

How the Church Must Prepare for First 100 Days Post-Pandemic

Business as usual in ministry has been obliterated. We have all just experienced something on the order of a global earthquake measuring 10 on the Richter scale. Almost all our buildings, roads, businesses and other ministry structures have been demolished. Just because the tremors have ceased does not mean we simply pick up where we left off, anymore than pretending after an earthquake everything will simply be the same. Just as people often remember the “earthquake of 1906” and how life changed, for the rest of our lives we will remember the pandemic and shutdown of 2020. The important thing now is for us to consider how we pivot as leaders in ministry to accommodate the new realities that are screaming for attention. These questions will help inform your new norm of the first 100 days post-pandemic:

1. What are other trends that could dramatically impact your church? Just as Bill Gates presenting a Ted Talk five years ago, warning of the global impact of a pandemic (and was largely ignored), might there be other trends that are sneaking into our culture that will fundamentally impact your church? Just a few months ago none of us could imagine almost all church services worldwide going livestream, let alone Easter! Too often we notice subtle changes (such as people coming less than two times per month to church and still considering it a home church) and do not consider what that really means.

Other trends, like the “knowledge revolution” where everything known in every industry is doubling every year and being digitized (causing some experts to say that 40% of Fortune 500 companies will go out of business in the next 10 years), will

have dramatic impact on every church. The graying of the church (well-documented in my doctoral project, "Faith at the Speed of Light"), which paints a picture of a significantly aging global church, is absolutely affecting the church already and will shape the history of the world. Our opportunity is to notice global trends to pivot in order to leverage them and not be taken by surprise.

2. What is the future of technology for your ministry? Since almost every local pastor has become a televangelist, compelled by the shutdown of large gatherings, it would be over-simplistic to imagine we have all just arrived at high-tech, superhero status.

I'm reminded of a meeting that Google execs had a few years ago with a number of the largest megachurches in America. One of the Google execs (who is not a Christian) addressed each church leader by name and knew well their organizations asked a piercing question, "Why is it you think everyone who comes to your webpage wants to know how many locations you have? Did you know there is technology that can track exactly where they are searching from and can show them your location nearest them automatically? And this technology is 10 years old!" What are the other technology opportunities we are overlooking that could broaden the impact of your church? This deserves to be on someone's job description at every church.

3. What does it mean to be a future-fit leader? At the very least, what we have all just experienced the last few months demonstrated just how quickly things can change. The accelerated rate of change is a new reality thrust upon us by the knowledge revolution, and experts expect the changes in the last 80 years of the Industrial Revolution to be squeezed in to the next 20 years of this present revolution. Becoming a future-fit leader is an imperative new skillset ministry leaders can grow in to anticipate changes like a batter anticipates a pitch as it leaves the pitcher's hand. We can train our eye to see if it will be a curveball, a strike, and

better anticipate and respond to all the new kinds of balls that will be pitched our way.

4. What are best practices of exponential churches that are crisis-ready? There are quiet examples all around the world of churches that are thriving in the middle of this global crisis. These “exponential churches” are growing in numbers (not just views of their livestreams) of actual people becoming followers of Christ and beginning a journey of discipleship. The fact is that these churches had set up systems and practices before the crisis that caused them to thrive even before the pandemic, and only proved to be even more effective during the shutdown. Why should we reinvent the ministry wheel? Let’s at least learn the principles behind their best practices and see how they could apply to our own context. Warning: Some of their best practices will confront the “way we have always done it” mentality of many churches.

5. Are there practical tools to seize the momentum of the pandemic for reaching the young generation? Since the pandemic spread fear much quicker than the disease, it has caused a global economic earthquake that is difficult to underestimate the impact.

The silver lining to this is that for the first time, Millennials and Gen Z have to face the reality of the fragility of the foundation their culture and lives were built upon. Whereas they may have been so confident and maybe even cocky, not needing to consider God in a recipe for success, now everything has shaken. Now is the time to rethink how we are messaging to them, how we are getting their attention and leveraging tools of how they receive information, and how we are giving them the unshakable confidence found in Christ. Let’s be careful to not be tone-deaf and simply present a generic message. Remember that to farmers Jesus talked about seeds and vines, and to fishermen He talked about fish. Let’s speak to the urgent need in the soul of those who built their confidence in what they discovered are crumbling foundations.

6. How does intentionally building leaders in my congregation create a strong predictor of thriving in crisis? This key best practice of exponential churches is not simply having more people on the elder or deacon board. Building leadership brings strength to the health of any local church. Building leaders means teaching them to make character-driven decisions no matter the environment. It is training them to live a life worthy of being emulated. Most of all, it is showing them how to develop others (via discipleship) so that when there are no structures available (think outlawing church in the Roman government), the church continues to not just survive, but thrive. This is exactly what is happening to every exponential church documented as having these practices before the pandemic, and they have been reaping the benefits during the shutdown that has catapulted them forward as we speak.

7. How can I plan to invent the future I desire when so many changes are being thrust upon us? Planning can seem a bit cumbersome and an exercise in frustration when so many norms have been obliterated. Many large companies have ceased from making a 10- or 20-year plan knowing that rate of change is happening so quickly. A shorter two-year or five-year window is more appropriate.

Still, how can we keep from simply responding to trends and crises and learn to lean into them to realize the vision of our own church? An “inventing the future” planning process helps to wrap your mind around this kind of thinking. It’s like building a bridge while you are walking on it. It is keeping present programs functioning, but aggressively looking to what the new iteration of church will look like in the next two to five years. If we study it and plan for it, we can invent the future that we sense the Lord wants us to embody.

Now is the time to fundamentally rethink how we are to move forward. Let us not mistake this global earthquake as a mere tremor. We are all living on a global San-Andreas fault where we can regularly expect to be shaken. All the rules have

changed. The message has not, but the realities of our world have changed, and we can lean into those changes. The first 100 days post-pandemic will allow us to establish a new norm for our ministry and how we prepare for this new world we have just discovered. Let us not waste this crisis. Who knows if we have not been born for “such a time as this”? {eoa}

*After speaking to 3 million youth in arenas and stadiums, and authoring 30 books for youth, parents and leaders, **Ron Luce** has just finished hosting Jesus Global Youth Day with 50,000 attendees live, and more than 10 million youth in churches all over the world with the global broadcast! Ron has just completed his doctoral project and new book titled Faith at the Speed of Light, where he documents multiple exponential churches from all over the world that are growing exponentially by reaching the next generation. He is now taking these best practices and his 30 years of experience and consulting churches to create effective powerhouses of life-changing ministry as they build a multigenerational church! His free webinar and resources can be found at [. He can be reached at Ron@.](#)*