



Practical Suggestions for Churches

(March 14, 2020)

As we navigate through these uncharted waters dealing with the COVID-19 (coronavirus) outbreak, every organization seems to have a list of suggestions of how to survive. In light of those ideas, I thought it would be helpful to offer some specific suggestions to our churches as they continue to have, or seek to have, services during these difficult times.

While the CDC and other health organizations offer specific health and medical guidance, the following suggestions are simple and practical ideas that every church should consider.

Greeters

Having greeters open church doors for attendees will eliminate a variety of people from touching the doors, as well as eliminate the greeters from shaking hands with each person.

Offerings

Instead of passing the “plates,” consider placing offering buckets either at the front of the church during offering time or placing them strategically at doors when people exit.

Protect the Vulnerable

Encourage the elderly and those with compromised immune systems to take extra precautions, including staying away from large church settings.

Use “Social Distancing”

Although we come from a culture that encourages connectivity, including laying on of hands and greeting each other with an embrace, this is a time to step back from those traditions that could potentially spread the virus.

Smaller Service Gatherings

In areas where the local governmental authorities are requesting that groups no larger than 100 or 250 come together, consider going to smaller service venues/gatherings and have multiple services throughout the week, not just on Sunday mornings.



Emphasize Small Groups

If the governmental authorities are recommending that only a limited number of people congregate, use Sunday school class groups or other small groups to continue the mission and focus of your local church.

Communicate about Giving

Regrettably, many people will not give to your church unless they actually attend services. It is important to communicate to them that all of the ministries of the church are continuing and that the church needs their support. Even though you are not having your regular meetings, encourage them to be loyal stewards to God's Kingdom. Electronic giving options are very helpful in these times.

Stop "Let's Greet Each Other" Time

During times like this, the "meet and greet" times should be eliminated during, before, and after services.

Continue to Reach Out to Your Community

With school closures and businesses closing, there are going to be families, and especially children, that may have to go without food and other necessities. Consider an outreach effort to those children who may not be getting breakfast and lunch at their school. Also, consider how you can provide assistance to those that may be unemployed due to the virus outbreak.

Go "Electronic"

If you have a substantial outbreak of the coronavirus in your area, you may need to go fully to an "electronic" church format. Live stream, videoconference, and even Facebook Live may be options that you need to consider. Always remember to remind those watching to give so that the ministries of the church can continue, even though they are not attending church in your physical building.

Watch Your Church Budget Closely

If you are unable to have church for several weeks or if your attendance is off substantially for an extended period of time, it is most likely that your church's financial condition is going to deteriorate. It is important that you reach out to your mortgage holder, as well as to your other creditors, and begin to work out payment arrangements with them immediately, rather than waiting until you are in a crisis situation.



Clean Your Church Facilities More Often

Any surface that your church members touch should be cleaned with an alcohol-based disinfectant immediately before and following your services. The CDC provides specific guidance on what products are effective in killing this virus. Extra efforts should be made to protect all surfaces of the church from the spread of the virus.

Extra Attention to Children Areas

While children have not been as adversely impacted by the coronavirus as others, there is a concern that children may be spreading the virus. Therefore, all children's areas should be cleaned thoroughly before and after every service, including extensive cleaning of all toys.

Sick Staff Should Be Sent Home

Whether the person is a paid staff person or a volunteer, they should be sent home if they exhibit any symptoms of being sick. Even though they may not have the virus, a person that is in a weakened condition could become a carrier for the virus. Those persons should be encouraged to stay home until they are completely well.

Conclusion

There are probably at least another hundred suggestions that you could add to this list. However, the goal is to create an awareness that we need to take extra precautions.

Most importantly, I am reminded that the Bible references 365 scriptures where God tells his people to "fear not." Even though we are in a difficult time, we must not have a spirit of fear.

How to Clean and Disinfect

Surfaces

- If surfaces are dirty, they should be cleaned using a detergent or soap and water prior to disinfection.
- For disinfection, diluted household bleach solutions, alcohol solutions with at least 70% alcohol, and most common EPA-registered household disinfectants should be effective.
 - Diluted household bleach solutions can be used if appropriate for the surface. Follow manufacturer's instructions for application and proper ventilation. Check to ensure the product is not past its expiration date. Never mix household bleach with ammonia or any other cleanser. Unexpired household bleach will be effective against coronaviruses when properly diluted.
- Prepare a bleach solution by mixing:
 - 5 tablespoons (1/3rd cup) bleach per gallon of water or
 - 4 teaspoons bleach per quart of water
 - [Products with EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claimsexternal icon](#) are expected to be effective against COVID-19 based on data for harder to kill viruses. Follow the manufacturer's instructions for all cleaning and disinfection products (e.g., concentration, application method and contact time, etc.).
 - For soft (porous) surfaces such as carpeted floor, rugs, and drapes, remove visible contamination if present and clean with appropriate cleaners indicated for use on these surfaces. After cleaning:
 - If the items can be laundered, launder items in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and then dry items completely.

- Otherwise, use products with the EPA-approved emerging viral pathogens claims (examples at [this linkpdf icon](#) [external icon](#)) that are suitable for porous surfaces

Linens, Clothing, and Other Items That Go in the Laundry

- Do not shake dirty laundry; this minimize the possibility of dispersing virus through the air.
- Wash items as appropriate in accordance with the manufacturer's instructions. If possible, launder items using the warmest appropriate water setting for the items and dry items completely. Dirty laundry that has been in contact with an ill person can be washed with other people's items.
- Clean and disinfect hampers or other carts for transporting laundry according to guidance above for hard or soft surfaces.

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and Hand Hygiene:

- Cleaning staff should wear disposable gloves and gowns for all tasks in the cleaning process, including handling trash.
 - Gloves and gowns should be compatible with the disinfectant products being used.
 - Additional PPE might be required based on the cleaning/disinfectant products being used and whether there is a risk of splash.
 - Gloves and gowns should be removed carefully to avoid contamination of the wearer and the surrounding area. Be sure to [clean](#) hands after removing gloves.
- Gloves should be removed after cleaning a room or area occupied by ill persons. [Clean hands](#) immediately after gloves are removed.
- Cleaning staff should immediately report breaches in PPE (e.g., tear in gloves) or any potential exposures to their supervisor.
- Cleaning staff and others should [clean](#) hands often, including immediately after removing gloves and after contact with an ill

person, by washing hands with soap and water for 20 seconds. If soap and water are not available and hands are not visibly dirty, an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains 60%-95% alcohol may be used. However, if hands are visibly dirty, always wash hands with soap and water.

- Follow normal preventive actions while at work and home, including cleaning hands and avoiding touching eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
 - Additional key times to clean hands include:
 - After blowing one's nose, coughing, or sneezing
 - After using the restroom
 - Before eating or preparing food
 - After contact with animals or pets
 - Before and after providing routine care for another person who needs assistance (e.g., a child)

Additional Considerations for Employers:

- Employers should work with their local and state health departments to ensure appropriate local protocols and guidelines, such as updated/additional guidance for cleaning and disinfection, are followed, including for identification of new potential cases of COVID-19.
- Employers should educate staff and workers performing cleaning, laundry, and trash pick-up activities to recognize the symptoms of COVID-19 and provide instructions on what to do if they develop [symptoms](#) within 14 days after their last possible exposure to the virus. At a minimum, any staff should immediately notify their supervisor and the local health department if they develop symptoms of COVID-19. The health department will provide guidance on what actions need to be taken. When working with your local health department check their available hours.
- Employers should develop policies for worker protection and provide training to all cleaning staff on site prior to providing clean-



ing tasks. Training should include when to use PPE, what PPE is necessary, how to properly don (put on), use, and doff (take off) PPE, and how to properly dispose of PPE.

- Employers must ensure workers are trained on the hazards of the cleaning chemicals used in the workplace in accordance with OSHA's Hazard Communication standard ([29 CFR 1910.1200external icon](#)).
- Employers must comply with OSHA's standards on Bloodborne Pathogens ([29 CFR 1910.1030external icon](#)), including proper disposal of regulated waste, and PPE ([29 CFR 1910.132external icon](#)).