



Using Technology to Prepare Your Church for Coronavirus (COVID-19)



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Churches across America are preparing for the possibility of a Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak in their communities. With many people avoiding large crowds and public places, it's vital to strategize and plan your response to a potential outbreak in your community, especially with Easter less than a month away.

What you should know

Begin by developing a health and safety plan based on the specific needs of your congregation. There's a lot of information on the COVID-19 virus being provided by global and national health organizations. A few that you may find helpful are:

- [Center for Disease Control](#)
- [World Health Organization](#)
- County or Local Health and Human Services Organizations

Next, determine how you can reach those who may be impacted or how you will manage your membership in the event you are unable to host services.

How technology can help

One of the most impactful ways to stay connected with your church during this time is by leveraging technology. Some software solutions for churches offer ways to notify members about disruptions or changes, run your ministry away from your desk, and even help people connect and participate remotely. Let's take an in-depth look at the ways your church can use software solutions to keep members aware of your plans and continue to engage with your ministry.

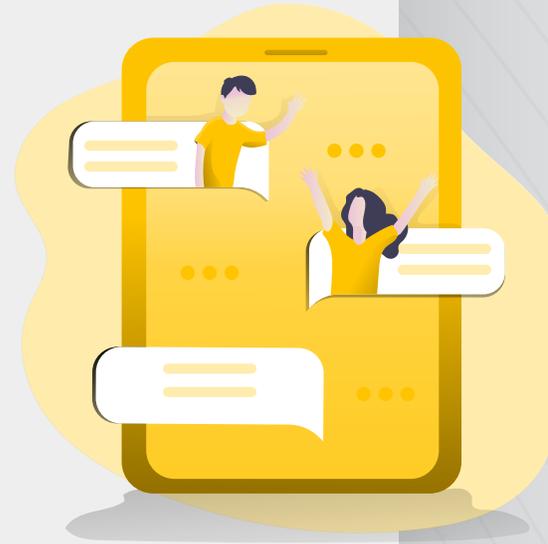
Streamline Communication to Everyone

During times of crisis, you will want to quickly communicate with your staff and members across all communications channels. Ensure you have both a technology platform and a plan in place to inform your members, volunteers, and staff of any updates or changes they need to be aware of, such as cancellation of services or updated policies. Many churches rely on email for this, but if you stop and think about how many emails go unread, you'll realize you need to communicate quickly and effectively through other channels.

5 reasons to go beyond email:

1. People spend up to 9 hours per day on their phones
2. The average person checks their phone 80x a day
3. 75% of people prefer to receive a text message over an email
4. 98% of text messages are opened
5. 99% of texts are read

Ideally, you will use a communication tool that allows you to send mass and targeted SMS texts, phone calls, and emails, plus one that integrates with church database systems, social media accounts, RSS feeds, panic buttons, and more. Getting this in place now prepares you to deliver a message that will get heard.



Are you set up to send out mass communications if you need to cancel or change an event? If not, we're ready to help. In an effort to keep ministry lines of communication open during the U.S. outbreak, we're offering churches mass communication tools free for 30 days. **Email us at CareTeam@ministrybrands.com to get started.**

[Email Us](mailto:CareTeam@ministrybrands.com)

Consider Providing Remote Working Opportunities

During weekdays, church staff should preemptively figure out how to accomplish as much of their jobs as possible remotely. Most church management and accounting platforms are cloud-based and documents can be shared through cloud-based applications like Dropbox. Put a plan in place that allows church staff to work from home during a potential shutdown.



Remote Work Best Practices: What to Do

- Schedule a check-in phone call or text around mid-morning to make sure your team has everything they need
- Use an efficient church management software that keeps everything flowing smoothly. Church management systems allow all tasks to be easily assigned, so your church staff can update their to-do list and you can stay in-the-know about their productivity

Remote Work Best Practices: What NOT to Do

- Schedule a long meeting during the day so you can make sure your team is working
- Constantly check up on your team through text messages, emails, phone calls, etc. to make sure they are staying on task. Trust your church staff to do what they say they will do

Start Live Streaming Church Services

Live streaming is an excellent outreach tool to keep the church connected for those avoiding or minimizing public contact, especially your senior population that may be isolated at home due to the threat of the virus. You can quickly set up streaming at your church. You can find tips for getting started and helping members and guests tune in below.

1. Choose how to capture video

There are many equipment options ranging from smartphones to high-dollar cameras. If you're on a tight timeline, it might be a good idea to use what you have on hand. Take a quick inventory of your church's audio and video equipment. Use what you have. If you don't have any sort of video camera, use a smartphone.

After you have chosen your camera, you'll need other accessories to go with your camera/camcorder such as:

- Tripod
- Microphone for your pastor if your camera allows it
- HDMI cable and HDMI extender (optional)
- Video switcher (if you plan to use multiple cameras or video feeds)
- A video capture card for their computer(necessary if using RTMP software to run video feed from external camera to computer)
- Any sound equipment you might need, such as microphones or soundboards

You can find each of these items sold online that meets the needs of whatever your budget may be. Our team is also standing by to help guide you through this process, so if you are lost and need more direction, reach out! We're here to help you.





2. Think through production

Video production, simply put, is the process of capturing the video content. In the case of live streaming church services, video production is simply thinking through overlays, switching cameras or views, titles, and additional details. If this is starting to feel overwhelming, a simple point and shoot will work just fine.

3. Connect your video feed

Decide how you're going to take the video that you've captured and convert it into a digital format to use for the live stream. There are lots of options out there, and all of them will work if you have the right live streaming service.

4. Broadcast your video

Lastly, decide where you are going to put your video so that people will see it. Live streaming to your church website is the first and most obvious choice, but it is a good idea to broadcast to other options as well. Other places might include Facebook Live, a Church App, like MinistryOne, Roku, Vimeo, or YouTube. The best choice is a place your congregation is already familiar with and actively using.

5. Make it easy for people who are less tech-savvy

The easiest way to facilitate the use of live streaming with older adults (who tend to be less technology savvy) is incorporating it into a platform they already use. The first place to start is with your church's website or app. This is a trusted place for seniors because they know you control it.

- Don't just put a link to your website in your church bulletin. On a weekly basis, email or text members a direct link to where your video stream exists on your website. That way, when they click the link, it will open up the video window for them to watch
- Send them a direct link to your church's Facebook or YouTube page. With an estimated 70% of older Americans already using social media to stay connected with family and friends, there's a good chance your congregants have already watched lots of videos there and are familiar with the platform
- Consider having some of your younger and more tech-savvy members connect with older congregants via FaceTime or email to walk them through how to call up a live stream, how to change the size of the video player, and how to change the volume



If you need support getting started quickly with live streaming, we're here to help. In an effort to empower as many churches as possible to keep services running smoothly, we're offering 2 free months of Church Streaming. **Email us at CareTeam@ministrybrands.com to get started.**

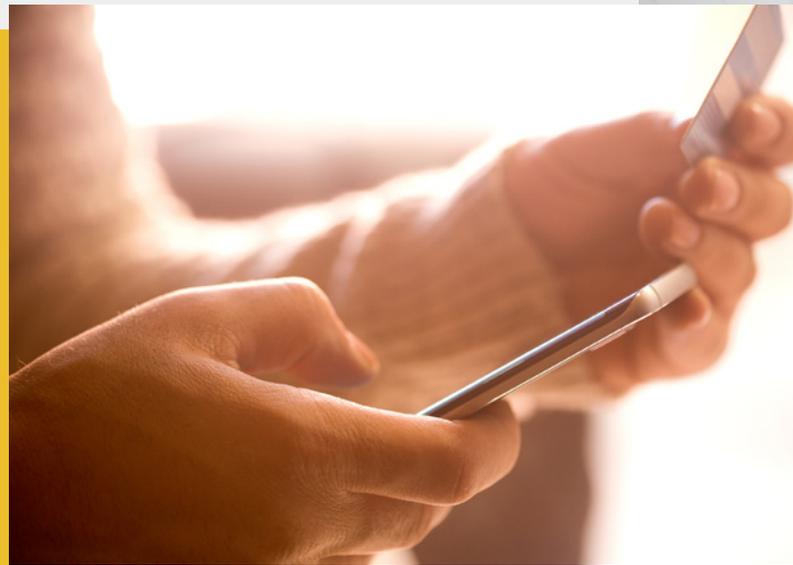
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Generosity is a key part of worship, but passing the plate is also a potential contamination point for the COVID-19 virus. If people aren't attending services due to virus fears, or services must be cancelled, the financial health of your church may be at stake.

When you anticipate fewer people attending services (or if you plan to cancel), make sure you're educating your church on the benefits and security of online giving. If you don't have online giving, now is a good time to add it into your contingency plan.

Here are a few tips to encourage congregants to give online:

- Share your giving options often via email, social media, on your church website, and other online places your church community hangs out (so people know they exist!)
- Include the link to your giving page when communicating and include step-by-step instructions on how to set up an account
- Use branded donation pages to promote a familiar giving experience, providing comfort to people that want to ensure they're giving to your church
- Adopt new giving options for people to donate using their phones (like mobile apps or text-to-give)
- For older generations, speak to the security measures your platform has in place, helping them understand there is minimal risk of fraud due to the high standards the payment card industry must achieve to facilitate online giving



While it's incredibly easy to set up an online giving account, have a plan to help older folks that want to give, but would like additional help. You can create a short video, or designate a staff member to communicate with them in real-time as they go through the process.

With online giving options in place and promoted often, you'll be able to engage 100% of your people in generosity, even when they're staying home.

Not offering text giving to your church yet? Let us know if we can help. We're offering free text giving to churches to support any disruptions ministries experience as a part of Coronavirus. Let us know if this is something your church could use. **Let us know if that's something your church could use by emailing CareTeam@ministrybrands.com.**

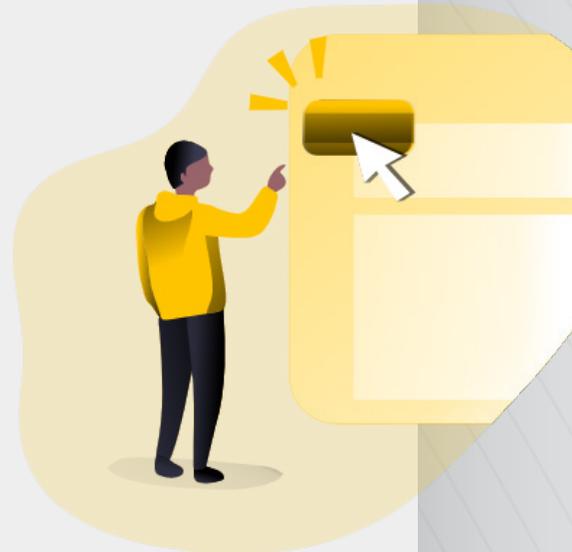
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Update your website and social accounts to keep people informed

Put your website to work

Your website will likely be the first place someone checks to see how your church is preparing for COVID-19 and whether the virus will impact weekly services. Here are some ideas to use as you update your website:

- Add an alert banner or pop-up message that links to your latest news regarding COVID-19 or upcoming services
- Create a landing page (or update your homepage) with the following:
 - Forced closures
 - Government resources (links to consider include [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](https://www.cdc.gov) and your local Department of Health)



- A link to your live stream
- Online giving instructions
- A video message from your pastor.

Check out College Park's [alert banner on their homepage](#) and the [informative landing page](#) they are updating as needed.

Not sure how to do this? Connect with your website team or provider to see what can be accomplished.



Share news on social media

Once your website changes are in place, or even before, post notices to your social media accounts letting those interested know how your church is preparing and what changes they might expect. Once your site is updated, link directly to your landing page.

Create video messages

If you want to put together a church video announcement from your pastor or another member of your team to add to your landing page, be sure to follow these best practices.

- Keep your video under two minutes
- Limit the number of announcements you have
- If you choose to add a bumper at the beginning, keep it short
- Speak to your target audience. Know who is in your congregation, and speak in ways that they will understand
- Share your video on your church website, social media platforms, and send it out as an email, too



Connect with a Church App

For some, the ideal tech solution during the COVID-19 outbreak is a church app because you can connect in so many different ways all in one place. Those avoiding crowds can still participate by submitting and responding to prayer requests, listening to sermons, donating, and reading push notifications with urgent announcements.

Those that attend service, but want to minimize touching common areas, have more control because they can register and pay for events, use remote child check-in, and perform other activities straight from their smartphone.

A Final Note

The COVID-19 outbreak creates unique challenges for churches. Reducing the spread of the virus, accommodating Easter, communicating urgent messages, and other factors must be considered as you create your contingency plan.

With church technology, you're equipped to communicate and connect with your congregation quickly wherever they are, on devices they take with them everywhere they go (even if it's just from their kitchen to their couch).

Ultimately, the mission of the Church is to share the love of Christ and the hope of the Gospel. If viruses can be slowed by changes that our houses of worship and faith communities make, then the Church is doing its part to protect its people and community. We're on standby, ready to help in whatever way we can. Email us at CareTeam@ministrybrands.com for access to free tech during this season of the Coronavirus.