



COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

A Sobering New Reality

By David Duncan, Executive Director CDF Capital Foundation

In the midst of a global pandemic declared by the World Health Organization (WHO), we wanted to share a few insights and recommendations for pastors and church leaders navigating these unsettling times.

I had a strange experience last weekend—a cohort gathering I planned to oversee was postponed. Instead, during that I time I wondered what should I do when I would have been teaching, coaching, listening to plans, evaluating, encouraging best practices, and so on?

Then, another sobering thought hit me: Spring Training has been cancelled and the baseball season, at the very least, has been postponed. Yikes! I really enjoy baseball season. I love the daily rhythm of listening to a game on the radio and checking the box scores and the league standings—it's my thing, and I'm missing it already.

On Thursday my favorite team, the St. Louis Cardinals, put out a statement like all Major League Baseball teams did: no games, no stadium tours, and so on. But what are the players doing? Those young men who were invited to Spring Training and were giving it their all to hopefully impress the coaches and management—what are they up

to? The seasoned veterans who are paid ridiculous sums of money each year to play a game—how are they filling their “free time”?

In a blink the answer became obvious: if they love the game and their career, they're continuing all that they were doing before the stoppage. They are following their daily routines of physical conditioning. They are working on the fundamentals of their craft—hitting, fielding, throwing, running. They are doing all they can to stay in “game condition” as possible, keeping it as real as possible.

Why? Because while today is full of the unknown, someday (and we all hope soon) this will be past us and the season will resume, the games will be played, and NORMAL (whatever that looks like post-coronavirus) will return.

Lessons for me?

1. When “normal” is broken, maintain or even increase communication with your fans. I have received several emails from the Cardinals, each giving me as much up-to-date information as possible. Each email assures me that the team has me—their best fan—in mind. Each lets me know the boys will be back as soon as possible.
2. Stay in playing condition. Sure, enjoy the unexpected freedom, but don't get out of the disciplined routine that makes you an elite player.
3. Keep the facilities ready. Water the grass. Rake the dirt. Change the burned-out light bulbs. Tidy up the grandstands. Everyone will be back soon.
4. Anticipate the resumption of the season. As quickly as it was paused, it can be restarted. Those who are the most prepared will likely be back to speed the quickest.
5. Win the championship! Isn't that why we play the game—to win? Define “win” however you like, but for me it's showing up and bringing my best to each and every game.

Remember 3 Things on the Way to the Championship

1. YOUR GIVERS WILL CUT BACK

Those prone to discouragement from all the “bad economic news” may also be prone to reduce their charitable giving for a time. However, according to Dr. Clark Dickerson, difficult times cause people to focus their giving to their preferred ministries—if you are one of those for your partners, you are positioned well.

Those who base giving upon income from a business or investment portfolio that is impacted by the economic fallout may also be prone to reduce their charitable giving. (They would likely appreciate knowing you are aware of their circumstance, are praying for them, and understand their decisions will be difficult for a season.)

Remember 3 Things on the Way to the Championship (cont.)

Those who have been looking for a reason to reduce the number of ministries they support or reduce the amount they've been giving may find the pandemic a perfect opportunity (reason) to cut back.

2. YOU WILL CUT BACK

Some ministries will choose to restrict travel, and thus givers and prospective givers will not be invited to invest in the ministry.

Some ministries will reduce work hours in a common facility, and thus production may be reduced, meaning fundraising activities will be reduced.

Some ministries will simply accept the bad news, and thus they will reduce (or even cease) giver communications and invitations to participate.

3. MITIGATE YOUR RISK

Communication, communication, communication—tell your stakeholders how (or if) your operations are impacted by the pandemic in a genuine, honest, and sincere manner. As appropriate, tell them how your ministry is serving those impacted by the pandemic. And tell them how your regular work continues, despite the possible impact of the pandemic.

Keep working your plan—don't waiver from the fundraising activities you have on your calendar. Don't take a "let's wait and see how this works out" approach. Keep your bias for action intact. Obviously, if you had a large gathering planned, you will have to consider can your event become virtual or must it be canceled? But in general, do all the things you have planned to do in your Development Plan.

Don't try to capitalize on the pandemic for fundraising—unless you are actually doing something that is directly related (serving victims, supporting others who are serving victims, prevention training, etc.). Instead, make it clear to your board, staff, and stakeholders that your core work remains vital and active—and their active investment in that work is vital.

Finally, please consider that "this too shall pass." As our media and government agencies continue to put out the latest news, know that our God is still on His throne. He was not surprised by this illness, and He is not intimidated by it.

May we continue to shine as lights to those in darkness now, and when this current pandemic is over, may we be stronger and better positioned to serve even more.