

What's Next?

COVID-19 EDITION

March 2020 Edition 2.0

Helping Church Leaders address the COVID-19 Era
Director - Strategic Counsel to Pastors and Church Boards

During times of crisis, good leaders keep an eye on certain performance metrics like giving, attendance, and budgets to monitor if we are doing well. Great leaders do that but they focus more on looking for opportunities to expand and respond to our congregation and people in the greater community.

There is a big difference in reacting to this crisis and responding to it. I would say all of us at first were reacting. As the situation settles, we can start responding. This resource is designed for senior leaders and boards to respond.

My friend and colleague Dave Travis has written an extremely helpful resource that offers information and guidance in our thinking about the near-term future as the church responds to COVID-19.

This is the first version, and I am sure it be updated. Please check back with me for updates. The content here is presented as discussion information, not legal information. I'm sure you will find the information here helpful as you make decisions related to the next steps as a result of COVID-19. Please don't hesitate to reach out to me with questions. I'm here to serve you during this challenging time.

Because we are both about His church, I am offering FREE calls with church staff teams and board members. To make it easy you can [access my calendar here](#) to schedule a call or email me at erik@generis.com.

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Introduction:

In late fall 2019 I released *What's Next? 2020* an update of a prior work to help Pastors, Staffs and Board members think about the future of their church in light of changes in the operating environment.

While I mentioned some wild cards in that work, I didn't predict the Corona Virus crisis. This combination of national concern around the illness combined with the economic near shutdown is the biggest "Black Swan" of our era.

This ebook was written and produced quickly in order to give Senior Pastors and Church Boards some common discussion resources to consider.

This is version 2.0 and is being updated frequently. Please email me for an updated version constantly.

It is presented as discussion information, not legal information.

The order of this book has changed a bit from earlier releases of the material.

One of our principals, Brad Leeper, has added a chapter on Generosity issues in this window.

My colleague Geoff Surratt also has a great mini chapter on church and video.

I am booking FREE calls with church staffs and board chairs to help them think out loud their own confusion. My current engaged clients have priority on that of course, but I am doing my best to accommodate those that desire it. I am presently only doing that with US based clients however.

To get on my calendar email me directly at Dave.Travis@Generis.com

Also my fellow colleagues at Generis have set up a hotline and direct coaching service to help in multiple areas during this crisis.

To access that information go directly to:

<https://sites.google.com/generis.com/covid19/home>

From Consumers to Co-Laborers: The Kairos Moment for Churches

Originally published March 23, 2020

My clients tend to be larger, evangelical churches. Many have been successful in the past two decades of gathering crowds, ministering to real needs, and organizing their ministry to serve large numbers of people.

The core of these ministries are groups of strong, passionate believers and disciples that serve Jesus with pure motives and deep devotion.

However, there is a second layer, often larger beyond the core that still act more like consumers of faith with sporadic attendance, less effort into their own spiritual growth, and tend to want their needs met spiritually with programs for their family members with perhaps an occasional act of service beyond the church.

Part of this is based on the tradeoffs leaders make by wanting to reach the largest number of people. By emphasizing larger, gathered groups we give the feeling of momentum and growth. And we know that many have grown spiritually through these forms. But our churches have unintentionally believed that this large crowd was a sign of success.

But the COVID-19 crisis of 2020 may be a great opportunity for churches to totally reset this situation. We have an opportunity to deepen those in both layers to disciple them to fullness in Christ. This is a Kairos moment more than a chronos moment. It is a hard-reset moment for churches.

Why? Because with shelter in place directives some will discover what they truly value in their life. They will dig deep to discover who they really are or in some cases, they aren't.

This is our opportunity to reset our ministries in a more sustainable way. This is true for individuals and the leaders in your church. Some will see they are not operating from their strength personally and choose to exit their current employer or role to find a new place that fits their own sense of who they are and what they value. My sense is that

many will realize that more material goods are not a help to happiness and will desire a simpler life and are willing to make the sacrifice to get there.

Some churches will have severe financial reversals with giving dropping significantly. This will force leaders to re-evaluate their church's ministry face and plan. Just as individuals reevaluate, the church as an organization has a great opportunity NOT to return to the plan that was in place before the crisis. In this Kairos moment it can reorient itself and its ministries. The opportunity is to move people from consumers to co-laborers.

Here is what we are talking about:

Success Redefinition – Both Personally and Corporately.

Each person who lives through the crisis will reevaluate what is most meaningful in their life. With the forced isolation, probably loss of income or livelihood for many, each of us will begin to get down to ground of what place Christ has in our lives and where our trust rests. As we move into May in the crisis, this is what we should be preaching and teaching in our online gatherings and communicating in various ways.

Corporately we will learn over the next few months how little the crowd means to nominal believers. The trials and tests will reveal the flaws in our past ways. It will lead churches to count those committed to deep discipleship and service and value that number more than the total crowd numbers. Churches will devise unique ways they measure that new number, hopefully not in just a check the box way but through ongoing conversations and tracking with individuals about their own sense of growth in Christ.

As we redefine success to not a gathered crowd but as an equipping and training organization for deployed disciples who serve their own circles of influence at their homes, work and networks we should be training how we deploy our resources to serve that end.

In 30 days, it will be a great time for your and your governing board to get serious about redefining success for your church as we are in and will begin the coming out process for the organization as it looks ahead. You can attempt to "return to normal" and many things need to do so. But the opportunity we have been given to rethink and re-strategize in a big way may not come again soon.

Simplification

Many of our churches have staff that minister primarily through weekend gatherings or in support of those activities. Some churches also have extensive menus of other programs with many layers of activity that must be supported by directors, pastors and administrative staff.

In many of our churches we are still supporting and maintaining programs that lost 80% of their effectiveness in prior seasons of our church's life. It may be time to seize the opportunity to coalesce a new vision for our people facing processes around some simpler pathways.

During this next season we are going to get very simple very fast as to what matters to serve those entrusted to us. Many churches will find some very simple tools and groupings that actually make a difference in the lives of people versus those that are nice extras and supplemental. Now could be the time to begin that reflection and thinking.

For those churches that have not been through this exercise in the last 3 years, this could mean some fundamental restructuring of our program.

Small Groups

The use of this term is not just to describe home meeting group or even a Bible class but rather a band of people that organize and function to encourage each other and live out the "one anotherness" of the New Testament.

It could be a home meeting group. It could be a weekly Bible class. This could be a service group, a deep discipleship group, a group as small as 3-4 that are committed to one another deeply. These are people that are committed to one another and to helping one another live out a deeper commitment to Christ. These will be the primary units that churches use for growth, ministry, service and mission. They will not focus on the leader or teacher but rather on each other and building each other up.

Some of this will well up within the hearts of people that have been cut off from many of their daytime coworkers. They will miss the camaraderie and casual ties they have developed. For many that live alone, Twenty-eight (28) percent of American

households, this has been one of the primary touch point places that beat back loneliness. Their needs for some relational contact will grow over this season.

There are ways to build on this momentum in the isolation season and coming out of that season if we will jump on it. Some of this will include new groups that are based around family groupings without age segregation. Some will be in smaller discipleship, life on life groups. The opportunities are ripe for rethinking and redefinition.

Sustaining Family Life

For households with children at home, about 40% of American households, family life is about to get a fundamental shift. During isolation weeks we are going to be together a lot. The key will be creating new rhythms and practices when we are used to going a half dozen directions every day.

This will create stress on top of the existing anxiety. For some marriages, it will reveal cracks and fissures long covered over by busyness.

Some preventative care can come through suggesting and guiding new patterns through our broadcast communication by providing resources and activities for families during this season.

But others will need some more intensive coaching and care through more intensive couple care. Consider assigning some staff and key volunteers to mentor and coach during this season via electronic means. Use the communication channels you have to say: "We know there can be trying seasons in your marriage now, we have this help available. Feel free to make a confidential call to....."

Servant Expression

This will be the key indicator during this crisis. Many will feel the calling not only to care for their fellow small group members but dedicate some of their time to serving others. I think people are wanting to find ways to serve others and be useful during this time more than the fear of being exposed.

It is where the church as a people will step up to be of meaningful in their expressions of care to those outside the faith in very practical ways. Some will be done through the

small groups as they unite to serve others. Some will be done in other channels through partnerships with schools, other non-profits and even governmental projects.

Smart leaders will learn to commission and bless these servants not oppose or try to control them. With a little encouragement, these groups and individuals will create ways to bless and serve beyond the leader's imagination.

Begin now to seed creative thinking among your people and ask them to sign up for special training, brainstorm and thinking sessions where they can create, own, fund and amplify their personal ministry.

Leaders may want to consider conversations with some restaurants which will suffer greatly, to provide some bulk purchases of meals to distribute to those who will be suffering in the coming days. These can be picked up and delivered with proper caution and guidelines.

Streamlined Development

One cannot short cut discipleship but we can streamline some development of others. As people begin to reevaluate their own lives and callings either vocationally or in their lifestyle, this is the time to step into that conversation with them.

Try in your communication channels: Some of you are considering what God is calling you to do in the future. Some of that is vocation and some of that is in your own walk with God. If you would like to join a group of three or four people also working through these issues, pastor x will be working online with several small groups in this way. Please email or text him at (number and email.)

This would be time well spent through investing in these lives.

Additionally, we must rethink our disciple development at all levels to equip people to meaningfully minister to other people through what God has gifted to them and not try to make them all the same. To do this we must help them evaluate their own gifts, strengths and callings and help them strengthen those that are already in them by giving them just-in-time skills in areas where they feel ill equipped.

Reset, Reframe, Relaunch

[This was originally published as the Fourth Guidance Note...Just as a reminder – MOST of my clients and churches I have served in the past 25 years have been large, evangelical churches and this guidance is targeted mostly for them. It is not that smaller churches cannot benefit from this, but that it is specifically written with larger churches with larger staffs in mind.]

The clearest statement I can make right now is: This changes everything.

The impacts of the COVID 19 Corona Crisis will be felt for many years. Church leaders need to understand the impacts and be ready to respond and lead in this time of crisis.

This paper will focus more on action and administrative guidance. It includes some projections and ideas that will help you think creatively about the future.

The opportunities for churches are great and strategic. They can seem overwhelming which is why FOCUS is needed. This can not only be our greatest hour of mission and ministry but our biggest opportunity for change.

We need to Reset many things, Reframe much of our ministry and then ReLaunch into the new day.

Often when I am working with a church in a change process I use William Bridges change thinking and we speak about healthy endings, productive neutral zones and new beginnings. We need to think similarly in this stage. We will be helping people process some endings while we are engaged in this neutral zone. This neutral zone will involve some experimentation that leads to new beginnings.

This paper is written with US churches in mind as some countries will experience different factors.

Below are some of the areas that you, your team and your board and lay leaders need to be discussing:

The illness itself

The headlines are just starting

- We will see more deaths and more physical suffering. While not projected to be at the scale of 1918 pandemics, we will see more people losing their life during the next six months that will be attributable to the illness.
- Unlike the flu, which many are comparing this to, the deaths will be more compacted in a shorter time frame and will seem to be magnified due to the timing.
- The shelter in place, quarantine measures will be longer than many believe and could reoccur in the coming year as well until treatment methods, capacities for care and vaccines are created and tested. Government leaders are giving mixed messages but it could be July/August before coming out of isolation practices.
- Government officials have learned in the past week how stringent they must be in insisting with legal and other means to help with social distancing and enforcement parameters on those that continue to disregard the guidance.
- As some government officials will want to encourage a quicker re-opening, they may be shocked by the degree that people will discourage those practices, especially if COVID admissions continue to rise and deaths rise.
- While a few countries will be spared harsher distancing rules, we must remember that we live in a highly mobile culture where many people travel for work regularly, we may be subject to stricter rules.
- There will also be some regional variation in open/close/distancing rules as some areas of the country will be harder hit. But we are in a very mobile society and other countries with similar mobility have been hit hard.

While this is a long-term concern of all freedom loving people globally, this will be welcomed by the masses of people who want to be as safe as they can be from the transmission of the virus.

Business/Economy

Some will fault me for not beginning with spiritual things, but let me first set the stage.

- The best estimates from reliable sources are planning for 20-30% loss of GDP in 2020. A lost quarter of economic activity on the whole. This means loss of jobs, corresponding income from those jobs. We may see the economy begin to rebound towards the end of the year. But this will not be enough to save many companies, small businesses, jobs and nonprofit organizations.

- This loss of economic activity will hit hard those most vulnerable, especially the working poor and working-class people. But they will also hit others across all sectors as economic activity declines. No one really escapes during this sort of situation.
- This is especially true in services such as restaurants, hospitality, sporting industries and related, the oil related industries, manufacturing of non-essential durable goods, among a host of other industries. Much of retail has shut down and moved online but dropped at the same time.
- (P.S. – We currently program most of our churches for white collar, professional types instead of working class and working poor. How? The hours of our services, even our gathering times.)
- The question will be when does the economy begin to lift? The governments are pouring money at the situation but there is only so much they can do. Restoration of “normalcy” could be a long way off.
- There are several sectors of the economy that will be impacted more than others in a negative way. A few will be impacted in a positive way. Many grocery, drug stores, some warehousing and Amazon are hiring to meet demands.

The above factors are mentioned because this is a totally discontinuous situation from earlier in the year. In most projections and conversations in the past 6 months, we expected most of the economic sectors to be growing slowly, not declining precipitously.

Households

A few things to realize about the households in your community and church.

- Almost 36 million Americans live in a single person household. If they are working, that is the only income. If they are on a pension, social security or living on investments, that is the only income.
- Social isolation is a real thing and leads to frequent depression. We will find new openness in this season for this reason. As many singles have been some of the hardest groups to reach by faith communities we may have an opportunity if we think creatively.
- For those that are married, many are dual income. But the loss of one of those incomes could be very debilitating for a family. The loss of both could be catastrophic.
- It is true that many families lack access to any emergency funds. It is also true that the average “savings account” is above \$8000. What causes this discrepancy? Those with lots of savings tend to move the averages up. Younger

people and families have lower savings balances. However, very few will have enough savings to cover their current expenditures for long.

- Many who did have retirement plans and retirement investments will also be hit hard by the downturn. “My 401 K has become a 101K (or less)!”
- Those that derive income from investments, rents and other sources other than employment will also be hit hard.
- As in the last recession we will see a growth of multigenerational households over time.

The good news is that:

- Some household expenses will drop as people are staying home, not buying restaurant meals, entertainment, and other retail. It won't be enough to make up for lost wages and income but will be a shock absorber.
- About 30% of Americans will realize they can work mostly from home and will be continue to be paid something even if not their full wage. Some household income will be uninterrupted including those with social security and stable pensions.
- While there will be much economic dislocation, it will be uneven with some hanging in there during this season. Thriving economically will be another matter though. Look for many to simplify, reduce expenditures and be very frugal.

Social/Lifestyle

We are talking about a redefinition of public gatherings, public spaces and community wide events.

- Will the American addition to sports end? There is already major disruption. And when college and pro sports come back will they allow fans in the first months? These traditional gatherings of large groups could end. Add to that youth sports, other involvements of today's younger generations and it appears that major sectors of this part of society will be disrupted.
- Some dining establishments and community gathering spaces will be lost, and others will cut seating capacities. What does this mean for these third spaces?
- While some gyms and facilities remain open now, how many will close due to economic and social distancing reasons? And what does that mean for those that are employed in and those that use these spaces?
- On the plus side as many more people begin to walk their neighborhoods, practicing healthy distancing, will they meet new neighbors and friends and begin foundational relationships?

- Which activities – think golf, biking, fishing, hiking, bocce ball? And others could experience a resurgence in the current crisis?
- Theaters and those businesses will suffer. Some larger multiplexes may be able to survive because they have a collection of various size spaces. (similar to trends in churches with multiple size venues.) But those smaller theaters will now become available for use, rental and repurposing.
- Many restaurants and retail stores are trying to use drive through, pickup and delivery to survive. How will these ideas influence us as a church beyond “drive-in church?”

“When things get back to normal?”

That may not be anytime soon. If you define normal as the way we did it through February 2020, then we may never get back there.

Those that thrive will be thinking more like – What can be the new normal that is sustainable for the next season of uncertainty.

Some of the worst-case scenarios are waves of the virus peaking over next 18-month season before good vaccines help reduce the widespread impacts we are seeing now.

A few longer-term potentialities to consider:

- We may get back to “normal gatherings” but people may fear gathering in larger groups. How will we structure our gatherings?

Will we be able to shift much of our ministry to smaller venues and multiple gatherings?

How important is the “platform show” in light of this season and what follows?

You may not need your total plan there yet, but I would think that way.

- We may see younger people who have flocked more to city centers move back towards suburbs and exurbs and more rural spaces. What does this mean for our ministry?
- How will all of these concerns impact kids, youth and other ministry spaces and willingness of parents to encourage participation?

On the plus side:

Let us remember the 1918 flu pandemic, the closest historical comparison, which happened while a World War was underway, had a tremendous decade that followed.

The “Roaring 20s” was a time of great financial expansion as well as church revival and church construction. Several significant religious movements came to the fore in this period. The Student Missions movement was one of them.

Those new movements and practices looked different from the prior generation and seasons. This could happen again but there is no guarantee it will happen.

Counsel for Executive Teams and Governing Boards

We have seen lots of creativity so far and I expect to see much more as churches adapt to this relatively short season in light of eternity. It will seem very long though in the shorter term. We have to think REFRAME our ministry now to RELAUNCH when the new day comes.

- In the past I encouraged churches to have 3-6 months of operating reserve. Here’s the good news and bad news. The longer your reserves would last the better you are at keeping afloat. The bad news is that seeming reserve will also mislead you into thinking we should carry on just as we have been. Instead I would look at this season as a time to reframe, reset and relaunch.
- Our firm has many resources to help you encourage the generosity of your people, but it will not be normalized in the next few months. (see Generis.com/)
- Now is the time for the productive neutral zone with experimentation that can lead to those relaunches and new beginnings. But it will be a painful season of endings first.

Let me first describe some staff engagements and wellness:

- Your staff should continue meeting on a regular basis by electronic means. In fact some teams should meet more frequently.
- This is a good opportunity to have multiple book studies/lunch discussions using online meetings.

- With a large staff I would have small group meetings with the pastor/executive team over virtual lunch for check in and conversation.
- Adjust the working hours to fit conditions for your neutral zone (now) and lean into what that might look like for the future. Example: If all the gatherings of their ministries get moved to evening hours, what does that look like for “regular hours” for many of these.
- Keeping staff whole, spiritually refreshed even during this intense time is critical. How will you encourage and monitor their pace rhythms?

What this means for ministry:

- We are now in a social recession and could be in a social depression due to shelter in place guidelines.
- As mentioned in the prior paper as well, people will get down to what they really value in life. Are we prepared to help them find that meaning in Christ? Will their needs for true relationships lead to a relational resurgence we can support?
- For many believers and non-believers the hunger for true community will be high. How will you serve that NOW, not just waiting for later? How will you build on that hunger to offer what would really matter in their life? If you think your former program was getting it done, great. But if it wasn't, NOW is the time to be repositioning and retraining people towards that next reality.
- My own guess is that when public gatherings come back on stream it will be on a phased basis with smaller groupings for several weeks, gradually moving back to larger group sizes. Do you have a plan for this possibility? What would that look like for your fellowship? How would you encourage and incentivize congregants? What does that do for children and youth as well?
Fortunately, many of you are already figuring some of that out with smaller online groups and meetings as we go here.
- As mentioned in my previous paper, From Consumers to Co-Laborers, we will need to think about smaller groups, teams and streamlining much of our public facing program. Start that thinking now. What is essential? What is not for carrying our mission forward?
- As worship music and elements have moved online, we will learn what people value in that arena. I am not saying people don't value a great crowd and high energy worship experience. I am saying the majority of the people see that as

“icing on the cake” not necessity. We have invested much in the former in recent decades and we will find in this new era a different reality.

- Sadly, many churches have little financial margin and some will be going under or pushed to the brink. This opens up opportunities for larger churches to help. Some of that will be fostering those churches and nurturing them back to health. Some of that will be multisite mergers and rapid moves to make that happen to preserve property and the engagement of the struggling church participants.
- There is a move to reinforce the charitable tax deduction provisions, including some pastors arguing for a double deduction in 2020. This would help those able and willing to give to keep some churches afloat. (As of March 26 it looks like an additional deduction will be in place, though not a double deduction.)
- Pray for Revival and for God to move in the hearts of people. The doors to evangelistic outreach are white unto harvest but our same modes and methods may be inadequate. As people lose loved ones and friends in this season of sickness, how can we speak to them meaningfully to invite them to face their questions?
- As mentioned in the previous paper – many will want to commit to marriage. How can we use this season to reach and disciple those in a pre-marriage process that helps them understand the truths of God’s plan for their lives through marriage?
- Some will get pregnant during this season as they are home much more. How will we prepare for the next year of “bonus babies” that will roll through our communities and ministries for the next 20 years due to this season?
- Sadly, some will have marital stress, addictions and other issues that come to the fore. How can we reach out to them now and create systems of care and concern? This is one of the realities we must face.
- As people have community needs both within our fellowship and outside how do we make our members and small groups the focal point of helping meet those needs right in their neighborhood FIRST? And then provide some potential back up plans and systems once the small group’s and individuals resources are tapped out?

This is a marvelous way for small groups to step into people's lives – both inside their group and in their circles – to meet needs first at those levels. Empower your groups to do this. Bless them for doing it. Hold them up as examples.

- How do we emphasize generosity not just towards the church but towards our neighbors, co-workers and others? Secondly how do we continue to support our churches at a high level so we can continue to thrive now and in the future? Generis is developing many resources here so watch Generis.com and click in for more help there.
- How can we do pastoral care and chaplaincy when we can't be in the same room with people? This may be the new reality for many months.
- We are clearly figuring out we may not need all this office space that we thought we did. What is the best way to repurpose that space? How can we build practices and policies to create other work environments that are collaborative but also cut down on real estate?
- We are discovering that we don't need as much paper flying around either. (and I love paper more than digital.) It still needs good design but we may not need it printed anymore or will learn to deal with lack of printing.
- As you will see in the next section – I would have governing boards reviewing staff policies right now and making immediate changes if necessary.

These are all starter questions that you need to gather up your staff, key leaders and elders to discuss, debate, create, build and align in this season.

Some hard decisions ahead

Now comes some hard words. Based on conversations I am having with clients and leaders now, here are some of the things staring at us and scaring us.

Smart leaders will both engage and lean in with their board to make some of the hard decisions ahead. I would encourage you to be meeting with that group on a very regular basis via electronic means. Make sure they know the full picture and are fully engaged and prominent in the decisions made.

As large churches have built larger staffs, they are going to have to reevaluate every position in light of the new day. Secondly we will evaluate our key staff people in light

of what we will need for the future. That sounds very unfair to those hired in the past few years. They were hired to do a specialty role and now we are asking them to be great at serving larger groups of volunteers and be more generalists.

- How do we pare our financial resources going out the door? By the end of next week, (end of March 2020), a good administrator/team will know which expenses won't happen for the next few months or that can be delayed. The lack of onsite meeting, reducing facilities maintenance and utilities, etc. will help some.
- I would commend financial leaders – such as Business Administrators, Executive Pastors – to begin to model what 20,30,40, 50% revenue shortfalls would mean to the ministry. They should also model some of the expense declines. Then they should lay out the levers that can be adjusted, pulled and managed in the near-term future.
- If the church has a high debt or balloon notes coming due in the next 12 months, engage the lending agencies and start negotiations. If they decline, begin conversations with other lenders to establish relationships and begin to discuss the situation. It must be remembered that the last recession took out some major church lenders and now others have entered the field.
- How will we rebuild our financial structures in the future that set aside funds for opportunities like this and others that will come in the future?

Further Staff Adjustments

- As of this writing, March 26th, it appears that the Federal government will have some method of loans, through banks, to churches for some payroll purposes. That is not final and this is not legal guidance. Reporting suggests that some of those loans could also be forgivable. (Which means the government will reimburse the bank) Some churches will have to decide whether this is acceptable or amounts to government intrusion. The exercises below will prepare you either way.
- Knowing that in many cases staff compensation is 50% or more of total financial outlays, it means that staffs will change in light of new financial realities.

- Then you are often getting to programs and staff. Which programs will we cut due to finances? What is our grid for having those discussions? In other words, how will we choose? You don't have to make the decisions now, but know HOW you will make those decisions.

- How can we be fair, generous and faithful stewards as we lead our staff in the coming weeks knowing that some of this will mean ending their tenure with us? How can we have fair process, generous compensation policies in light of our current seasons?

- A few words on staffs and what I am seeing in churches: (But reexamine these decisions once the governmental aid questions are finalized.)
 - Many special contractor roles are being cut for now, but could be added back later.
 - I see some executive teams taking pay cuts now often across the board percentages.
 - The next step is across the board cuts on a percentage basis. I understand this is very hard on many staff members. Now with many legal issues as well, there are limits.
 - Some are willing to work without pay for a season if they can keep their benefits, but make sure that is allowed in your state.
 - The step beyond that is a furloughed basis. In other words, we want you back at some point but right now, we can't pay and don't expect you to work.
 - The round beyond that is layoffs. There are going to be some stipulations on those under the new law just passed that could impact your church however.
 - For those that are ill, there are provisions in the new law that require a few weeks of paid leave to be given to them. There are also Family Medical Leave provisions that must be considered.
 - There is the potential of some Federal help here for churches but I consider it fairly remote. However, a church's nonprofit arm such as a school or community development corporation may be eligible.
 - For help with those issues please contact me and let me connect you to someone more qualified to help you process the hardest of the ideas.

- For staff that stay, we keep and ride it out with us:
 - Your job role and responsibilities will probably change dramatically.
 - Some of you will be fine with those changes but they will all bring stress as we figure out new ways to work and have to do it quickly.

- We will value those that identify, coach and resource other leaders more than those that do individual ministry BUT we also need all hands-on war time footing also doing personal ministry on top of the coaching and leading.

Those are just some of the realities involved in the process of Reset, Reframe and ReLaunch into the next season.

I am working with a few clients now to think through these issues and build tools and resources to help you in these areas.

To set up a call (Free!) just email me at Dave.Travis@generis.com and let's figure it out together.

Late March Guidance

This What's Next COVID 2.0 release takes some of the prior information I released and updates it for the current conditions.

Instead of discussion it outlines clear realities and some action steps.

1. Timing and Planning

Unless things radically change, we are looking at least 45 more days of increased distancing and isolation.

On the plus side this gives us a planning window.

As in prior guidance through March focus on reducing anxiety.

Use April for a clear season around Easter and the New Life found in Christ.

Use May for a different focus.

Sketch our June just in case.

2. COVID MINISTRY

Make a plan for how you will minister to those with COVID 19. Many pastors are already wrestling with this. With distancing rules for the past several weeks the concern will not be contacting those they could have also infected. Think phone, video, care packages delivered.

Many will get it and recover and then be mostly immune we think. As their health is restored help them be encouragers to others that come behind.

3. Change Your Mindset

When our community is in a state of fear and uncertainty, this should be seen as a great opportunity for ministry rather than a crisis to be feared. We have a marvelous opportunity to speak in terms of our hope and confidence in God through this season. Those that address the issues in reality but make a plan to hold up how the Gospel permeates our behaviors, ministries, and hope in Christ alone will prosper. Fear is mostly a psychological, emotional, and spiritual battle and you have the opportunity to offer comfort to your community.

4. Seek Facts

First realize that while there is hype and there is truth to the general concern, most of the fear can be overplayed. It is important to seek accuracy over quick information. Sources such as [CDC](#) and [WHO](#) should be your ultimate source for facts. It is important to not share inaccurate information and unconsciously spread misinformation. Stick with the facts and follow the direction of experts and leadership.

5. Economic Impacts to Consider

We are all pretty convinced of this now. These could be the longest-term impact.

In these times of economic distress, members of your community may seek assistance and support from their local church. Counselors, support groups, and benevolence are all opportunities for you to be a resource.

Know your community partners who are in the field. Great churches already have good partners but if you don't, start now. They will welcome your engagement with them.

This could also be an opportunity to establish a crisis needs fund. Many will be out of work and miss paychecks, students who rely on school programs for meals will go without, and while we don't encourage multiple giving channels on a regular basis, if the purpose is wide enough, it could attract special gifts to serve the needs of a wide range of people in crisis.

6. Take Precautions To Protect the Vulnerable

Several churches are setting up task forces with medical professionals to announce slight changes. This is an example of a "Short Term Activated Team." These types of action steps ensure your congregation is informed and shows them you are being proactive.

7. Go Digital

This is also an opportunity to expand your online efforts. Many will use simple streaming tactics but this is also an opportunity to pilot multiple online, digital communication strategies that keep people connected and encouraged. This first starts in worship streaming. [Check out this article from Portable Church featuring livestream kits.](#)

An alternative to investing in livestream equipment would be to partner with another local church who does have the livestream capabilities. You can instead use those funds to serve your neighbors who will be facing economic hardship in this time.

Be willing to go simple, spare and from a table. DON'T OVERPRODUCE. This is not a worship live stream but a new era of relational connection via video.

But livestreaming is only the start. Work with an online platform that allows you to engage people in real time.

Do multiple worship hours and have a way you are connecting people and to people at each worship hour digitally.

If possible, develop a call in prayer line that goes along with your digital broadcast. Have digital handouts and forms and tell audiences how to access.

Encourage people to get on your email list.

Encourage your people to share and do watch parties.

8. Tap into your Small Groups

This is the time for small groups to shine and they can figure out the google hangouts, zoom calls and other methods quickly.

Encourage them to meet MORE frequently than normal.

Give the leaders some slide decks to do some all church announcements as well including encouragement towards stewardship.

9. Giving

During times of crisis, giving is undoubtedly affected. Use this as an opportunity to increase regularity in congregant's stewardship.

"Our ministries continue and our missionaries still need support through this season of irregular meeting. We are still in need of loyal stewards who will walk with us through thick and thin."

Your church may already be using online giving, this is a great time to remind your church how easy it is to set up and use. Prepare an easy step-by-step guide for utilizing your online giving as well as setting up recurring giving and include it in your communications.

10. Ministry Through Congregants

This is a great opportunity to get your congregants focused on caring for friends, neighbors, and coworkers. *"As you find people impacted that we can serve, would you please let us know?"* This reporting system could be met with the response of many possibilities.

First, getting that front line friend to take responsibility for ministering to the family impacted through practical measures of concern. Second, in pastors making phone calls or even visits to those impacted. *“I am the pastor of xyz church and your friend Mrs. X says you are ill with the virus. How can we pray for you? We think you matter to the world and to God. Can I add you to my regular prayer list.”* Then frequent follow up calls and touches are appropriate. This will be a time to BE BOLD in sharing the gospel.

Boldness rules and Christians have always led the way in times of disaster or crisis as we focus on our hope in the Lord and His providence for us.

11. Be creative on the Arts side.

- It's been amazing to see many musicians do mini concerts online and via facebook. How is your team producing 5-7 minute encouragement in this way?

- Bulk up a special Spotify playlist of worship songs focused on God's presence, healing, and salvation. Share it widely via social media.

- Consider a “daily dose” audio podcast that is a daily message of prayer, affirmation, and teaching. (2-5 minutes)

- Utilize Instagram and Facebook Live techniques to stay connected with your congregants.

12. More communication beats less.

Don't worry about bugging people right now. But do coordinate your teams well. Call through the list. Overcommunicate your heart, your church's ministry in the community. Help people share God stories. Encourage your people to share everything with a hashtag. Build the email list if you have not already. Just call people and ask if they can go to a sign-up page to get on the list.

13. Use Conference Calls

Consider then setting up some conference calls with those groups hosted by the assigned leader WITH the pastor or other key staff member.

People want a pastoral presence right now.

The purpose of the call is just to let them know you care, you are listening, give basic information about what is coming up at the church and how they can minister to one another. Then just pray for them. A series of 30-minute calls rotating through the groups will go a long way at this time.

14. Consider the Lonely

Consider the lonely in your congregation. For many that live alone, (a fast-growing demographic – 28% of American households), they will have little interaction with others. Develop a phone call routine, pattern be it from staff or others. Encourage people to reach out to one another.

15. Mission of the Day

We can encourage church members and attenders through a “mission of the day” – like bake cookies for a neighbor, or serve them in some other way. Then get reports via electronic means to encourage others. (Toby Slough from Crosstimbers Church says – we need to focus on what we can do for others.)

For example – encouraging attenders to make notes that say “Our church wants to pray for you and help meet your needs. Please call me, your neighbor, at xxxxx, and let me know how we can serve.” Place them in plastic bags and tape them to mailboxes in their street. Do this several times in the next month with slight alteration of the message to build bridges of goodwill.

As they released this idea to their church, the people created 30 days of various ways they could do this as a resource. Let your people be creative.

12. Easter

We will probably be locked out for Easter celebrations in church buildings. Begin to plan for Holy Week kits that you can have your people create to share with neighbors that

track along with your livestream and other programs. More on that in another section in the 3.0 Resource

13. Drive In

I think DRIVE IN church with the right set up could be a potential possibility. This takes some creativity and work to set up but should be considered. You would have to do multiple sessions every week but it could be a great way to go. A church can use their own parking lot, a drive in theater, even a local dirt short track for this purpose. Move fast though.

14. Pregnant folks

As some congregants may be pregnant with a child right now, consider special touches to reach out to them. Perhaps organize a virtual shower through a gift list and zoom.

15. Kids Ministry

With no youth sports, schools and in some communities, no daycare open – consider the myriad of opportunities with digital outreach for kids. These could include story time with a pastor at 9 in the morning and an 8 p.m. Bible lesson every night.

16. Family Worship Time

One church said they are encouraging “Family worship time” every night at a set hour with a broadcast for 10 minutes that has guided session for families.

17. US Mail

And the Apostle Paul loved using letters to nurture church leaders. Consider special mailings to leaders, high impact givers and the membership where you craft special messages of the state of the church, how people can continue to connect and serve during this season.

In conclusion, if I may be so bold, **pray for revival!** Crises can also lead to revival. I will never forget the day I witnessed over 400 people being baptized on one day right after September 11, 2001 at a church with a strong military presence. People realized they needed God and were turning to His church for answers. This could be a marvelous harvest season if we respond not from fear but with boldness.

Corona Virus Stewardship: Retaining and Growing Giving to move toward Recovery

March 2020

Prepared by Brad Leeper of Generis

Giving for the church mission is a huge question right now. Many signs are encouraging about church giving while at the same time we see disturbing signs that many in your church will be financially impacted that will impair giving for some time.

Since the virus season began, our firm, Generis, has had a heavy diet of conversations around giving, sustained ministry and how to engage a faith community in new ways under averse and new circumstances.

Wise churches are working now to preserve as much giving as possible. Too much is at stake to avoid immediate action.

In good times and in bad times, Christian people continue to give. Even in challenging times, Christians will respond to challenges, with increased generosity and sacrifice... for the organizations that they love. Nothing can stop generosity when there is a mission and people that a giver loves. People support ministries that they believe in.

We want to help you preserve giving. We can even think of expanding giving as strange as that sounds. The stories of gifted givers and many people rising to the occasion still fascinate me. We have had several clients report significant gifts in the past week.

Not proactively dealing with your church generosity now will you create ministry gaps, avoid meeting needs and lessening the impact of your mission.

Giving is under great stress now perhaps through the end of the year. Giving patterns and amounts will change with the likely result that your overall giving will be substantially less than expected. Diminished ministry, potential loss of staff, loan payments and other core church functions will be under review.

Now we have the new legislation to factor into ministry revenue streams. While the legislation appears to be quite favorable to non-profit organizations and small

businesses, at best, the help will be short-term and not a long-term fix. The recovery season will last much longer than the quarantine season. Your giving recovery timeline can be very long or very short. What you do now determines that timeline.

The need to anchor your giving remains paramount with or without any legislative assistance. Building a passionate giver base around your work for the recovery season determines how quickly your mission impact returns and expands. Avoid relaxing because of the potential short-term fix from the legislation.

How to preserve as much of your mission and operations as possible?

1. Anchor your Core Givers

Your church probably receives a majority of its giving income through a small number of households. It is important to work with these givers in their unique context so as to anchor their giving for your church. Most often, these households are positioned in greater capacity to give in an unusual season than most other households. Serving these top givers well will retain and even grow their commitment during this season. Reach out and connect with them. Ask them how they are doing personally and spiritually. Let them know that, if possible, their continued commitment to the ministry is essential at this time.

2. Communicate Effectively

This is a critical time for effective and regular communication. There will be very high demand and pressure on your givers to give to many other places than your church. Upgraded and proactive communication will reinforce how your church stands out and should be the priority giving destination. Be sure to focus on the impact your church is making on lives in the community. Few things motivate people to give more than tangible evidence of how that giving helps or changes someone's life. Communicating what you are doing to serve others can greatly influence both new and seasoned givers.

Power Tip: It's almost time for your Q1 Giving Statements. Don't go with the "Business as Usual approach this year. This is an opportune moment to draw people closer to your mission with stories and gratitude for their commitment.

3. Be Intentional With Your Offering Moments

It is easy to overlook the importance of the offering moment in a virtual worship service but it's actually an opportunity to be very intentional. What you typically do on stage won't necessarily translate well on video. Here are four realities you need to understand for an effective offering moment:

- You're always telling a story about how your church is impacting lives in the church and in the community.
- People must be ready to give mechanically. Send push notifications, text messages or emails ahead of the service that help people get ready to give by putting the appropriate giving mechanism in their hands beforehand. Don't make them scramble to find them during or right after the offering moment.
- It's important to be concise! Don't confuse the moment by making other announcements or talking too long. Focus on the impact and the blessing of giving and then land the plane quickly.
- It's very important to share that you continue to give as a leader and other staff and leaders have also made giving in this season a priority. You don't want to ask others to do something that you aren't prepared to do yourself. The amount doesn't matter. It's about modeling commitment at a difficult time.

4. Align Your Staff

This looks different for every church, but we know that the speed of the leadership drives the speed of the team. Will your staff be passionately engaged in this season around giving while prioritizing their own giving to the church? Your staff will likely be under emotional wear and tear in this season especially if job security feels at risk. This season allows your church and your team to foster spiritual formation and discipleship around giving. It's more important than ever to align the staff, ministry programs and generosity into an organic and holistic approach.

5. Engage Your Board

Many Board Members will be heavily leaning into expense reduction as the only or primary manner to allow your church mission to flourish. While ministry accountability and wisdom in expenditures are essential, it's important for them to understand that equal effort must be given to retaining givers in this season. Start by securing their commitment to anchor their generosity in this season and then encourage them to inspire those within their sphere of influence to do the same.

6. Review Your Systems

There are at least 12 systems in a church that directly impact how people give, the amounts and the frequency. Whether it be your website, your digital giving tools, your communication systems, or your giving statements, small adjustments in these vital areas can make a huge difference in people giving or not giving. The current crisis will

certainly expose gaps in those systems. Get those gaps closed as soon as possible so that you are well positioned to accelerate on the other side.

7. Provide Alternatives

Too often we fail to recognize that different methods of giving can often release gifts we never believed possible. For instance, Donor Advised Funds (DAF) are a growing tool in charitable giving that aren't just limited to faith based nonprofits. Most research and our anecdotal experience show that many DAFs contain large, excess balances that are just looking for a reason to be granted. Additionally, there are people in almost every church, regardless of size, that have assets which can be given to a church instead of cash. This isn't about boats and cars, it's about Real Property and Businesses. By communicating these tools as potential giving opportunities, you can surface significant gifts that could be game changers for your ministry.

Here's what we know at Generis from past experiences. There will be a recovery season after the current economic turmoil recedes. When the virus emergency concludes, there will be a season for the giving patterns to reboot to a new normal. For the church that handles the current downturn well, the eventual recovery takes much less time with increased giving coming sooner than much later. The more you do to steward your current givers and strengthen your systems well during the crisis, the more confidence you can have that giving will do far more than return to normal on the other side.

Our team at Generis would be honored to serve you and coach you through this process. Get started with a free phone consultation by clicking [HERE](#):

The STAT Teams you may need now

When I work with a church, I talk about STAT Teams. **Short Term Activated TEAM.**

Before this extraordinary season I spoke of them in terms of activating a group of people in your church who probably won't give week to week or even twice a month commitment to volunteer service for one reason or another.

But they are willing to commit to 4-8 straight weeks for a significant project, sometimes even longer when they know ahead of time, this is not a long-term commitment.

Sometimes these teams can be activated for "regular annual events" such as Summer Camp, Bible School and the like. The same can be said of Mission Trips. But I have also seen teams assembled to help a new site launch in quick start mode, to catalyze a new staff position launch.

The key is finding people that will invest themselves for this "Short Season" and in a way that validates their gifts and strengths. These teams can be large or small, but should have a recognized leader and/or a staff coach.

These are shoulder taps and referral selections, not "who wants to join."

A STAT team can be a "hot group" that gets beyond our normal ways of thinking. Give them a clear charter, a question or problem to be solved. In this season I would just say – "other than our online platforms, we have very little resource, so this task needs creativity."

The recognition after the project is done is usually private, with that group, by a top leader who appreciates them in meaningful ways.

Right now, we have a great opportunity to catalyze a few STAT teams during the crisis to activate some leaders that rarely are tapped for regular service.

The best examples started a month ago in churches that assembled **Medical Advisory Teams**. These teams included medical professionals mainly inside the church. But some reached out to community health leaders as well to be on the team. The team convened a weekly call to give counsel and advice to the board and pastor about decisions that would be wise in light of the current circumstances. Most of the leaders have not been able, due to their other calling as medical providers, to be engaged meaningfully by the church in the past. That's a win in engagement.

Others you should consider:

Member Ministry Empowerment – this team helps gather ideas, resources and tools to empower your people to provide hands on ministry to others in their neighborhoods

and circles of influence. This could be a larger team, convened every two days by phone or video conference. Occasionally the lead pastor may hop on to thank the team but let the coach and team leader generate and run.

Easter Celebration Team – this team you need to have NOW. This team helps plan how we will take Easter Celebrations to the people with ideas such as the Holy Week boxes that members help create with a list and printed resources to carry to friends. Or if you decide to do the “DRIVE IN” Easter service, helps to put all those logistics together.

Financial Crisis Team – some of you already have Finance teams that are working on these issues, but you may want to activate another layer of people who are sharp financially and can give advice and counsel. You are going to need to look at all revenues and expenses and be able to explain well any decisions made to your people along the way.

GENEROSITY Team – this is different from managing the revenue and expenses. This is the team that works with your people in encouraging creative generosity during this season. Some of that will be congregant to congregant and some will be for the church as a whole. Contact your Generis Consultant for more help and coaching with this team.

Missions Team – for those churches with their own missionaries in the field around the world and in this country, you may want to create small prayer and connection teams for each missionary family.

Discipleship Path Team – who needs to create a 40 Day discipleship program with daily reading, three times a week small group coaching program, and weekly mentor video meetings? Or some other short term process or adaptation of your prior process. We have an opportunity for some new believers and others who are “stuck at home” and will engage NOW with new time availability.

Get weekly reports from the staff coach and team leaders to follow along but don't think you have to run them all.

THE ABSOLUTE FINAL WORD ON WHAT YOUR ONLINE CHURCH EXPERIENCE SHOULD LOOK LIKE

Geoff Surratt - Multisite Strategist with Generis

(Dave Travis note - I think my colleague Geoff Surratt nails it here. People want to see THEIR pastor or a local pastor. They want a pastoral presence in their lives, some for the first time.)

Having talked to dozens of pastors across the country, watched many churches online this past weekend, and helped my church craft their weekend experience I think I have the absolute answer for online church. Some churches' make the video look as much like a normal weekend as possible, some sit in a circle for worship and teaching, some pre-record everything while others do it all live. Sometimes the pastor speaks from his living room, sometimes from a stage and sometimes to his iPhone in his basement. And the final, no kidding, absolute answer as to which is the best way to do church online in this season?

All of them.

Let me explain. Someone sent me a description of their church's online service from this past weekend and it sounded like the worst church experience since the inquisition. You couldn't have forced me to sit through it.

The caveat? The person who sent it loved it.

Why did they love it? Because it was their worship leader and their pastor speaking to them. They weren't concerned about the quality of the technology, or the intimacy of the setting, and they weren't searching the internet for the church who did it "the best". (Good thing) They attended church with their friends and they connected with their leaders. Full stop. (A phrase for my British friends)

The moral to my little post? Don't sweat too much about the quality or style of what you are putting online right now. Do what you can with what you have, just like you do every other weekend. Your church is probably never the most polished church in town, and that's ok. Pastor the way you always pastor; with humility, authenticity and hope. That's what your people need right now.

Here's a case in point. Last night my pastor, [Ernest Smith](#), did a Facebook Live session where he sat on his back porch with his family and used his iPhone to field questions

people left in the comments. The production quality was 0, there was no format other than questions, and the people who were there loved it. It was a chance to connect with their pastor.

So if this weekend your worship leader has to sing and play alone in his house and you have to preach to your phone from your living room, its going to be ok. Just make sure to wear pants.

Geoff Surratt

Director and Multisite Strategist

Connect with Geoff at Geoff.Surratt@generis.com

About the Author:



(Dave Travis is on the far right.)

Dave Travis is the Director of Strategic Counsel to Pastors and Church Boards with Generis. Prior to joining Generis in 2018 he had spent almost 25 years with Leadership Network serving leaders of large churches in the US, Canada and Europe. He stepped down as CEO in 2018.

Prior to that he had a life as a denominational leader, pastor and engineer.

Through that work he had the privilege of advising hundreds of pastors every year. Through his work at Generis he helps churches think and plan around several issues.

StoryCrafting for Churches – What is our next chapter story? This current work is focused to help churches think productively about the next chapter in spite of COVID 19.

Succession Planning – What does our next chapter story have to do with our next primary leader? Dave has advised over 90 large churches in this area.

SpringBoard – How does our Church Board rise to meet the challenge of today's new era? Boards can either lift you up or drag you down. Dave has advised many boards in adding strength to the church's leadership and directional force.

He also serves as the co-host of the TWO LIVE DAVES podcast with Dave Ronne.

Dave and his wife live in the Atlanta, GA area and have two adult daughters. Amazingly they have been a part of the same church fellowship for over 36 years. Dave has served his church in numerous roles including chair of the board.

He is a graduate of The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, Georgia Tech and has done numerous other programs such as the Harvard Business School program for Nonprofit Leaders. He is a member of the Association of Conceptual Frameworkers.

His mentors in consulting were Lyle Schaller and Peter Drucker.

Contact Dave directly at Dave.Travis@Generis.com.

See his website at effectiveministry.com



Erik Ely

Senior Generosity Strategist

Erik Ely is a Senior Generosity Strategist with more than 27 years of leadership experience in the market place and the local church. Erik's experience in business and ministry allows him to have a unique perspective on ministry. He draws on his gifts in leadership, administration, strategic planning, and financial analysis to help churches reach their God-given potential and vision.

Erik has a passion for local churches that want to have an impact in their community and he knows that every church is a unique reflection of Christ; no two are alike. He has personally been involved in multiple building campaigns as both a staff person and a volunteer.

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