

# How to Prepare Churches for Life After Quarantine

For the first time in recent history, people are being kept away from church during a national crisis. Pearl Harbor, the stock market crash of 1929, the financial crisis of 2008 and especially after Sept. 11, 2001, people flocked to the church. Many of us remember 9-11 like it was yesterday, and the recent days have brought us to an all too familiar place.

In 2001, I was a CEO in Texas. On the morning of Sept. 11, I was on a plane from Oklahoma City through DFW to Dulles/Baltimore Airport. During the flight, our pilot rang five bells, which tells the flight attendants there's an emergency. They left their carts in the aisles as the pilot announced, "Cabin, prepare for an abrupt turn." I had just enough time to clutch my laptop to my chest. After we landed, the pilot told us that as our plane was about to enter Washington, D.C., airspace, the Air Force stated that anyone entering would be shot down.

When I got on the ground in Dallas and opened my Motorola flip phone, I called my office. They were very worried and had gone to a little Episcopal Church close to our office to pray. Yes, my whole staff, made up of believers and nonbelievers, went to church and prayed for our country and our president. That weekend, churches across America were flooded with people wanting to worship Jesus, many for the very first time. Out of a crisis came a profound evangelism opportunity.

As we look across America today, for the very first time in our history, our church doors are closed. Churches must reach their congregations via online services and sermons. Many churches are scrambling, trying to figure that out with only a week to go.

The current practice of online church might continue for weeks. The National Institute of Health's Dr. Anthony Fauci stated that coronavirus cases may not crest until the end of April. That would be six more weeks of online church when people in our country really *want* and *need* to attend church.

So, what can we expect after weeks of church closures?

If I look back at history, people want to go to church in a crisis. Now, I can only imagine what church attendance might look like when we are in a crisis, *and* people have not been able to attend church for six weeks.

I want to encourage pastors and church leaders. You will soon see your pews full of people. They will need to be pastored. They will need to be encouraged, and most importantly, they will need to hear about the hope of Jesus Christ and what he has done on the cross.

So, pastors, as you are working physically separated from your church staff, meet the current needs of your church, but also prepare for the future after the crisis. Let's get our teams excited about their coming role when so many new people will fill our churches. Let's start planning on launching a new sermon series when we all get back together again. Let's get excited about seeing our churches full of worshiping faces happen to be able to be back in church again. {eoa}

**Sutton Turner** *is the chief operating officer of Vanderbloemen, which serves teams with a greater purpose by aligning their people solutions for growth: hiring, compensation, succession and culture. Through its retained executive search and consulting services, Vanderbloemen serves churches, schools, nonprofits, family offices and Christian businesses in all parts of the United States and internationally.*

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