



CATALYST CREATIVE

Coronavirus and the Church



Coronavirus and the Church

While the Coronavirus crisis has captivated the nation and created fear in our churches, we can and should respond in a calm and collected manner, providing clear next right steps for the people that call our church home. In these posts, Russ Cantu guides us how we can be prepared on-campus, through live-streaming services, through remote work and ministry, and online small groups.

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Coronavirus and the Church:

How to Best Prepare for the Inevitable

I know everyone has a “10 Ways to Stay Safe this Flu Season” article, but this is different. And for me, this is a lot more personal. My wife has Multiple Sclerosis, has been undergoing chemotherapy as her treatment for two years, and is immunocompromised. While people are picking sides on a virus, I am over here as a husband and caregiver helping our family navigate this as best as possible.

A few things to note:

1. Coronavirus mortality rate is 4%, compared to the flu with .1%.
2. There are not enough resources to test everyone adequately.
3. We have reached the community spread portion of the virus.

“What does it matter, Russ?”

For those who are young and in good shape, probably not much outside of becoming a well-informed individual. For those whose immune system may be compromised, who are over the age of 60, or infants, it could mean everything.

This is NOT about telling you what to do; it's about helping you mitigate risk and provide a healthier environment for your church.

We always have hand sanitizer on hand. We are adamant about using it, at Target, grocery stores, at home and at lacrosse games. We use it everywhere, because it's a simple way we can help reduce our risk. As a church, you can help others reduce their risk by providing hand sanitizer at every entrance to a building, classroom, venue, bathroom, or common area (I'm looking at you coffee carts).

We wipe down our house daily. We use name brand Lysol and Clorox now, as the EPA has labeled most off-brand as not being good enough to kill all germs and viruses. Yeah, costs go up, but the risks go down. Anytime we have people over, the door handles, bathroom handles, seating, etc ... get either sprayed or wiped down. It's weird to have a house smell like a hospital at time, but it helps reduce risk and that's important. If you wipe down classrooms after every use, not only are you helping reduce risk to the kids in your care, you are falling in line with the San Diego Unified School District and most of the school districts nationwide (Did you know: Costco gas in Carlsbad is wiping down each pump after every use?).

We sit outside more often than not. Proper ventilation and filtration is critical for helping contain the spread of airborne droplets. While the virus cannot be stopped by a common filter without a scrubber, most filters are able to catch droplets from coughs. And if you've ever attended church services, you know that's nearly non-stop right now. But we sit outside. We sit outside a lot. For us, it's an easier way for us to stay engaged in community while my wife's chemo does its job. If her immune

system is compromised in cycles, when it cycles closer to chemo, we choose open air as much as possible. Just a common cold can hurt, so this is how we reduce risk. Churches can help reduce risk here by providing proper ventilation inside, as well as an outside area that attendees can engage with the weekend content.

At North Coast Church, the common area between our largest venues serves as our go-to venue. No, it is NOT what North Coast would define as a venue (no host, worship, giving moment, etc ...), but we can see the TV inside the foyer through the glass, hear the message through the outdoor speakers, and stay warm near the firepits. No, it's not what most would consider their optimal listening environment, but we love it and it could easily be made into a formal venue environment if given the time and resources (there are roughly 50 or so who choose this every week with us, spread out between a dozen or so tables and three firepits).

On that note, it's pretty easy to take your church live online. If you want to offer another option for your church, you could easily stream via YouTube, use a church livestream for a more hosted experience (quite a few larger universities are doing this, like Berkeley and Stanford), or make sure your social media channels are updated immediately after a service with both video and audio content. The worst thing you could do is leave a person feeling disconnected, and in today's hyper-connected context, it's super simple to get online.

The best thing you can do is be proactive instead of reactive

While my advice is more descriptive than prescriptive, I have received three emails from pastors this week about the issue; I know this is something a lot of you are working through right now. If I could build down my list, I would start with the following three action items, outside of what your own internal risk assessment measures may be.

1. Place hand sanitizer at every entrance and common area.
2. Wipe down all surfaces after every use.
3. Provide proper ventilation and open air venues.

I hope this helps. If not, I hope it gives insight into where my family, and a lot of other families are at.

Coronavirus and the Church:

How to Take Your Church Online ... FAST!

Are you ready to move fully online, today?

If you read "Coronavirus and the Church: How to Best Prepare for the Inevitable", then you probably want to know how to take your church online as fast as possible. In this post, I will give you simple steps every church can use to take their church fully online, from weekend sermons to online giving, and even your midweek small group ministry.

Livestream Your Services

Talking your church online does not have to be an arduous task. You can get off the ground with a relatively low budget and volunteer load, and scale it to suit your needs. If you are looking for platforms that have high engagement rates, low volunteer loads, and minimal set-up, I highly recommend using [Facebook Live](#) and [YouTube Live](#). You can set them up in advance, create countdown, chat with your guests, and then save to the channel if you would like for future viewing purposes. If you are looking for a more hosted experience that more closely resembles a typical in-person service, then I would recommend using the [Church Online Platform](#). Created by [Lifechurch](#), Church Online gives you the ability to do everything YouTube and Facebook does, announcement slides, giving opportunities, moderated live chat and prayer, and simulated live viewing (pre-recorded services, but live on the platform). What you need to do now is decide if you want to favor high engagement and low volunteer or a higher volunteer load with a more hosted experience.

CHURCH LIVESTREAMS

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A PACKAGE	Cost Per Item	Quantity	Total
SlingStudio Hub	\$999	1	\$999
SlingStudio Link	\$349	2	\$698
SlingStudio Battery	\$149	1	\$149
SlingStudio USB Expander	\$49	1	\$49
Apple iPad 9.7" 7th Gen	\$309	1	\$309
Canon XA11	\$1299	2	\$2598
SanDisk 128GB Memory Card	\$49	2	\$98
Canon Battery	\$135	2	\$270
Camera HDMI	\$19	2	\$38
Tripod	\$307	2	\$614
Camera Control	\$89	2	\$178
		Total	\$6000

B PACKAGE				
SlingStudio Hub	\$999	1	\$999	
SlingStudio Link	\$349	2	\$698	
SlingStudio Battery	\$149	1	\$149	
SlingStudio USB Expander	\$49	1	\$49	
Apple iPad 9.7" 7th Gen	\$300	1	\$309	
Canon XF400	\$2499	2	\$4998	
SanDisk 128GB Memory Card	\$49	2	\$98	
Canon Battery	\$135	2	\$270	
Camera HDMI	\$19	2	\$38	
Tripod	\$307	2	\$614	
Camera Control	\$89	2	\$178	
		Total	\$8400	
ADD ONS				
Eartec Comm System 4 Person	\$815	1	\$815	
Equipment Storage	\$415	1	\$415	
Consulting, Installation, and Training			\$2000	
		Total	\$3230	

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Our friends at Crosspointe Church, a megachurch with locations in Orange and Ventura, Ca highly recommend using the service Restream.io for broadcasting recorded video content live to Facebook

Create a Weekend Strategy

Newbreak Church has taken this to a whole new level. As their guests walk through any one of their five campuses, they platform their Weekend Info webpage. This /info page highlights:

1. A description: How the page is expected to be used.
2. A primary call to action (CTA): The "Connect Card" button (communication card).
3. Buttons for their most important CTAs.
4. Inline giving button: Keeps givers on the website.
5. Global church events: Events that apply to every campus.
6. Current Series: Describes and links to the current sermon series.



[SEE THE WEEKEND PAGE](#)

Develop Recurring Givers

When someone gives to your church online, the very first welcome email with giving confirmation should include a statement that not only thanks them, but encourages them to become recurring givers. While my income ebbs and flows due to the creative nature of my context, the majority of your congregation has a set income on a monthly basis. This allows you implement a "set it and forget it" mentality, much like our family does with Amazon and our essential goods automatic orders. But especially during times like this, where fear and fact make it difficult for our guests to be regulars, we need to make it stupid simple for people to give, and give on a recurring basis.

Planning Center Online, Tithe.ly, Secure Give, and many other church giving solutions make it easy for people to do just that. One more thing that makes this simple: most wise church management systems either have an automatic email platform built in, or leverage an integration with services like [MailChimp](#). When you do this, it allows you to know who is giving, automate email sends to them contextually, and enables future campaigning.



Your Weekend Info

Use this page to find the sermon notes to follow along the message or fill out a connect card to update your information and let us know how we can pray for you. You can also click one of the buttons below to give online, find upcoming events, join a serving team or find a life group.

CONNECT CARD

GIVE

EVENTS

JOIN A TEAM

GROUPS

Take Your Groups Online

If we are all being crazy careful on our church campuses, then shouldn't we have that same standard for all the homes our groups meet in? The hard part here is obvious: not every home and community is equipped to host during a crisis. So why don't you take your groups online? I led a small group ministry that was fully online for over a decade (mostly using Zoom). We had hundreds of virtual small group leaders and thousands of group participants. Each participant would average nine to twelve months of commitment, and most would renew their commitment every year. Virtual groups are not only feasible, they're a reality we should implement during a crisis and one we should consider in a hyper mobile and remote world.

Listen to Local Authorities

Now is not a time to be a rebel. My wife is undergoing chemotherapy for her Multiple Sclerosis, I have family members that either have Asthma or are over sixty, and viruses don't give a rip about your feelings. Be as prepared as possible, protect your church and community, and take things online. Not only is it wise under the current Coronavirus context, it's wise because our culture is completely online.

The screenshot shows the website for the Office of Governor Gavin Newsom. The main article is titled "California Public Health Experts: Mass Gatherings Should be Postponed or Canceled Statewide to Slow the Spread of COVID-19", published on March 11, 2020. The article text includes: "State public health experts announce that gatherings with 250 people or more should be rescheduled or canceled. Smaller gatherings can proceed if organizers implement 6 feet of social distancing." It further states that Governor Newsom announced this policy on March 11, 2020, and that gatherings should be limited to no more than 250 people, with smaller events limited to 10 people. A quote from Governor Newsom says, "Changing our actions for a short period of time will save the life of one or more people you know." The article also defines a "gathering" as any event or convening that brings together people in a single room or single space at the same time. A sidebar on the right lists "Recent News" and "Archives" by month.

Coronavirus and the Church:

How to Lead Online Groups

Most churches are streaming services or asking their congregations to host watch parties in their homes over the weekend, but what are they doing for small groups?

After leading online small groups for over a decade, I have a little insight into how to coordinate and lead groups effectively. Not only can this meet a need during the Coronavirus crisis, it can open up new ministry opportunities for your church in a highly mobile and digitally-focused world.

Communicate with Your Church

During a crisis, the best thing you can do is communicate with your church. Communication has the power to bring people together in an informed context, while a lack of communication can leave people feeling disconnected and on their own.

1. Send out a weekly email to your entire database.
2. Explain what will happen for services, groups, and children.
3. Give updates on all your gatherings, including service projects.
4. Create clear CTAs (call to action) for every activity.
5. Record an explanation video that covers everything.

If you can communicate (or over-communicate) with your church, then you will have better engagement rates during the down time and help people feel like they are still a part of the whole.

If you are moving all your groups online during the downtime, then you need to explain the why, what, and how behind the decision. While most people will understand the why behind the decision, they may not understand the what and how. In this, you will need to create more explanation videos (I use CloudApp for this purpose) and walk them through every step below.

Decide on a Platform

After using every group platform available for over a decade, I fully stand behind Zoom. Their free plan is limited to 40 minutes, and their \$15 a month plan per host will cover unlimited users and time in meeting. If you are stressing about costs, I have that covered for you too. If you are a non-profit, the best way to find the best pricing option would be to submit a sales ticket and someone will reach out to them to discuss pricing options. They understand the situation, I have spoken with one of their commercial account executives about this, and they want to help you out. If Zoom is not your jam, Skype works well in a pinch.



Welcome Your Group Members

Once you communicate your groups strategy to your church, you need to prepare your pre-existing leaders for success. This goes beyond the basic Leader Tools you provide to your group leaders every week (Want to see what North Coast Church does for leaders?). One of the ways you can help accomplish this is by providing them a Welcome Email format to use when welcoming their group members into the online format. While your leaders are prepared to lead in a home or on campus in a room, the likelihood of them being ready for this is small. Help put them at ease and calm their group members by welcoming them in with all the pertinent information they will need to be prepared for their online meeting (homework), how to connect remotely (Zoom training video), and details about the meeting's format. Here is a sample welcome email that has been used by thousands of group leaders when welcoming members into their group, customized for context.

Hello [group member name],

Welcome to the [day and time] group. It is my hope and prayer that this group will be a big part in your development as a healthy Christian. There is no doubt that [series title and or sermon title] is essential to understand, as we wrap our heads around the Covid-19 crisis and move forward as faithful followers of Jesus. As a parent, husband, man and community leader, I know that this is a big deal, and one we can work through effectively as a small group.

Here is our small group homework [attach pdf or link to visit the homework online]. Please work through the content on your own time before we meet together. Be sure to watch the sermon from the weekend, as that is the best way you can prepare for our meeting. If you have any questions about the homework or the sermon, write them down on your phones and bring those question to our group when we meet this week.

While some of you have used online meetings rooms before, this may be a new experience for a lot of you. Because of this, I want to provide the meeting's format for you. That way when you log in, you will know what is going on and understand that this meeting will be intentional and respect your time. Here is what will happen during a typical online group meeting.

- We will start promptly at [time]. I will arrive in the room ten minutes early.
- I will open us up in a short word of prayer.
- We will take our time discussing the week's small group questions.
- Everyone will have an opportunity to engage the subject if they would like.
- Once we have discussed the questions, I will open it up for free talk for ten minutes.
- After the free talk, I will close us down in prayer, acknowledging your requests.
- The entire meeting will be sixty minutes from beginning to end. The first few minutes of every meeting may be a bit awkward, but that's only because people are still getting used to this. It may not be a home, but it can be a lot of fun once we get going.

I look forward to seeing you this week online. Stay safe. Keep your distance. And remain vigilant. There are a lot of at-risk people out there, and those who are healthy need to do their best not to get them sick. Online groups is one more way we can help.

- Russ Cantu

PS: I will be sending out weekly emails with our group homework and prayer requests.

Group Specifics You Need to Know

Every [day] from [time to time].

Download Zoom before our first meeting.

Click here [specific meeting URL] every time we meet, and it will take you directly to our meeting.

If you need to call in, please call this number: 555-555-5555.

Our meeting ID for this group is: xxx-xxx-xxxx.

Stay Connected During the Week

If we can engage our church on the weekends with streaming or watch parties, and if we can engage them on a weekday through online small groups, then the next biggest potential will be how to stay connected as a group on a daily basis. Guess what: most do not have the time or space to engage with others on a daily basis (I bet you were not expecting that). While I can fully get behind a text message group chat, Facebook messenger groups, and WhatsApp, the real truth is that most people are not connecting daily with their small groups. Between learning how to remote work, having their kids at home every day for a month, and the added pressure of learning a new thing, set your expectations in reality. People will only give so much before they break, so consider it a massive win if people can give you time and space for a weekend service and weekday online group.

Tips for an Effective Online Group Using Video

- Encourage your members to do their homework and come prepared with questions.
- Make sure your group knows that the group covenant still applies to online groups.
- Keep your meeting on track, focused on the format of the night and always ending on time.
- Make sure your chosen tool has been downloaded, installed, tested, and ready to go before your meeting.
- Use a high quality camera and pair it with bluetooth headphones (I use AirPods).
- Use a clean and well lit room to conduct your meeting.
- The less background noise the better, so close all your doors.
- When you are not talking, make sure you mute yourself.
- Never sit or stand in front of an open window or bright light, as it washes your video out and lays a shadow over you.

How to Rock a Home Office for Your Remote and Work from Home Reality

This post seems even more timely now with the Coronavirus crisis, as people are trying to figure out life right now, as we shift from in-office to remote work. Here's how I rock it, and how you can work from home effectively. I've been working remote for two decades now, having an office both on-site at a corporate location as well as one in my home, having an executive suite as well as a home office, or just having a home office that has the capabilities to host my clients. Here's how I have set up my home office as well as a few tips for you to start your remote work and work from home reality up for success.

Start Your Day off Like Any Other Day

Get up, take shower, and get dressed like you are going to work ... because you are. ["Here's some free advice if you never have. Start the day with a shower and then dress like you normally would for work. I love pajama pants too, but they're a breeding ground for depression. Flannel feels like failure by day 3."](#) Starting your day off like a normal day helps set your body off for success. We crave routine, and just like making your bed gives a simple success release of serotonin, setting a consistent morning routine enables you to focus on going to work as normal.

Let Your Office Reflect You

I have photos of my family, art prints from Ugmonk, and items that reflect who I am (like a collection of limited edition or small batch whiskey and bourbon and a wine cellar stocked with client gifts). But my office is also all business. While it has the creature comforts of home, everything in my office has been designed to keep me on track. If you lack the basic comfort of your office reflecting you, you will always feel out of place, even in your own home. So when I walk down the stairs and into my office, I know I have a space that is all me and all business. You need that space too.

Prepare Your Desk for Comfort

If you are going to be spending a lot of time at your desk, then you need to make it comfortable to sit (or stand) at for hours on end. I have dual 27" monitors hooked up to my 15" MacBook Pro that are raised to eye level for proper ergonomics, surround audio provided by Sonos, a sit and stand desk by Autonomous, and a chair that enables me to sit for up to four hours if needed by Tempur-Pedic (and sold at Staples, sometimes on sale). I raise and lower my desk every thirty to sixty minutes, walk around the office while on calls in an effort to increase blood-flow, and make sure I look around the room every hour so my eyes don't go bonkers looking at computer screens. Twice a day, I book out with my dog and take her on longer walks. It's good to get out of the house, and it makes her tired so I can relax after a long day working.

Know How to Best Communicate via Video and Audio

When working remote, you cannot expect your co-workers to communicate the same way as in-office. While using Slack as a communication tool helps with near instantaneous messages and Basecamp as a project management tool helps keep workers on track (make sure you read *Remote*, by Basecamp founder Jason Fries), things will be different while working from home. There are time and space constraints, new sounds and interruptions, and spaces being shared by kids who are most likely home from school during the workday. Here's how I set up my desk and office for communication with coworkers and clients.

- I use the Logitech Brio Webcam for video conferencing via Zoom.
- I use a Yeti Broadcaster setup for creating tutorials for clients via CloudApp.
- I use the Diva Ring Nebula Ring Light for front-lighting.
- I use a controllable light above my office chair that gives me the right amount of hair light.
- I use contrasting maple wood wainscoting and a blue hue paint for my background.
- The art that is in the frame for recording is non-reflective, to prevent video glare and mirroring.
- For basic calls with clients and coworkers, I have my desktop and phone paired with my AirPods.

Find a Schedule that Works for You

I know what I need to accomplish going into each week. Sometimes I block schedule, and other times I mark tasks off on a list. With my hyper-active brain, it's always up in the air as to what method I will be using. But I know myself and know how best to accomplish my work. If you use Basecamp like I do, then you know how to manage your projects on your own, with your team, or with clients. You can gantt if you'd like or take a glance at what's ahead, but you always know what is ahead, who a project is assigned to, and when it is due. Find out how you best work and cater your schedule to meet your needs. There's no need to be hard and fast to it, because people, projects, and circumstances shift. So expect there to come a time when you need to flex as well ... like now.

**Still have questions or need help?
Just click here to go to the site, click on my photo on
the screen and we can talk about it.**

It will take a while for all church groups to get online. But if we understand the implications of the Coronavirus, the importance of keeping community during isolation, and are prepared to provide a healthy solution, then we can see the needs of our people online in an effective way.

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