



The Stewardship Coach Volume 7 / Issue 12



"You never let a serious crisis go to waste. And what I mean by that it's an opportunity to do things you think you could not do before." Rahm Emanuel made that comment as Obama's incoming chief of staff at the height of the 2008 financial crisis. Emanuel, who would later go on to become mayor of Chicago, ignited a firestorm as a result of the comment. He came off, looking uncaring.

Emanuel's point was largely taken out of context and used as a political bludgeon against not only him but of his boss, President Obama. Geoffrey Widdison made the following observation that I think sums Emanuel's indelicate point. He stated,

"When there's a serious crisis, people are more driven to get things done, more willing to compromise, and more attentive to politics. Hence, when there's a crisis in place, it's the perfect time to try and make the changes you want to make."

We are in the midst of a serious crisis. While we might disagree about the cause and impact, Americans are talking about and adjusting to the Coronavirus. Churches are making adjustments as well. I believe that many of the adjustments we are making will stay with us long after the passing of the Coronavirus.

As I write this, our nation is on the verge of panic. Governors in some states are asking churches to close their doors. Bishops are announcing closures as well. Whether you hold services or not, you *will* see a huge drop in attendance. This *will* impact your church both now and in the immediate future. Thankfully, our amazing God has provided for us all the tools we need to navigate through this crisis *even* if we cease physically meeting.

In this edition of the Coach, entitled ***The Digital Church***, I share thoughts on how a digital footprint can help you navigate through this minefield.

The Internet is our Roman Road! I am pretty sure the 1st-century church was not thrilled to be ruled by Rome. Yet, the Apostle Paul used Rome to further the Gospel by using their transportation system to help spread the Gospel. Today's Roman Road is the Internet, and we would be foolish not to utilize it. In our mobile digital world,

If you want to stay connected with your people, you must be digital! Here are some thoughts:

Digitize your worship services. Have you asked yourself yet what the picture above has to do with anything? Everything. The picture is a screenshot of my new client Bishop Robert Bolton, pastor of One Accord Christian Church not far from New York City. I captured the screenshot from One Accord's YouTube channel to help make my point.

One Accord has an average attendance of around 70 people. Their annual operating budget is just under \$100K. If they can do this, anyone can, and everyone should, have a digital footprint in our world.

Digitize your connections. How do you stay connected with your members in times when attendance is challenged? Social media is a great way you can stay connected with your members. Several sites allow groups to form and even allow video connections. I recommend that you use social media to keep your small groups connected. Video conferencing might replace the need for actually meeting.

Finally, and you would expect this from me:

Digitize the offering! We are in the 21st century, and you must give your members multiple means to contribute. The following is a great example of this.

At Seacoast Community Church in Charleston this past Sunday, the Senior Pastor, Josh Surratt, before his sermon, addressed two different crises and used digital resources to meet the challenges each crisis presented. Here is a link to his message, https://www.seacoast.org/seacoast_go/tame-the-tongue/.

First, before the sermon, a video was shown of a sister church that experienced damage by the recent tornado in Nashville TN. After the video, Pastor Josh showed those in attendance how they could quickly give to support churches hurt by the tornado by texting in an amount to Seacoast's Disaster Relief Fund. A screenshot showed how texting "Relief25" to Seacoast's dedicated text number, 320320, immediately sent \$25 to the Disaster Relief Fund.

Pastor Josh then addressed the health crisis Coronavirus. He stressed caution to the crisis, *not* panic. He then listed several practical things to keep attendees safe such as hand sanitizers, etc. One of the significant responses from Seacoast is to discontinue passing out weekly worship guides. Until the Coronavirus crisis passes, all communications, including sermons notes, will be digital.

Pastor Josh encouraged everyone to take out their smartphones while he talked and download the Seacoast App. He briefly showed people how to use the App, including how they could use it to give.

Pastor Josh also addressed the possibility of future services being held online only. "While we don't see that as happening, we are none the less preparing for that just in case," he said. Again, the App will facilitate this. Members can stay connected, *and* they can continue to give faithfully. With today's changing attendance patterns, even in the best of times, you must have a means of immediate engagement with your members.

In his message last Sunday, Pastor Josh never mentioned recurring giving. Yet 75% of all giving at Seacoast comes in some digital format. Most of those gifts are set up as recurring. For Seacoast, a church living in a hurricane zone, recurring giving is a must.

As we face the inevitable decline in attendance, and even the possibility of closure, recurring giving is a key to the sustainability of your missions and ministry. Recurring giving is yet another example of how a digital platform can help you sustain through any crisis you will face.

If you are a digital church, you have a better ability to respond to any crisis you might face. My advice is to be a digital church!

The Coronavirus is on everyone's mind, and your church must respond in a way that builds confidence and assurance. To fail to address this issue is to miss an opportunity. Failing to address the issue also makes you appear irrelevant and out of touch. The Church has always taken the lead in matters impacting society. Now is another opportunity for us. How will you respond?

Check out my Bonus section for ideas from ARC on how your church can respond.

Also, I will be LIVE this Monday Morning at 11 AM teaching more on how to connect utilizing Facebook. **Monday Mornings With Mark will be live March 16th at 11 AM EST:** <https://attendee.gotowebinar.com/rt/7081778876232214541>

As always, please let me know how I can be of service to you!



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This Week's Offering Talk

Since everyone is talking about the Coronavirus, this offering talk is geared to that. For those of you still holding services, you will probably have few guests in the house. This talk is geared as a straightforward message to your members. Edit this to fit your particular circumstances.

We Are Still Open for Business!

Yes! We are still open for business! For now, we have determined that with caution we can still meet together in corporate worship. We have been adamant about encouraging everyone who is sick, and those who are especially vulnerable, to stay home. We continue to work towards staying connected with all our church family through every means available to us.

We *WILL* stay open for business because our “business” is eternal! Now is not a time to shrink back. We might have to resort to NOT meeting. We might need to move towards a more digital footprint. We have determined that we will do whatever it takes to continue ministering to you, our church family, *and* our community. Our goal is to *lead* our community through this crisis with calm and cautious actions.

Let me be frank. To continue to accomplish all we need to do to fulfill our calling to our community takes money. We can do what we do because of your generosity. Honestly, when attendance is impacted, so is our giving. We need your continued generosity so that we can continue forward. At some point this virus will pass. All our missions and ministries in the months ahead are still planned. Each of these takes money to happen. My appeal to all of us is to continue being faithful in your giving. Your generosity does make a difference!

Finally, let me end by encouraging you to use our easy and quick online process. We have multiple ways by which you can give even if you are not physically present. The best way to assure your offering is never missed is to set up your giving to be recurring. You can go to our website and follow the Give link to find out how easy this is.

Thanks to your generosity we are and will continue to be open for the Lord's business!

Bonus Section

Everyone is trying to figure out a path through this current crisis. I have spent considerable time investigating what others are doing. Many of my clients are ARC (Association of Related Churches) churches. Their leadership sent out one of the best emails on COVID-19 that I have seen. I have copied it here.

How to Talk About the Coronavirus with Your Church

We've compiled resources for you to use if the need to talk about the Coronavirus with your church arises. The goal of this messaging is to provide important information without instilling fear. Here are some important things to consider including in your messaging if communicating with your church about the Coronavirus.

Let people know of the actions your church is taking.

- We are dedicated to offering a clean and safe environment.
- Our facilities are cleaned regularly.
- In addition to hand soap available in the bathrooms, we have a supply of alcohol-based hand sanitizers available for use at every service time and location.
- We plan to continue our weekly services but are monitoring the situation and following recommendations from state and local government agencies.

Provide examples of best practices for not spreading germs.

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Stay home if you are not feeling well.
- Cover your mouth and nose with your forearm when coughing and sneezing.
- Wash your hands frequently for at least 20 seconds at a time. Use soap and water when possible.
- If no soap and water are available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer with 60%-95% alcohol.

Share encouragement through scripture.

- Psalm 91:5-7: You will not fear the terror of night, nor the arrow that flies by day, nor the pestilence that stalks in the darkness, nor the plague that destroys at midday. A thousand may fall at your side, ten thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you.
- Psalm 91:10-11: No evil shall befall you, nor shall any plague come near your dwelling; for He shall give His angels charge over you, to keep you in all your ways.
- Luke 12:25-26: Who of you by worrying can add a single hour to your life? Since you cannot do this very little thing, why do you worry about the rest?
- John 14:27: Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.
- John 16:33: I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.
- 2 Timothy 1:7: For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.

Check out these examples of how churches have started communicating about the Coronavirus.

- <https://www.newcreation.org.sg/updates/announcements/health-advisory-regarding-the-2019-novel-coronavirus>
- <https://mailchi.mp/f00556af36bf/worshipwed-185057?e=1cdbc6e28f>

The news around the Coronavirus is changing rapidly. Always refer to the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#), state, and local government guidelines for the most up-to-date information.
