



COVID-19 (Coronavirus)

**Small Churches with Great Impact
in the Face of COVID-19**

By Derrick Engoy

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.

Pastoring a small church in a big city has been extremely rewarding. Among many of those rewards is the ease of intimate connection. We average roughly 50 adults on a given Sunday, 10 children, and 8 youth. I truly know everyone by name. I know every family member. I know where their kids go to school. I even know many of our member's likes and dislikes.

I may not know how many hairs are on the heads of a given saint, but I do know a lot about them.

And the church knows me.

Despite being a smaller church on a tight budget, our impact in the community has still been significant. We've developed weekly food distributions, launched multiple Laundry Love sites, and organized annual Back-to-School events for our city. We've also opened up our facility for neighborhood groups like Homeschool Networks, Parent Teacher Association meetings, and community workshops.

In other words, Kingdom work shouldn't be limited by the size of a church—nor should it be halted due to a scarce amount of financial resources.

Using Technology to Our Advantage

Despite not having the budget to produce a livestream equipped with flashy lights and multiple camera angles, we jumped at the opportunity to utilize Facebook Live to stream our Sunday service to those who weren't in attendance for various reasons. It wasn't even something we planned because we didn't think we had the capability to do so. We actually decided last minute to use Facebook Live at the recommendation of one of our members. The amazing realization that came out of this experiment is that we've had approximately 450 views to date. We didn't quite meet our average attendance this past week. We did have nearly 40 people show up. But without notifying our congregation ahead of time, we still got more exposure than we could have ever imagined.

In addition, with the CDC now recommending that public gatherings be limited to 10 people or less, one of our

This reality is especially true during the times we find ourselves in because of the COVID-19 (coronavirus) pandemic. It's a time for small churches to step up and not to step back.

I've been extraordinarily amazed at how our compact community of faith has mobilized in the past few days in response to the limitations placed on our public gatherings. Our church stepped up in great ways this week in order to still provide a sense of normalcy and intimacy in the midst of worldwide chaos. I was reminded that the church truly isn't a place where we gather. The church, more correctly, is God's people. And when God's people step up, no matter how small the group may be, the Kingdom becomes more visible to those desperately seeking hope and comfort during dark times.

The following are ways our church is staying connected this week and making an impact in the communities we lead.

leaders suggested using Google Hangouts to still move forward with our Bible studies. Hangouts allow for virtual face-to-face interaction to happen; which is something a livestream can't provide. We were able to email the study questions out beforehand, so those who participated could prepare their thoughts and answers.

Another way I was able to still remain connected to our body was through live daily devotionals and updates posted on Instagram Stories. I spent 3-5 minutes each day reading a passage of Scripture and sharing my practical thoughts on how to respond to God's Word during these chaotic times. It allowed for daily interactions and, in many ways, put me in position to be available more often than I had previously been.

Going Old School

Our small band of loving leaders also suggested creating a call list to check in with our church family. We printed out a contact list and divided the names amongst 4 leaders who've been assigned to check in with their people every 2-3 days. We realized that we were able to

provide a lot of pastoral care this week, which many members expressed their appreciation for. Many commented on how grateful they were to hear a "loving voice." The task spread across a few people made the work tremendously easy.

Volunteering at the Church

With many people losing their jobs and with schools shutting down, a lot of people are stuck restless at home. People cope in many different ways, but those ways tend to run thin the longer one is confined at home. There are only so many walks and bike rides you can go on before growing weary. Binge watching the latest Netflix series isn't the most healthy. And the kids tend to get louder the more cooped they are.

Our team suggested we create volunteer opportunities out of the jobs that are normally assigned to our staff

members, so folks can get out of their homes for a couple of hours. We created a sign-up schedule in order to stay within the suggested gathering limit. And we assigned tasks that wouldn't put people in situations where they would compromise their health.

Some folks wiped down and sanitized classrooms and offices. Others did basic filing and admin work. We even set up opportunities for church members to learn and design social media content and bulletins.

High-Impact Connection

These simple, inexpensive, yet high-impact ways of connection and service have gone a long way during an uncertain time. They've reminded our church that community, intimacy, and Kingdom work is still possible during a pandemic that COVID-19 has presented us with.

We need to continue such practices long after the effects of the virus subside.