



## How Churches Can Respond In the Wake of COVID-19

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### 1. It's time your people hear from you.

If you haven't already, issue a statement to your congregation and community about how your church will respond in light of this pandemic.

Here's a great example from [McClellan Bible Church](#).

Your statement needs to answer:

- How will we update everyone during this season?
- Will we continue to meet physically? At our regular times?
- What digital options will we offer for people who choose to stay at home?
- What are we doing to ensure everyone's safety and health on campus? If you say you're going to disinfect every room, nook and cranny, then please do it!

Email your response to everyone in your database, post it on your website (homepage) and social platforms, and also consider a [press release](#).

Remember these 4 C's when communicating on this issue: Confidence, Clarity, Consistency, Compassion.

### 2. It's time to let technology bring you closer to the people God called you to serve.

As more and more people choose to stay home in the coming weeks and months, churches should offer a live stream of their worship service.

Here's a guide to using [Facebook Live](#)

Here's a guide to using [Youtube Live](#)

Here's a helpful link if you're considering using [livestream.com](#)

Keep in mind that copyright issues will come into play if you choose to post any worship songs or media that is protected under copyright laws. Your CCLI agreement should have you covered, though: <https://us.ccli.com/ccli-news/five-questions/>

Some churches have already made the conscious decision to not gather for the foreseeable future.

[One such church](#) will offer virtual worship services at their regular times.

Remember that the Lord's Church is not a building, a service, or a program that you run. What God is doing at your church can never be contained to an hour of worship on the weekend. The truth is, if our church is only as strong as our Sunday morning gathering, that means we still have a lot of work to do!

Depending on your resources, you can execute virtual services by either prerecording everything and posting at set times or presenting live via one of the platforms listed above.

### **3. It's time to publish, not polish.**

It happened first thing Monday morning. A Communications Director called and said, "My pastor just came into my office and said, 'In light of the coronavirus, we have to start live-streaming this weekend.'"

He went on to explain that given their current set of tools and staff, the demand for "excellence" far outweighed their ability to execute at such a high-level.

Because it's highly likely that more people will access your church through your digital platforms during this season, it will be tempting for you to spend a lot of time (and money) polishing your content.

Let me encourage you that this is a time to **publish**, not **polish**!

Bottom line: You don't have to spend thousands of dollars to get people to engage with your content.

You may be wondering what equipment you need to pull off a live stream or post a live video of your pastor(s) on Youtube or Facebook.

Keep in mind that Lady Gaga's latest music video, Stupid Love, was shot entirely with an iPhone 11 Pro. You don't have to watch it to understand the fact that you've probably got most, if not all, of the tools you already need to do this!

Here's a low-cost production kit that includes a tripod and mic that will work with an iPhone: [Shure MV88 + Video Kit](#)

You may also want to pick up a cheap lighting solution to ensure your video isn't grainy or low quality.

Here's a cost-effective lighting [Ring](#) or [Kit](#) that will help your team look like pros!

#### **4. It's time to convert our digital platforms from channels of communication to environments of engagement.**

Most churches use digital platforms to inform people about what is happening. We want people to attend something, so we use our Website, Facebook, Instagram, and email lists to tell people what, when, and where.

In the absence of physical gatherings, one of the most critical pivots church leaders can make during this season is to measure engagement over attendance. To do that, our communications efforts during this season should inspire people as much, if not more than they inform people.

They need to see you in their scroll. What will stop the scrolling is an opportunity to participate!

As devastating as this new reality has become for many of us, a great opportunity awaits those who commit to being *present* on digital channels like never before. One of the most crucial elements to an effective digital response is to bring a pastoral presence to your digital environments. Consider assigning staff hours to engage digitally. Encourage your team to ask the kinds of questions that will engage and illicit a response from your community. Also, commit as a team to increase your response times to people who comment or send messages through your pages and posts.

In fact, this may be an opportune time for your Communications Director or Social Media Strategist to train your team on how to use social media effectively.

One of the best ways you can make the shift from channels to environments is by using a robust social media management tool. This will allow you to create an on-time delivery system for all your messages while giving you a dashboard to measure engagement on every post you make.

Here's a helpful article that compares two such pieces of software and how to use them effectively.

[Hootsuite vs. Sprout Social](#)

People not only need to know what's happening during this season, they need alternatives to physical participation. Because our churches are not just the sum total of what happens on weekends, ministry leaders need an effective way of extending a lifeline to those who depend on their services.

Consider creating virtual gatherings for auxiliary ministries using a video conferencing tool like [Zoom](#). The standard (free) version allows up to 100 people to join for 45-minutes per session. Our team at Slingshot Group has been using this tool for years as a way of keeping 60 associates connected to one other and the thousands of churches we serve across the country.

Bottom line: People need to see you in their social media scroll. What will stop their scroll is an invitation to participate and the opportunity to engage with you.

## **5. It's time to invite people to take their next step.**

Let's face it. Every church leader is concerned that people will fall through the cracks during this season of uncertainty.

However, I honestly believe this is a time for the Church to prevail! Some people are scared. Others are apathetic to this because it hasn't affected someone they know, yet.

There has never been a better time to align all your communication efforts across all your digital and traditional media platforms to share Christ in your community!

Be intentional during your physical and virtual gatherings with clear "calls to action" that encourage people to go deeper in community and grow spiritually.

- Invite people to opt into [SMS/Text](#) and [email campaigns](#).
- Consider challenging your people to a new Bible reading plan during this season via YouVersion.
- Consider using a service like RightNow Media to stream a library of Bible study videos to your people.
- Encourage digital giving. Here are three great platforms for churches [Pushpay](#), [Gyve](#), [Tithe.ly](#).

This is not a time for uncertainty from spiritual leadership. Fear is a powerfully destructive force that has unleashed havoc on the world's economy and people's everyday lives. Rather than acquiesce to the culture of fear, we should exercise an attitude of faith by encouraging and inviting people to take the next step in their journey. If anything, this reality has forced church leaders to think digitally in a way that we otherwise would have kept ignoring.

As fellow Slingshot Communications associate [Phil Bowdle](#) says, "Communication isn't someone's job. It's everyone's job. Everyone has a role to play. Jesus gave us a mission. Jesus gave us a message. Now, it's up to us to think like missionaries to the culture that God has placed us in so we can leverage the greatest opportunities we've ever had to communicate the message of Jesus."

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