

MINISTRY AND COVID-19

Discussion Guide



reachglobal
crisis response



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HOW CAN THE CHURCH BE THE CHURCH IN TIMES OF CRISIS?



CRISIS DISRUPTS THE NORMALCY OF LIFE AND REQUIRES US TO REFLECT AND THINK DEEPLY.

- Where are we now?
- What are the implications of the present circumstances?
- What does the future hold?

ReachGlobal Crisis Response can help you process the present reality and the new normal.

HOW DOES YOUR CHURCH'S VISION AND ITS UNIQUE RESOURCES INTERSECT WITH THE CORONAVIRUS AND ITS IMPLICATIONS

God can, and often does speak in a crisis, while you need to act boldly, how much time do you need to take to pray and ask others to pray? (Ester 4:15, Nehemiah 2:4, but also see Nehemiah 1 – he had already prayed!)

Your church has unique gifts and resources that can be used to meet the needs of hurting people during this crisis event.

How can you leverage these resources and ministries to help enable your church to be the church?



WHAT ARE THE EMOTIONAL, RELATIONAL, INTELLECTUAL, PHYSICAL AND SPIRITUAL IMPACTS/IMPLICATIONS OF THE CORONAVIRUS?

- How has your church/community been effected?
- What are the current/future needs of your community?
- What are people communicating and in what ways?
- How are you able to shepherd in the present context?
- What resources do you uniquely have, as a church, to serve your local community?



WHAT ARE THE EMOTIONAL IMPLICATIONS

- What fears/anxieties is COVID-19 triggering for you? Your leaders? Your Body?
- How can you address these fears and anxieties and spread gospel truth?
- What are the what-ifs you are thinking about?
- What are the what-ifs you are too afraid to think about?

WHAT ARE THE RELATIONAL / SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- What does biblical community look like considering social distancing?
- Considering social distancing, what does community look like? How do we communicate and relate?
- How do you make use of this new “common bond experience” to build relationships with people in your community?
- What idols is this crisis revealing in our culture? In your church?
- What are the longer-term implications of the economic circumstances (significant economic downturn)?



WHAT ARE THE SPIRITUAL IMPLICATIONS

- What does disciple-making look like for your church body with social distancing?
- How do you and your church make the best use of time considering COVID-19?
What new opportunities are presenting itself to share the love of Christ?
- What is your church's theology of suffering?
- What is your current attitude towards COVID-19? Is it something to get through, get over or get past? Is it an opportunity for intentional Gospel outreach?



WHAT ARE THE PHYSICAL IMPLICATIONS

- How are people in your church and your surrounding community being impacted? Potentially impacted in the future?
- If the current restrictions extend, considering the economic climate, how might these factors impact the community you serve (extended quarantines, job loss, family crisis)?

WHAT ARE THE INTELLECTUAL / PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS

In a crisis and trauma, people's ability to think clearly drops by half:

- How do you lead/shepherd yourself and your body who have less intellectual capacity than before?
- How have you seen illogical responses from yourself, your body, and your community? How do you address them?
- How can you address the trauma and stress facing your congregation and your community?



UNDERSTANDING THE COVID-19 CRISIS



WHY IS COVID-19 DIFFERENT?

Psalm 46:1-3

*God is our refuge and strength,
a very present help in trouble.*

*Therefore we will not fear though the earth gives way,
though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea,
though its waters roar and foam,
though the mountains tremble at its swelling.*

Normal Flu infects over 13% of US Population, requiring 800,000 hospitalizations and resulting in over 60,000 deaths (2018)*

Unchecked, COVID-19 could result in 49 to 90 million infections in the US, 1.5 to 9 million hospitalizations and 300,000 to 1.3 million deaths**

2018

2020

2020

COVID-19 does not have any vaccines and no proven anti-viral treatments

Source:

* Estimated Influenza Illnesses, Medical visits, Hospitalizations, and Deaths in the United States — 2017–2018 influenza season

** Rough estimation - Based upon CDC, WHO, Johns Hopkins data and analysis from Wuhan, China

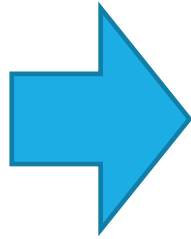
EVERYTHING HAS CHANGED

- Dramatic government intervention
- Fear
- Precipitous drop in stocks
- Restricted/prohibited business activity
- Financial downturn
- Panic buying
- Social distancing

- Is this for **TWO WEEKS**, two months, longer?
- **EVERYONE** is affected
- How **WILL** the **CHURCH** respond?

IMPACTS ON MINISTRY CAN BE SUBSTANTIAL, BUT THE CRISIS ALSO OFFERS NEW WAYS TO REACH COMMUNITIES AND THE LOST

- Canceling physical services
- Canceling school classes / moving online
- Canceling camps/meetings/ in-person small groups
- Inability to collect physical offering
- Impaired finances, dramatic drop in offerings for months
- Loss of community



- Online services – keep same rhythm, e.g., times, content
- Utilize technology to support ministries, small groups, bible studies, school classes, etc.
- Use online forums, group discussions, chat boards
- Buddy system for church members to check on each other
- Neighborhood prayer walks –ask how you can help
- Shopping ministry for more vulnerable / infected
- Door knockers telling people to call if they need help
- Emphasize online giving, request additional resources for benevolence and to meet church financial needs **NOW**

Psalm 5:11

*But let all who take refuge in you rejoice;
let them ever sing for joy,
and spread your protection over them,
that those who love your name may exult in you.*

THINGS ON THE GROUND WILL CHANGE RAPIDLY DAY TO DAY

- Schools and businesses likely to remain closed for an extended time
- Government guidelines will continue to evolve and most likely tighten for the next several weeks
- Guidance for any physical meetings, even in small numbers, will likely become more restrictive
- Shelter in place likely for larger metropolitan areas & areas with larger outbreaks
- Media – panic mode will not diminish in the short-term
- Some members will contract the Coronavirus

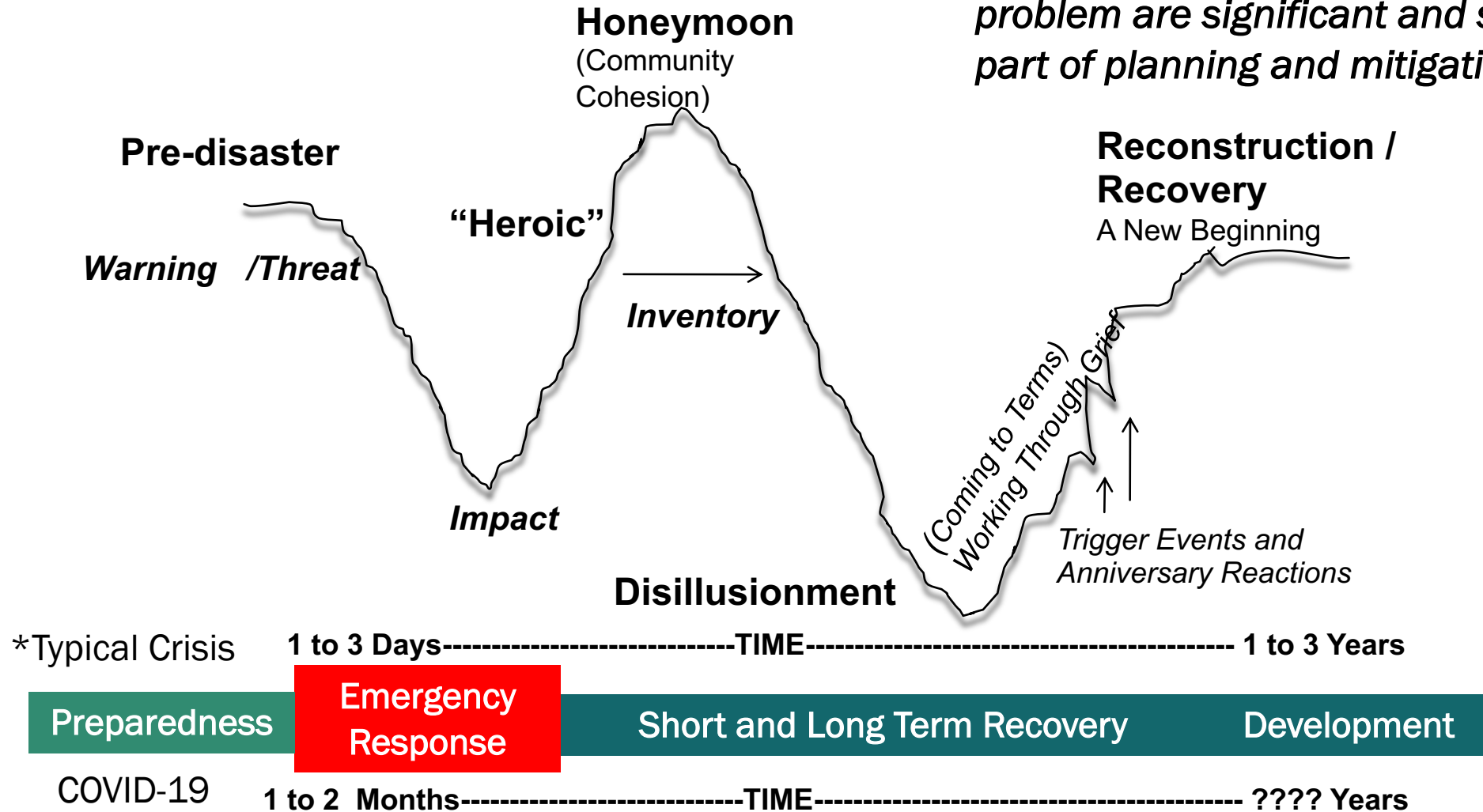


- Utilize authoritative sites / sources of information
- Meet frequently via phone / online
- Adjust plans as needed and communicate often

**How does ministry
need to adapt?**

PSYCHOLOGICAL RESPONSE TO CRISIS

The implications of a longer-term problem are significant and should be part of planning and mitigation efforts



* Hurricane, Flood, Earthquake, Tornado, etc.

PLANNING AND ADAPTING IS MANDATORY

- Establish a dedicated team to create/update the church's crisis response plans
- Develop and execute a communications strategy and plan
- Define criteria for cancelling / restarting services and using an online / streaming format
- Review and revise service elements, e.g., communion, offerings, greeting, etc.
- Develop an approach for caring for older/vulnerable members
- Adjust outreach programs to minister to the needs of the community
- Encourage online giving / offering options
- Establish enhanced approach to cleaning church facilities

Actions / Questions to Consider:

- What are the criteria to cancel all physical meetings, small groups, etc.?
- Can we provide technology training for community / small group leaders if needed?
- What are the criteria to restart worship services at the church facility?
- Will we need to revise elements of the service when begin meeting again in person?
- Will giving be impacted?
- Should we request additional donations for benevolence?
- What future issues will the church face as a result of the present crisis?

COMMUNICATIONS ARE CRITICAL TO CHURCH MEMBERS, VOLUNTEERS, CHURCH STAFF, AND THE COMMUNITY

Key Messages:

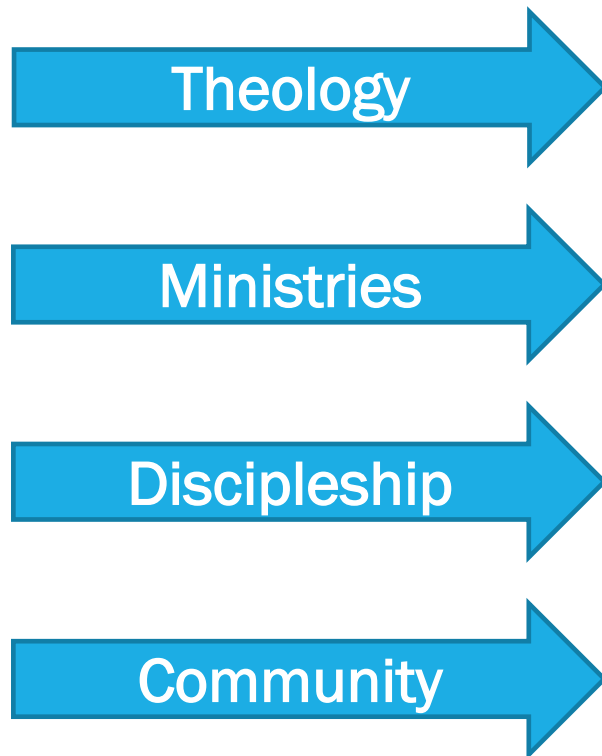
- We do not fear, we are children of the King
- Church leaders have a plan and are staying up to date on recommendations of health authorities and local, state, and the national government
- This crisis offers an opportunity to reach lost people and proclaim the message of hope that is in us
- Reach out to others in the church often
- Contact Community/Small group leaders / Elders if you need help / have concerns
- Use Simple Messages
- Messages Come from Elders / Church Leadership
- Keep Messages Consistent
- Release Accurate Messages as Soon as Possible

John 14:27

Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

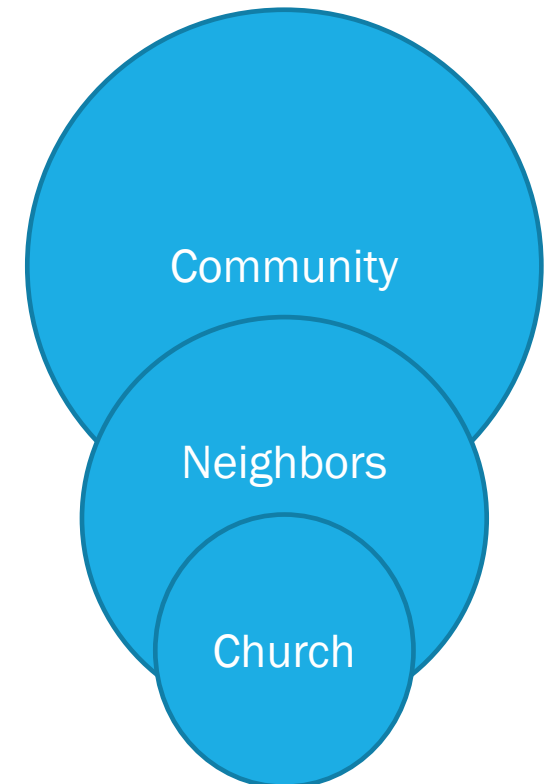
CONTINUITY OF MINISTRY IS CRITICAL TO THE HEALTH OF THE BODY

How can the church be the church in the present context?



- Developing
- Caring
- Equipping
- Informing
- Connecting
- Shepherding
- Discipling

How does the vision and mission of the church, its unique position and capabilities, intersect with COVID-19?



COVID-19 OFFERS PROVIDES A MISSION FIELD TO SHARE THE GOSPEL AND REACH THOSE THAT DO NOT KNOW CHRIST

What the World Sees / Experiences

Mental State During a Crisis*

- Uncertainty
- Fear, Anxiety, and Dread
- Hopelessness and Helplessness
- Denial

...lack of information or conflicting information from authorities is likely to create heightened anxiety and emotional distress.*

* Source: [CDC: Psychology of a Crisis](#)

Ministering in Word and Deed

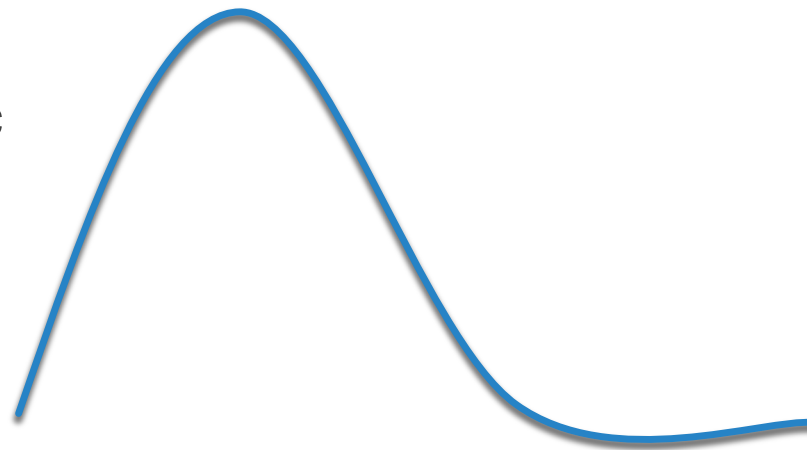
How will we leverage our unique ministries and capabilities to impact our community for Christ?

"I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and pollute others and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me, and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbor needs me however, I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely as stated above. See this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God."
Martin Luther, Works v. 43, p. 132. Letter "Whether one may flee from a Deadly Plague"

REACTION CONTINUUM – HOW WILL THE CHURCH RESPOND

Ignore

- Event is overblown
- Media is creating panic
- Wait and see
- This won't last long
- No impact on ministries
- No impact on finances



Embrace

- Nothing is certain
- This is the new normal
- Adapt Ministries
- Embrace social distancing
- New Ministries to Focus on Trauma and Counseling
- Prepare for the Next Wave
- Raise Funds Now



ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER



WHAT IS THE NEW NORMAL

- Is this for **two weeks**, two months, **longer**?
- What are the **implications** for **society** in general?
- How will this change **health care** and related services?
- How will health care be **rationed** / **distributed**? What is the Church's **position**?
- What are the **implications** to global **connections** between **countries**?
- How does this **change behaviors**?
- How is your community impacted? How is it changing?
- What are the implications of tens of **millions** of **unemployed** people globally?
- What about unemployment in your community?
- What **really matters**?

HOW DOES THIS IMPACT THE CHURCH AS A WHOLE

- How does the Church's **mission** and **capabilities** intersect with the evolving **realities** of COVID-19?
- How does this **impact** missions' **activities**?
- What are the **financial impacts** to the **Church**?
- What **support** can/should be **provided** by denominational **leadership**?
- What are the **priorities**?
- How can/should **like-minded** denominations work **together**?
- How will **THE CHURCH** respond?

WHAT IS THE IMPACT ON YOUR CONGREGATION

- Who are your most **vulnerable members**? Will existing **ministries** meet their **needs**?
- What are the **longer-term** implications for **larger** churches? **Smaller** churches?
- How do you stay **connected** with **members** / regular **attenders** / **visitors**?
- How are you able to shepherd in the context of the current situation?
- What are the unique resources you have as a church to minister in your community in this new context?
- What are your members telling you? Each other?
- Does your **church** have at least **six months** in financial **reserves**?
- What are the **implications** to church **staff**?
- How will business **economic challenges** affect your church's **leadership**?
- Is anyone in your **congregation** infected? What are the **reactions** of the **members**?
- How do you **assure members** / Visitors that church **facilities** are **safe**?
- How will you **decide** to Stop / Restart **meeting** at church **facilities**?

WHAT ARE THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVANGELISM AND DISCIPLESHIP

- How **can / should** existing **ministries** be **adapted**?
- What **new** people **groups** may now be **reachable** by your **church**?
- What, if any, **new ministries** should be **considered**?
- What are the **implications** for **church planting**?
- Can / should **house churches** become a part of a **local congregation**?
- What **training / discipleship** activities should be **prioritized**?

REACHGLOBAL CRISIS RESPONSE IS HERE TO HELP

A Mission Field is Created in the Wake of Every Crisis Event

- **Create / adapt** crisis response **plans** to mitigate coronavirus **impacts**
- Train / Support **preparedness** / **Trauma care** for individual / Groups of **churches**
- Provide **forum** for **leaders** to **brainstorm** new ministry **opportunities**
- Provide **guidance** on **evangelism** based on **prior** disaster **events**
- **Support** district / regional **leadership** in **developing** and **executing** responses



WAYS TO BE GOD'S HANDS AND FEET WHILE ABIDING IN SOCIAL DISTANCING



SPIRITUAL

- **Deepen your spiritual walk** by prayer, reading your Bible, doing a bible study, and devotionals.
- **Pray for our leaders** – This is an unprecedented time. Pray for clarity and unity for leaders of our government, state and locally, including our pastors, employers and others who lead people.
- **Community Groups** – Start an online group of friends who you can fellowship with and study the bible together. If started with local people, plan to transition it to an in-person meeting, when possible, after social distancing requirements have been removed.
- **RightNow Media** – Find some great studies on [rightnow Media](#), encourage others to watch them, then call them up and talk about what stood out to you.
- **Purposefully Meditate** – Practice setting aside time for meditating on the things of God. Do it in coordination with others and explore together what the Lord spoke to or impressed upon you.
- **Prayer Walk Your Neighborhoods** – Pray as you walk around your neighborhood, look for others that are out and while keeping a safe social distance, ask them how they are, if they have a story, if and how can you pray for them.

RELATIONAL

- **Write a card or letter** first to those who are sheltered, then continued to connect to those in your circle.
- **Connect with people electronically** by using Skype, Facetime, [Zoom](https://www.zoom.us) or other interactive apps for individual and or group calls. <https://www.commonsemmedia.org/lists/multiplayer-apps> shows a host of games that people can do together interactively.
- **Call a minimum of two people a day.** Use your phone contact list, church directory or your phone with the goal of calling everyone on your list for the next 30 days.
- **Love others** – From your own home, check-in by phone with others, who you know, do not have a strong support system. If you aren't aware of someone's support system, reach out to them to find out how to best encourage them.
- **Adopt an older / vulnerable person** – Identify vulnerable / older people in the congregation and ask others to “adopt” them and call them regularly (at least weekly) as well as text and email (if the person uses those forms of communication).
- **Neighborhood communities** – Setup / utilize neighborhood email registries for those interested. Assign block captains (may or may not be Christians). Provide regular updates, ask neighbors to check on each other. Ask for prayer requests.
- **House a college student** – many foreign students and some nationals may not be able to get home and their dorm may be closed. Individuals or families could provide housing for one or more students.

EMOTIONAL

- **Write a gratitude journal** – There are so many blessings that God gives us each day, even when there are bumps in life. Capture a minimum of one blessing each day and make each one unique.
- **Share stories with friends or social media** - God opens a mission field in every crisis. People will see your calm in the storm and will want to know the source of your calmness – our strong and mighty God!
- **Talk about Your Feelings** – Give someone an opportunity to talk about how they are feeling during this crisis. Let them process out loud what they are going through emotionally. Be careful not to feed into or exacerbate their negative thoughts and emotions. Let them know it is normal to feel what they feel.
- **Limit News and Social Media** – Encourage others to limit the amount of social media and news they are consuming. These avenues of communication can cause stress, fear, and worry. By limiting these, and trying to create a normal life rhythm, it can create a sense of stability and trust.

INTELLECTUAL

- **Think of others** by being part of the solution of halting the spread of any virus by practicing all of the recommendations of the CDC, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html>
- **Learn something** – Read the books you have put off. You can download books through the library and book downloading services. Learn a language for free using [Duolingo.com](https://www.duolingo.com) or similar sites.
- **Share your ideas on social media or by text** listing your ideas of how to share God’s love and grace with the goal of creating and/or maintaining community during these unique times. Email your ideas to respond@efca.org.
- **Book Club** – Find a group of people who are willing to read a book. Get together via phone or online and then talk about it and how it applies to life.
- **Teach Someone** – Use current technology to teach someone something. It can be anything from knitting to mathematics. Use those times as an access ministry to someone’s heart.
- **Find ways to support those who are currently out of work** especially hourly people who work in restaurants, gyms, students who had jobs at their universities that are now closed, etc.

PHYSICAL

- **Prayer walk your neighborhood** – It's just what it sounds like - praying to God while walking around, keeping your eyes open to the needs around you and humbly asking God to be in the details.
- **Game night** with your family such as charades or other games that don't use items, such as cards or dice that you touch: <https://matadornetwork.com/life/boardless-cardless-games/>
- **Plant a garden** – Growing fruits and vegetables helps you appreciate the miracle of God's creation.
- **Exercise** – There are any number of ways that you can exercise, taking a walk, finding an exercise app, or using the workout equipment in your home. Online, try GonoOdle.com for kids, toolsSilversneakers.com for mature adults and a wide variety of other youtube.com for everyone.
- **Support local restaurants** – Have people intentionally order take-out from restaurants to help support those local businesses.
- **Start a Facebook Group to provide services** to more vulnerable individuals, over 55, immune-deficiencies, infected. Provide meals, shop for groceries, check in on individuals.
- **Drop off meals and/or groceries** to elderly, families who have newborns, or families who are now having to stay home from work because their children's schools are closed.



GOVERNMENT, CHURCH, MEDICAL AND OTHER RESOURCES



RESOURCES

EFCA and Other Christian Resources

- [EFCA Special Update: COVID-19 \(Coronavirus\)](#)
- [Brian Duggan ReachGlobal - Coronavirus Update and Pandemic Planning Video](#)
- [Christians, This Is Our Moment: A Call to Clarity and Mission - Christianity Today](#)
- [A Concise Coronavirus Guide for Churches by Christianity Today](#)
- [Manual & Planning Template by Wheaton College's Humanitarian Disaster Institute \(HDI\)](#)

Medical Community Resources:

- [Coronavirus Disease 2019 vs. the Flu - Johns Hopkins](#)
- [Coronavirus Disease 2019: Myth vs. Fact - Johns Hopkins](#)
- [Cryptic transmission of novel coronavirus - Bedford Labs](#)

Government Resources

- [CDC Guidelines for Faith-Based Organizations](#)
- [CDC - Goals on Community Mitigation for Pandemic Influenza - graphic](#)
- [Preparedness and response framework for novel influenza A virus pandemics, with CDC intervals and World Health Organization phases - graphic](#)
- [WHO Coronavirus Situation Dashboard](#)
- [WHO Coronavirus Main Page](#)
- [Psychology of a Crisis - CDC](#)
- [CDC Clean & Disinfect](#)

Other Resources

- [Information is Beautiful graphic representation of Coronavirus data](#)
- [Best Practices Amidst Coronavirus Concerns](#)



CONTACT

Mark Lewis, Director of ReachGlobal Crisis Response

- (985) 869-4424
- crisisresponse@efca.org