADERS

Every church must change during the coronavirus scare. It is no longer an option.

Communication strategies must be put in place.
Sanitary practices must be implemented.
Preventative measures must be taken.
Uncomfortable emails must be sent.
Important events must be canceled.

This can be hard on a church. People want to hear the word of God preached. People want to be discipled. People want fellowship with other believers.

State governments across the country are issuing warnings not to meet in groups of 20 people or more. Enormous businesses such as the NBA and DisneyWorld have canceled weeks of events that would have earned them millions of dollars.

Must your church suffer the same fate? Do you really have to cancel church?

Thankfully, you do not have to cancel church.

There are an abundance of practices and tools that you can implement to keep your church healthy, safe, and stable during this rocky season of viral outbreak.

In this ebook, you'll learn everything your church should and can be doing during this outbreak to help your church remain calm, healthy, and engaged.

Don't panic.

There are good answers to the questions you're asking.

We're going to answer them right now.

By the end of this book, you will be equipped to create and implement your communications strategy, make confident decisions about whether to have an in-person or virtual service, and exactly what digital tools you will need to accommodate these difficult transitions when time and money are tight.

Let's dive right into it.

CHAPTER 1

CORONAVIRUS IN CHURCH

10 WAYS TO KEEP YOUR CHURCH HEALTHY AND DISCIPLED DURING THE OUTBREAK

NPR recently reported on the efforts among churches to prevent the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19). The CDC released an official post for churches and other faith-based organizations to prepare for and prevent the spread of COVID-19.

As a church leader, you may feel overwhelmed by all of the information about coronavirus.

- How will it change your church?
- Where do you find the best information?
- What are other churches doing?
- What are the best medical practices to prevent the spread of COVID-19?

Don't stress out too much.

You've landed in the right place.

Here, we're going to unpack the best practices for church leaders to continue their Sunday worship events in a manner that is in the best interest of their visitors and members.

THE VIRTUAL CHURCH SERVICE

The first option churches have for hosting their services in a way that prevents the spread of COVID-19 is to convert their service into a virtual service in order to prevent physical contact between members, staff, and visitors.

Hosting a virtual service means that the church staff would still produce the Sunday service itself, but it would be a congregation-less service. Instead of hosting church visitors and members in the church building, church attendees would tune into a live-stream of the production and participate digitally.

Let's delve into all the details of hosting a virtual service.

1. HOW TO HOST SUNDAY WORSHIP VIRTUALLY

The two primary components of hosting a virtual service are:

● the production of the service; and
● the publication of the service.

The production of your Sunday service should include all of the elements of your normal service, but the visual elements should be physically organized so that all "stage events" are now in direct line-of-

sight of your video cameras and audio equipment. Instead of the "stage" being central, now the viewpoint of the cameras becomes central.

Your set design can no longer rest on the assumption that people can see and hear what's going on in the building—they can see and hear what's on their computers. That requires a different physical strategy for your church production. Besides that, your basic church service plan can remain the same.

The publication of your Sunday service to a live-streaming virtual community environment requires more technical aptitude. There are several fantastic software products that enable your church to live-stream your service to video platforms such as YouTube and Facebook, including Dacast, ChurchStreaming.tv, SundayStreams, and vMix.

If you're a larger church, you likely already have the A/V production gear to live-stream your service. If you're a smaller church, don't try to use tools above your paygrade. Go with something simple that produces an aesthetically pleasing video and audio product.

For example, instead of purchasing an advanced DSLR camera with a zoom lens that makes the sermon look cinematic, use a simple plug-and-record camera with live-streaming capabilities. Save the big purchases for a season when you're not under the pressure of COVID-19.

In summary, produce a service without your congregation present and live-stream that service for your congregants. We'll get to best practices for communicating the details of that to your congregation further below.

2. HOW TO FACILITATE CHURCH COMMUNITY ONLINE

If your entire church is logged on to watch the service, you might as well give them an opportunity to touch base with each other and to

fellowship meaningfully with other believers.

One fantastic tool for this is ChurchOnlinePlatform.com. This tool offers video live-streaming services alongside community interaction capabilities. Your members (and visitors!) can log in, watch your service, and experience a virtual coffee hour as they sip their Nespresso lattes in the comfort of their own homes!

If you're concerned about your church's budget, remember that you're saving money by keeping everyone home for the Sunday. You're saving money on coffee hour, power, facilities, maintenance, and a host of other invisible budgetary items that accrue when hundreds of people use a building for an event.

Whatever tool you use, it's important to supply your congregants with the capability of interacting with each other so that the church experience can feel participatory, and so that the digital format of the service more accurately reflects what the church is supposed to be.

3. HOW TO CONTINUE SMALL GROUPS VIRTUALLY

Your church app is the best way to continue small groups. Use this to manage church events registration, group chat, food need updates, prayer requests, scheduling changes, and resource sharing. Keep them engaged throughout the week, and communicate to your church the best procedure for small groups.

When it comes to meeting with the actual small group, Zoom and Skype are fantastic tools. They each enable everyone in a small group to hop into a digital meeting room and experience the full fellowship and encouragement of other believers with none of the risk of encountering or spreading COVID-19.

This also enables those who test positive for COVID-19 to show up to

events without feeling guilty. The church should be mission-minded in this regard—this is not merely an opportunity to keep those in your congregation physically safe, but to proactively include those who are ill into the events of your community without them feeling left out or guilty.

4. HOW TO TAKE THE OFFERING DIGITALLY

Taking the offering is the easiest part of the virtual service. If your church is already set up with digital giving, then your church is in an ideal position to take up your church's offering. If your congregants have already set up recurring giving, then you'll be in a much better position.

However, you don't want to miss an opportunity to help more people to start giving. More than that, you may want to take a special offering during the service.

For both of these, look no further than Tithe.ly Giving.

It works seamlessly right on your church website. The giving form can easily be embedded or sent as a link through whatever digital giving platform you make.

More than that, when it comes time in the service to give, all you need to do is direct people to their church apps to give—whether to the general fund or for a special offering. Most church giving solutions require that you take viewers away from your site. But if you're live-streaming the service and people are interacting with each other, you don't want them to be distracted while they're giving.

You want them to remain engaged in the service. Tithe.ly is one of the few (if not the only) digital tool that enables you to do this.

THE IN-PERSON CHURCH SERVICE

You may still choose to have an in-person service. If your church does choose this path, there are important best practices that must be implemented in order to host your Sunday service in a way that protects your visitors, members, and staff from the spread of COVID-19.

5. HOW TO GREET PEOPLE WITH CAUTIOUS CARE

Greeting people at church is commonly a physical act—shaking hands, hugging, etc. The best way to defuse peoples' tendency to reach out to a greeter physically is to put an unmissable sign right next to the front door that says: "We are a loving church. For everyone's well-being, please refrain from physical contact."

That saves your greeters from awkward conversations, and it saves people from their typical instincts to reach out and make physical contact with those they love in the community. Another way to frame it is: "This Sunday, the way we love each other is by not hugging."

6. HOW TO SERVE COMMUNION

Many churches are moving to a weekly communion model, which increases the likelihood that your church will want to offer communion during this service. Since communion is the part of the service that involves the most physical contact between congregants, it's important that you constrain your practice of communion to a highly sanitary model that minimizes the possibility of the spread of germs.

Several practices you can implement to this end are:
● no dipping bread in wine;
● no common cup; and
● bread in individual, sealed packets (you can buy bread/wine sealed packets on Amazon).

7. HOW TO PROMPT THE PASSING OF THE PEACE

The next common practice in churches which occasions physical contact among members is the passing of the peace. During this time, you should take another opportunity to say: "This week, we share in fellowship by passing the peace without physical touch." Depending on your church tradition, you may make the sign of the cross to one another, take a slight mutual bow or, if you're very casual, do a wave.

The point here is to prevent physical touch during the "greet your neighbor" part of your service. It's important for the well-being of your congregation that you make this point before you initiate the passing of the peace.

8. HOW TO COORDINATE CHURCH VOLUNTEERS

Train all of your church volunteers on the best practices for preventing the spread of COVID-19. Once again, the CDC recently released a fantastic resource just for churches.

Once volunteers have been trained, task them with implementing procedures that help remind members to practice preventative hygiene, both personally and interpersonally.

9. CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

It's important to communicate to parents, first of all, that if their children or immediate family members test positive for coronavirus, they should participate in the service virtually rather than in-person.

More importantly, it is important to communicate to parents and children's ministry staff that the toys must be cleaned between each service so that the children are kept safe from the spread of COVID-19.

10. HOW TO SUCCESSFULLY COMMUNICATE IMPORTANT INFORMATION

The most important part of your church's approach to COVID-19 is your communication strategy. If people don't know what your policies are, they'll assume there aren't any. This could result either in people showing up to church without taking the proper precautions or people choosing not to attend church because they feel the issue isn't sufficiently addressed.

The first thing you must do is communicate to your church that you have a policy, but more importantly, which channels you will be updating with the latest information about your church's policy on COVID-19. You should ideally be publishing these updates on every channel as often as you have them. This includes:

- the church website
- the church email list
- the church text marketing list
- the church app's push notifications
- the church's social media accounts

Core to sustaining your church's attendance during the COVID-19 scare is communication. The first thing you should do is, as a leadership team, draft an official statement regarding all of your best practices for attending the service safely, and distribute that statement to as many outlets as possible.

In order to cement these ideas in peoples' minds, it's a good idea to show a video before the service explaining exactly how you will practice the entire order of worship in a safe way. Ideally, you will have this video produced before Sunday so that you can send it to your church to watch Saturday night (watch Ray Wilkerson's example at the top of this page).

Show the video first thing in the service.

As you do all of this, be sure to update your emergency communication plan for distributing timely and accurate information.

CONCLUSION

Here are very important guidelines that the CDC provides for churches in bullet form. For more explanation, visit the CDC's public statement for churches here.

- Plan for staff absences.
- Provide COVID-10 prevention supplies at your church.
- Promote the practice of everyday preventative actions.
- Develop a method for monitoring and tracking the COVID-19-related staff and member absences (Tithe.ly ChMS is perfect for this).
- Plan ways to limit face-to-face contact between people.
- Update your emergency communication plan for distributing timely and accurate information.
- Stay informed about the local COVID-19 situation.
- Be aware of temporary school dismissals in your area.
- Communicate frequently with those in your communication chain.
- Provide information that explains why and when on-site operations and services may be temporarily scaled back or your organization may be closed to non-essential visitors.
- Educate staff and volunteers about how to keep themselves healthy when accompanying someone to a destination away from your facility.
- Address the concerns of staff and volunteers who are at high risk for COVID-19 complications.
- Put hand sanitizer next to every entryway.

CORONAVIRUS AND REMOTE WORK
-
THE DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO MANAGING YOUR CHURCH STAFF DURING THE OUTBREAK

During the coronavirus outbreak, your church leadership team may not know the best way to proceed with the work of the church.

Many churches are beginning to adopt a remote work model for their staff.

You might think that remote work wouldn't work for your church staff:

- "Our staff members aren't self-motivated."
- "People won't be productive from home."
- "We don't have sufficient communication structures in place to successfully implement a remote work model."

However, as the coronavirus outbreak spreads, the need to seriously consider a remote option in order to keep your staff and volunteers safe increases by the hour.

Here, we're going to explain exactly what tools and methods your church can use to successfully use a remote work model to manage your church staff and volunteers while people remain home.

Pro Tip: Read this blog by our CTO Ben Sinclair to learn how Tithe.ly uses the remote work model, and how churches can use it for their benefit.

REMOTE WORK TOOLS

First, let's dive into the digital tools that will help your team keep productivity flowing among your church leadership team, staff, and volunteers.

It's important to note that both tools I mention below have highly functional free plans which are more than enough for a church to do remote work.

ZOOM

Zoom is the best tool for organizing virtual video conference meetings among church staff. Simply download the software for free, create an account (you can even log in through Google), and Zoom enables you to host meetings of up to 100 people, with a 40-minute limit on group meetings. If you pay a small fee ($15–20/mo), you can gain access to other features such as custom URLs, 24-hour meeting limits, etc.

Simply press "Schedule Meeting" on the home screen of your app, select the guests you'd like to invite, and press "Send to recipients." It will then send all guests a Google Calendar invitation and, when they accept the invitation, an event will automatically populate the guests' Google Calendars with a link that will take them right to the meeting.

You can also choose to have Google Calendar send reminders to your guests before a meeting starts.

SLACK

Slack is a chat app that enables users to collect their messages into channels and teams (admin, marketing, sermon prep, worship team, etc). Slack syncs with popular productivity and documentary applications such as Google Suite, Asana, and many more.

Here's one example of how this works:

If I have Google Drive installed on my Slack application, then I can set it up so that any time someone makes an edit to one of my Google docs, I receive a notification about it in Slack. The same goes for Asana and

other productivity tools.

Slack's iOS and Android apps are highly functional, making it possible to send Slack push notifications to users whenever they receive a message or an update.

The real value of Slack is that it has better file-sharing and collaboration features, and its design is better optimized for team collaboration, than alternatives such as Gmail or iMessage. One of the enormous benefits of Slack is that it significantly increases the rate at which tasks can be resolved asynchronously.

In other words, the nature of remote work is such that schedules, tasks, and activities can become less coordinated. Slack solves this problem to a large degree. If you require your team to be accessible on Slack from 8:00–5:00, Wed–Sun, then you have the same access to your team as you would if you were in-person.

REMOTE WORK STRATEGIES

If you're interested in implementing remote work at your church for the long term, I recommend reading the book Remote: Office Not Required by the founders of Basecamp. You'll find a deep and engaging argument for a remote work model, as well as tips for optimizing a remote work setup for productivity, organizational health, and team building.

Here are some practical tips for orchestrating productivity in a remote work environment:

• Have a weekly team meeting.
• Schedule one-on-one's with key staff.
• Don't be afraid to make a phone call.
• Consider daily 15-minute video meetings to talk through tasks.
• Make all essential resources digitally accessible (e.g., Google Drive,

Dropbox, etc.).
- Use a project management system such as Asana (if you're not already).
- Make sure your team has what they need to get their job done.
- Clarify expectations with your team.
- Provide daily check-ins, goals, and tasks.

CONCLUSION

Use these tools and methods to successfully implement a remote work model in your church. During this time of emergency, it is essential to prioritize the physical health of your employees above the convenience of your on-site work model. Few organizations are thrilled to be thrust into a virtual environment by a pandemic. And yet, many are embracing remote work for the very same reason: The health of the public is worth sacrificing the circumstances which enable marginal productivity advantages.

It's time for your church to embrace this model for this season, especially since it is unclear when this crisis will be resolved.

With a remote work model, church leaders are still able to effectively lead their teams, properly attend to their flocks, and even grow their churches simply by choosing to adopt the digital media which constrain current workflows, but which place give your team tools which are designed to catalyze growth at scale.

Embrace this season of church life in which practices are mediated digitally. Trust that God will bless and care for your church during this time, as you take the proper precautions to protect your congregation from the spread of coronavirus in the church.

CORONAVIRUS AND VIRTUAL CHURCH
-
THE ULTIMATE GUIDE TO KEEPING CHURCH GOING DURING CRISIS

During the coronavirus outbreak, your church leadership team is left to figure out how to lead your congregation, how to continue the fellowship of believers, and how to continue ministering to your community in a safe and effective way.

There are certain ministry contexts in which physical gathering and physical touch are more common. Small group meetings are one of those kinds of gatherings. People hug, shake hands, share food, and pass germs.

• Should you cancel small group?
• Should you cancel church?
• Should you let people do whatever they want?

Here, we're going to unpack the basic tools and principles that will help you make the best decision for your church—one which maximizes your ministry impact and keeps your congregation as physically safe as possible.

VIRTUAL COMMUNITY TOOLS

Several tools exist which enable your church to produce a full and engaging virtual service through an online platform.

Here, we're going to unpack what those tools are, what kinds of churches would be best suited for each tool, and how your church can leverage their capabilities not only to survive during the coronavirus

outbreak but to thrive as well.

But first, it's important to note one tool that every church should be using for their virtual service: the church app.

That may sound insane, but church apps are widely misunderstood and misused. More than that, not all church apps are equal. When I say that your church should use a church app for your virtual service, I mean that you need a church app equipped with the necessary features to live-stream video and accommodate inter-personal messaging and tithing during the service.

For this, look no further than the Tithe.ly Church App. It can handle live-streaming. It has the most straightforward, easy to use, advanced and customizable giving solution among church apps. If you're looking for an all-in-one, best in class church app for a very low price, your first action should be to get a Tithe.ly Church App for your church here: get.tithe.ly/church-app.

FOR SMALLER GATHERINGS

If you have smaller gatherings, certain tools are better suited for your needs. The tools below serve smaller churches best, but they also have helpful applications in larger churches for their smaller events and gatherings.

ZOOM

Zoom is the best tool for organizing virtual video conference meetings among church staff. Simply download the software for free, create an account (you can even log in through Google), and Zoom enables you to host meetings of up to 100 people, with a 40-minute limit on group meetings. If you pay a small fee ($15–20/mo), you can gain access to other features such as custom URLs, 24-hour meeting limits, etc.

Simply press "Schedule Meeting" on the home screen of your app, select the guests you'd like to invite, and press "Send to recipients." It will then send all guests a Google Calendar invitation and, when they accept the invitation, an event will automatically populate the guests' Google Calendars with a link that will take them right to the meeting.

You can also choose to have Google Calendar send reminders to your guests before a meeting starts.

This technology would best serve the small group ministry and, on a very low budget for a small church, could be the video platform that a church uses to host its Sunday service. However, I recommend using a more involved live-streaming service for the service itself, as Zoom is not a live-streaming platform but a video chat platform. I'll survey those products more below.

CHRISTIAN WORLD MEDIA

Christian World Media is a fantastic live-streaming service for churches. Their team is highly dedicated to ministry. Our team has seen them work with churches to find a price point that works for them. Their commitment to serving churches permeates their business practices, and smaller churches would do well to use them to host their video live-streams.

FOR LARGER GATHERINGS

GOOGLE CHAT

Google recently announced that users who subscribe to their Education services now have free access to their advanced Google Hangout tools, which enables video hangouts of up to 250 people and live-streaming to up to 100,000 people.

Google Hangouts is a far inferior service to Zoom, but if you are trying to set up a live meeting with more than 250 people, it can handle your volume-related needs in a pinch.

YOUTUBE

YouTube is a fantastic tool to live-stream your Sunday service. We'll get to more advanced tools below, but if all your church is looking for is a video live-streaming tool, look no further than YouTube Live.
If you have a young YouTube channel, your best option is to live-stream your service with a webcam such as a Mevo Plus.

Once you have your camera setup plugged into your computer, all you need to do is follow these steps:

• Open up YouTube on your computer.
• Confirm that your channel is verified and that you have no live stream restrictions in the last 90 days.
• Click this icon in the top right corner of your screen:

• Click **Go Live.**
• At the top, select **Webcam.**
• Enter a title and description, and select a privacy setting. You can also schedule your live stream for a later date.
• Click More options > Advanced Settings for more settings.
• Click Save. Your camera will then take a thumbnail.
• Click **Go Live.**
• When you're done streaming, click End Stream at the bottom. All streams under 12 hours will be automatically archived. You can access previous, current, and upcoming streams in the **Live Tab.**

CHURCHSTREAMING.TV

ChurchStreaming.tv is a premium live-streaming service that would be a high price-point for smaller churches. However, they are currently offering 90 days free because of the coronavirus outbreak.

Their features include no contract, embeddable anywhere (including your church app), live support, viewer analytics, video replay, video trimming, audio extraction (so you can publish the audio to a live radio channel), and many more.

Due to their current pricing offer in light of coronavirus, this would be the best option for most churches who do not already have a live-streaming provider in place.

Virtual Ministry Practices

COMMUNICATE

Excellence, specificity, and brevity are critical elements of a successful communication plan when it comes to mobilizing your church or small group on a virtual platform.

Make sure that everyone is tuned into the right channels—whether that is a private email list, church app messaging group, a private Facebook group, or text messaging thread. Once you have communicated that information to everyone on the list, make sure to send all necessary communications through that channel.

INSTRUCT EVERYONE TO MUTE

During a virtual meeting, it's tempting to have everyone "unmuted" to foster participation. However, this can easily devolve into a cacophony. Instead of leaving it open, instruct participants to press "mute" at the

beginning of the meeting so that only the person speaking can be heard. This prevents distracting background noise from interrupting a participant who is sharing in the meeting.

SET A STRICT OUTLINE FOR THE MEETING

It's easy for virtual video chats to devolve into chaos with everyone speaking over each other. One way to mitigate against this is to set up rules for interacting. In a small group context, this would look like opening your meeting with a brief explanation of how people should conduct themselves on video calls, the structure of the meeting, and when it is appropriate to speak.

You may choose to include a time of personal sharing, during which it would be best to have prepared an ordered list of participants. Share that list with the participants, and during time blocks in which people "go around the circle" to share, the participants will simply follow the order of that list.

CONCLUSION

While the tone of the coronavirus conversation is panic, your church's conversion to a virtual model actually communicates significant confidence and competence. If a church is in panic, it may shut down all services and staff production immediately.

When you shift to a virtual church option, you communicate your team's continued commitment to the work of your church and your belief that this crisis is merely a season that will be resolved.

Set an example for your church of what it looks like to walk through this coronavirus scare in faith. They will be inspired by your continued church production work in the virtual space, and may perhaps even be prompted to switch to a safer virtual model in their own professional and social contexts.

HOW TO PREACH ON CORONAVIRUS:

-

7 OVERLOOKED SERMON WRITING PROMPTS FROM SCRIPTURE

All church leaders are tasked with shepherding their congregations through times of crisis. Pastor D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones famously continued preaching his entire sermon, even when the Nazis had bombed the roof off of his church mid-service.

During the coronavirus outbreak, church leaders responsible for preaching may want to help their congregations to think biblically about coronavirus, its potential threats, and the promises God makes to us in the midst of those threats.

Here, we're going to highlight multiple touchpoints in Scripture that speak to various aspects of the coronavirus outbreak. The point here is to give preachers creative, textual prompts from Scripture in order for them to begin strengthening their creative connection between the text of God's word and the threats of our world.

Let's get right into it.

1. FEAR

Many people have been spun into a paranoia about coronavirus by the media. Some of that fear is justified, and some of it produces excess anxiety that hurts more than it helps. As a preacher, you can address this coronavirus panic by appealing to God's words that address fear.

For example, God says in Isaiah: "Say to those with fearful hearts, 'Be strong, do not fear; your God will come, he will come with vengeance; with divine retribution he will come to save you' " (Isaiah 35:4).

Furthermore, Jesus says in Matthew: "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own" (Matthew 6:34).

Speak to the heart of fear. Call people to be sober-minded, attend to their daily lives, and practice preventative hygiene. Even for those who choose to self-quarantine, this decision does not need to be out of fear. Quite the opposite.

Taking the proper precautions expresses confidence that there is something preventative and protective to be done. As a church leader, aim to shepherd your congregation into a place of peace and confidence by the time the service ends.

2. FAITH

It's very easy to think a lot about fear, and not very much about faith. But Scripture calls us not only to be bold but to believe boldly in the midst of crisis: "Even though I walk through the darkest valley, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me" (Psalm 23:4).

The Apostle Paul wrestled deeply with untreatable illnesses in his life, and yet he reflects: "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38–39).

Whatever coronavirus can take from us, it can't take Christ from us. It can't take our salvation from us. And it certainly will not destroy God's church in this world.

3. HOSPITALITY

Paul writes to Titus that ordained church leaders "must be hospitable"

(Titus 1:8). This reflects very old divine wisdom, which began when God established physical hospitality laws for the strangers among Israel in order to protect them from the diseases of an ancient and nomadic lifestyle: "'When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not mistreat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself, for you were foreigners in Egypt. I am the LORD your God'" (Leviticus 19:33–34).

Jesus himself commands Christians to be hospitable, even more so when people are physically suffering:

"'For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me.' 'They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' 'He will reply, 'Truly I tell you, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' 'Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life'" (Matthew 25:42–46).

During this time of crisis, it may be tempting to self-isolate so much that Christian service becomes inconceivable. But there are ways you can participate in the Christian practice of hospitality without exposing yourself to risk.

For example, you can send people gift cards, food delivery credits on services such as DoorDash, or even do a last-minute grocery run for as many elderly people in your congregation as possible. Families with small children and the elderly in your church need to be served with physical provisions more than ever before. Coronavirus offers an opportunity to help those who are at-risk to survive.

4. SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Christians have a social responsibility in the midst of the coronavirus.

Retreating into a private community is not the best Christian response. First of all, the church is obligated to obey the laws of the government: "Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God" (Romans 13:1). Therefore, when the government makes recommendations or issues warnings, it is incumbent upon the church to treat these communications seriously.

Second, the way your church community conducts itself during the coronavirus outbreak will communicate either a lack of care for the community or it will communicate the care of Christ for the community: "In righteousness you will be established; You will be far from oppression, for you will not fear; And from terror, for it will not come near you" (Isaiah 54:14).

Act rightly. Serve others according to their needs. Prioritize the health and safety of all in your community's reach, not only those within your church: "Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a disgrace to any people" (Proverbs 14:34).

5. PLAGUE

It may not sound like the best idea to preach on plagues during the coronavirus, but it can be calming to your community to hear that God's people have survived plagues before. God is not inactive during the coronavirus scare. He is invested in his church. He is in control. When we ask him for protection, he hears us.

When the LORD sent his plague to Israel, he protected the people that took preventative measures: "Pick out a lamb or a young goat for your families, and kill the Passover animal. Take the branch of a hyssop plant, dip it in the blood which is in a bowl, and put some of the blood on the top and sides of the doorframes of your houses. No one may leave the house until morning. The Lord will go throughout Egypt to kill the Egyptians. When he sees the blood on the top and sides of the doorframe, he will pass over that doorway, and he will not let the

destroyer come into your home to kill you" (Exodus 12:21–23).

In other words, the Lord protected those who took preventative measures. This isn't a promise that those who wash their hands won't get coronavirus. But it shows that even in catastrophic circumstances, God honors preventative action.

6. PURIFICATION

God established purity laws in the Old Testament in order to protect his people from the diseases of exile and war in the Ancient Near East: "Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "Take the Levites from among the sons of Israel and cleanse them. Thus you shall do to them, for their cleansing: sprinkle purifying water on them, and let them use a razor over their whole body and wash their clothes, and they will be clean" (Numbers 8:5–7).

The Apostle Paul applies this purification principle not only to the spirit, but the body also: "Therefore, since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God" (2 Corinthians 7:1).

What's the message here? God cares about physical hygiene. More than we might think. God wants us around as long as possible so that he can use us. This does not guarantee we will not suffer catastrophe and death. But it does mean that God has already addressed the matter of physical hygiene, and we should practice that value because it's something God values.

7. PRAYER

Finally, God commands his people to pray: "Hear the supplications of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place; and when you hear, forgive" (2 Chronicles 6:21).

When Jesus prays for us, he does not pray that God would transport us into some perfectly safe place. He prays that amidst the danger, we would remain spiritually safe: "My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one" (John 17:15).

This directs our prayer life in the midst of the coronavirus scare in two ways. First, we must pray. If we aren't praying, we aren't fully engaging these difficult realities in a Christian way. Pray for safety. Pray for protection. Pray for healing. Pray for recovery.

Second, we must pray for spiritual protection. It is tempting during a pandemic to think that our only trial is physical, but spiritual warfare often raises its head during these events in order to knock us off balance spiritually. Following the example of Jesus, pray against this as well.

CONCLUSION

Use these themes as prompts for your sermon writing process. It's not necessary to touch on all of these points. One or two may fit better within your current sermon series. Use those themes which you think are most fitting to your congregation's needs and which would be most helpful as your congregants look to be shepherded through this season of anxiety and fear.

Teach them what it looks like to walk by faith in an age when all your congregation can see is fear. When you turn on the news, log on to the internet, or speak to a friend, coronavirus is most likely the subject at hand. Help your congregation to root themselves in God, to rest in his promises, and to practice preventative hygiene during this season.

THE TITHE.LY REMOTE CHURCH SYSTEM:
-
THE ONE-STOP CHURCH TECH SOLUTION FOR LIVE-STREAMING, GIVING, MANAGEMENT, AND CHURCH APP

We have never seen more people sign up for Tithe.ly than we have since the coronavirus outbreak.

That's because Tithe.ly's full suite of digital tools built just for churches can help your church to remain financially stable, physically healthy, and relationally engaged during this season.

If your church is desperately searching for a tech solution, look no further than Tithe.ly. We offer a full suite of tools that meet your every need so that you don't have to glue together 10 different pieces of software (Squarespace + Mailchimp, etc. etc.).

Check out our amazing package of tools that plug-and-play right into your church's current need to set up live-streaming and digital giving in minutes.

1. CHURCH GIVING

Tithe.ly Giving enables you to collect funds and deposit them in your bank account right away.

• 15,000 churches already trust Tithe.ly.
• No contract.
• No setup fee.
• Tithe.ly looks beautiful.
• Tithe.ly easily embeds on your website or church app for live-streaming and live-giving.

2. CHURCH APPS

The Tithe.ly Church App is like having a NASA mission control department in your pocket (but your grandma could use it).

- Tithe.ly is best-in-class (other builders copy us).
- Live-stream your service directly in the app.
- Recurring and spontaneous giving directly in the app.
- Sermon series automated updates.
- Church calendar.
- Events registration.
- Member-to-member messaging.

3. CHURCH MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

A Church Management System (ChMS) is critical for the church during the coronavirus outbreak. You can track attendance, giving, engagement, children's check-in, and much more with the ChMS. It's an analytics dashboard for the spiritual health of your church.

4. TITHE.LY SITES

Most website platforms aren't built for churches. What many churches end up doing is hacking Wordpress or Squarespace to meet their needs.

Introducing: Tithe.ly Sites. The first industry-grade website builder made just for churches:

- Automated setup (15 mins or less).
- Sermon player.
- Automatically updated church calendar.
- Beautiful templates, design customization features, and font pairings.
- Included hosting and SSL certificate.
- Built-in email communication tool.

5. TEXT MARKETING

Text marketing is one of the most important digital tools your church could have during the coronavirus outbreak. Only 15% of emails get opened, but over 97% of text messages get opened by their recipients.

- Send text messages to your entire congregation from your Tithe.ly dashboard.
- Enable users to subscribe to certain communications by texting keywords (i.e., "Prayer," "Coronavirus," etc.)

6. EVENT MANAGEMENT

Tithe.ly Events is the perfect tool to register your members for your online service. Imagine having the full power of a high-price scheduling tool built into your church management system, giving tool, and app.

- Event registration.
- Syncs with all other Tithe.ly products.
- Compare expected attendance with real participants.
- Collect data that syncs directly with Tithe.ly ChMS.

7. TITHE.LY ALL-IN

The Tithe.ly All-In package includes all of these services in one. This is the best option for churches that want to use all of these tools in coordination with one another.

CONCLUSION

Every church is different, but one of the common challenges they all face is the need to collect and monitor giving. Tithe.ly is flexible and customizable enough to fit into any denominational context.

Get started with online giving today. No wait. No hassle. No contracts: www.tithe.ly

GET STARTED

FOR FREE

IN 5 MINUTES

SIGN UP