

FIRST-PERSON: Coronavirus and your church

by Thom S. Rainer, posted Friday, March 06, 2020 (one month ago)



FRANKLIN, Tenn. (BP) -- At the time of this article, we really have no idea if coronavirus will become a pandemic or if we have it under control. Though I tend to be optimistic about it, there are certainly perspectives on both sides of this issue.

You who are leaders in churches, though, need to begin thinking about how your church should respond right now rather than later. By the way, I am grateful to the community of Church Answers. Many in our community are having very helpful conversations about this issue even as I write this article.

Though my suggestions are not comprehensive, I do think they provide solid guidelines to follow at this very moment.

-- Focus on prayer instead of panic. Remind your congregation that God is in control. Encourage them to pray for the cessation of the disease. Ask them to pray for the victims and their families. Encourage them to pray for the Gospel to go forth boldly in the midst of this trial.

-- Develop a communication plan. For example, if someone in your church or community is stricken with coronavirus, be prepared to respond. Will you

have services or not? If you do not have services, how long will this period be? How can people remain connected to your church?

-- Be prepared to offer digital worship services and Bible studies. If your church does not offer the streaming of services on the church website, Facebook live, or some other means, now is the time to move in that direction. Make certain you can have digital services even if you can't gather for a season.

-- Aggressively encourage people to use digital giving. If you can't gather and pass the offering plate or bucket, you need to be prepared to offer mechanisms for your members to give. You should be making this move regardless of coronavirus. It certainly helps giving when attendance is lower.

-- Develop a plan to help church members and community members. If the situation does worsen, there will be people in your area in need of help and in need of basic supplies. How will your church respond?

-- Consider current church practices that might be harmful for spreading coronavirus or other diseases. Though my bias against it is obvious, now is the time to consider bringing the traditional "meet and greet" to an end. In some of your churches, you might consider other changes. I was in a church a few years ago that shared a common cup. No way.

I remain more hopeful than panicked about coronavirus. Still, there is no reason for churches to be unprepared. Prepare for the worst and pray for the best.



iStock