

PASTORPEDIA™

Cutting Edge Conversations for Pastors and Church Leaders

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Post-COVID at church

The quarterback has a voice and wristband!

And sometimes he pushes his helmet tighter so we can hear the instructions from the coaches. Then he checks his wrist notes and calls the play.

But they don't make any of these for pastors.

So how do we know what plays to call? What church strategy should change now that we have had a very different year? Should the church calendar fill up with what anyone suggests? Did that monthly breakfast really produce?

While we are opening up at varying speeds all over our country and world, what shall we do in our particular setting? And who helps us to decide? Could Tom Brady help? (And while we're at it, could we duplicate his salary? 😊)

We cannot answer for you, but we can give some ideas and possibilities, and urge you to pray and move carefully as you lead. It is a rather significant day, and it is not just a game.

*With you as we look for the next moves,
Knut, Jeff, Jim*

What are the next moves we should make coming out of COVID?

- COVID is hyper local!

Jeff Bogue

- Have regathering strategies.
- Make sure there are ways for people to take baby steps.
- Recast vision. Remind people why we gather and why we work together in the first place.
- Teach people to re-socialize. Create mid-size events so they can connect (in settings they are no longer familiar with).
- Understand the cultural changes. We are living in a new culture; we've gone through ten years of changes in ten months!
- Be sure to have the right conversations in your sermons. You must understand that people are in a different place than they were a year ago.
- Cut excess programs, budget, and possibly even staff.

Jim Brown

- Reach and minister to the broken, isolated, and worn-out.
- Push and continue to elevate community.
- People need hope and encouragement—point them to Jesus and the Gospel.
- Shore-up your ministries that need attention, for some have laid dormant for months.
- Contextualize your moves, as some regions are already more open than others.
- Some have left for good and have moved on, so minister to the ones that show up.
- Find ways to refresh, renew, and restore your own well-being.
- Prior to that time Make contacts with those that have not come back.
- Continue to reach your community with acts of service and kindness.
- Evaluate ministries that need to be eliminated and do so quickly. In addition to that begin new ones that line up with your fresh vision.
- Evaluate staff—restructure and where necessary add or remove.

- Cast some fresh vision, as people need to know what is happening next. Put some goals in place to accomplish that vision.
- Community, community, community!
- Elevate corporate worship and prayer.

Knute Larson

- Let's start with the obvious: it's a good time to make some changes! Probably some things that we put in a closet were not missed by anyone. And some activities in the church just make "groupies" of people without doing a lot of good for their souls. Do we dare hit "delete"?
- We must all figure out how to invite back ones who liked doing church in bed and or in their living room. National church coaches predict that 25% of them will never come back! Whoa!
- We must figure out how to be an "analog church" in terms of personal communication and relationships. The book by that name, *Analog Church*, was book of the year for Outreach magazine as it emphasized personal relationships and connections while still honoring digital ministries. Remember that some people who plan and lead Sunday or home ABFs or life groups do not need relationships and therefore easily forget to teach them.
- It's a great time to keep communicating more. Most churches did during COVID shutdown. A short video can say a lot in 30 seconds or 60. Why not keep it up?
- Check again on hurting people. Some lost loved ones this year. Some got loneliness-distress. Some lost income.

What leadership lessons have you learned during this strange time?

Jeff Bogue

- Be present. Be bold. Follow your convictions, and take the time to truly shepherd people.

Jim Brown

- Stay with your Biblical convictions!
- Prayer is the key to hearing from God and making decisions to lead though uncertain times.
- It was also affirming to humbly realize that God made me for this season to lead our church.
- Hear from the Lord!
- More than anything, people need hope. Work hard at reminding them of the promises of God.

Knute Larson

- First, a note of sympathy. In my own 55 years of church pastoring and now coaching pastors, I clearly think this is the hardest time ever to pastor. It's not only the amazing far-reaching upset of COVID, but

the horrible arguing and meanness that go on in social media and politics. Admit it or not, our people pick up habits that way. Plus, the growing secularism and atheism and bad examples of Christian leaders affects many Christians and “semi-believers,” if there is such a thing. 😊

- People need leaders. Churches need leaders. I must lead.
- Large numbers of people should not make decisions. I’m not sure they should fill out surveys. (Ask me what I think our church should do and if I tell you then I want you to do it that way please!)
- There are many areas where God is silent and wants us to lead after we ask Him for wisdom.
- We can have strong love and humility and still lead with confidence.
- Plenty of pastors and families got COVID too, so we should never preach again that every Christian must be happy and healthy! (Take that, Joel!)

How can you shepherd the people who dropped out of church out of fear and may not return?

Jeff Bogue

- Communicate with them. Press into the roots of their fear.
- Realize you may eventually have to let people go.

Jim Brown

- Ask some hard questions in love to get to the root of fear.
- We have asked people, *What is your plan for return?*
- You may have to let them go!

Knute Larson

- Some may be saying they do not want to be shepherded or pastored, and that they got along quite well without meeting as a church. Finally, we must let them decide that themselves. But...
- We must try to contact them and express love and sometimes dismay that they want to be the first people of faith who do not need to give and receive as part of the church. All the while of course acknowledging that some may need to stay home because of illness or limitations. For those people every church should have a staff member or a strong volunteer who has shut-ins as part of his or her ministry.
- Every Sunday School or home group needs a care captain to make sure contacts of love and concern are made. If it is not assigned it is often not done. And care is best assigned to groups.
- Keep praying and sending them the videos and other communication of course.
- Make sure they hear that Sunday gatherings and groups are really scoring high in authenticity and love and worship!

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