

Checklist:

How to Pivot to a Digital Strategy



Stay connected with your congregation-anytime, anywhere.

It's more important than ever that churches have the tools to reach and minister to their congregation so they never miss a moment to provide support and fellowship. Whether responding to a natural disaster, a national crisis, or an unexpected emergency—having a plan in place to reach and connect with your people digitally is critical.

Consider how you can still **reach your congregation** when in-person service is not possible. Or, how do you **ensure giving doesn't stop** even when people aren't in the pews? More importantly, how can you **leverage technology to stay connected**—anytime, anywhere?

As you are faced with the decision to restrict in-person service, here's a checklist to help you quickly pivot to a digital strategy:

Upfront Logistics:

Evaluate and Determine Your Physical Location

- ▶ If in-person service has been cancelled, determine where you will be recording messages and potentially your weekly sermon—from your living room? From an empty church? A local business?
- ▶ Assign a point person to own the shift to a digital strategy to ensure you don't miss an important step below.
- ▶ Have a point person that's also responsible for monitoring news, guidelines, or regulations from your local officials regarding the safety of group gatherings. Work with them to ensure you're following protocols as intended.
- ▶ Have a plan in place to ensure a point person can handle or address questions if there are any media or press inquiries.



Notify Your Leaders and Ambassadors

- ▶ Notify your direct staff of any changes to service or operations. You can do this via email, your website, a dedicated Facebook group, text message, push notifications, Slack, or a conference call—we recommend Zoom or [Google Hangouts](#) if you don't have another vendor you use.
- ▶ Notify your network of volunteers, who will ultimately be great advocates to get the word out and help direct others. Let them know their contributions are making a difference. Recommend using one or more of the above channels.



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Provide Spiritual Support

- ▶ Encourage your pastor to address concerns openly in the weekly sermon, and pray with your congregation.
- ▶ Set up a prayer list for those in need in your community.
- ▶ Consider setting up an option for a text for prayer channel.



Deploy a digital strategy:

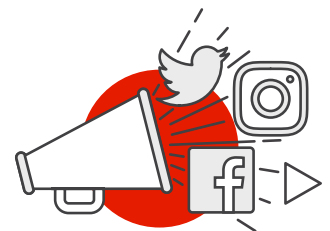
PASTORS: Record a video update

- ▶ Have your pastor record a video with important updates, words of encouragement and hope, and what people can expect from your church. Share this video on social media, in emails, through your church app, and any group forums you have established.
- ▶ No video team required, you can record a simple video in a quiet room using a smartphone.
- ▶ Talking points to consider:
 - How people can stay connected with your church and each other.
 - How they can participate while the changes are in effect.
 - Share ways to give online and communicate any special funds you've started in response to current events.
 - Direct people to your app where they can stay connected to everything that's happening and remind them to opt-in to push notifications so they never miss a moment to participate.



Leverage Social Media

- ▶ Share the video your pastor recorded (see above) on all of your social media channels.
- ▶ Live stream your weekly sermon via [Facebook](#), YouTube, or other platforms. Send a link via a push notification in your church app.
- ▶ Leverage your [Facebook group](#) to post additional updates, news, and announcements, including links to your website or other platforms where you're creating content and messages.
- ▶ Maximize [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [other platforms](#) as a means to get your message out to your congregation so they can stay connected and up-to-date on the most current information.



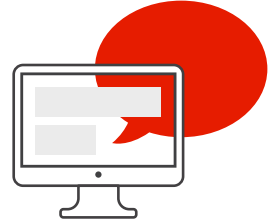
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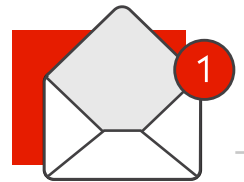
Update Your Website

- ▶ Draft or record a message that can live on your website regarding information in changes or steps your community should take during this critical time.
- ▶ Provide critical information about service times, locations, and other news at the top of your homepage so visitors can easily find it.
- ▶ Update your homepage with a link to disaster preparedness content so people can find it quickly.
- ▶ Create a pop-up banner to drive traffic to important updates and announcements.



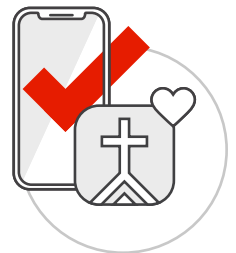
Send an Email

- ▶ Send an [email](#) to your congregation that includes a message of support, changes in service, or any other important updates.
- ▶ If you are a multi-campus church, and only one campus has been impacted, send the email to the impacted group. If appropriate, a tailored note and message of prayer for congregants at other campuses is a nice gesture.



Power Up Your App

- ▶ Ensure you have a plan or the capability to [live stream](#) from your app (if not, view social media section).
- ▶ Ensure you have a point person that can develop and send [push notifications](#). In fact, people read push notifications more often than email.
 - Make sure to remind your congregation to enable and/or opt in to receive push notifications from their app. The default for many apps is to opt-out.
 - Schedule push notifications in advance if you know there will be changes to how people can view the weekly sermon.
 - Use emojis and quick statements to get your point across quickly and effectively.
 - Use [rich push notifications](#) with an image or video, which have higher open rates.



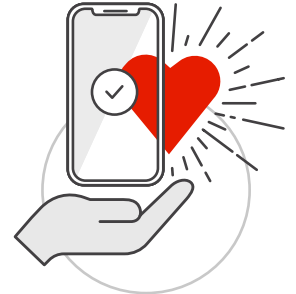
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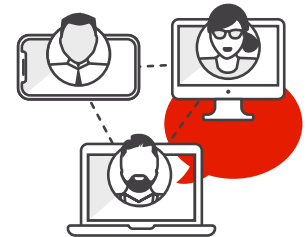
Encourage Digital Generosity:

- ▶ Skip passing the plate to keep from spreading germs.
- ▶ Encourage people to give from their mobile device or online at home.
- ▶ Ensure you have a text-to-give solution set up and ready to go.
- ▶ For those that still want to give via check or cash, set up a specific area where envelopes can be dropped off.
- ▶ Initiate a relief or support fund that people can contribute to, that will help those in need in your congregation and community.
- ▶ Ensure you have proper reporting for clicks, gifts, and finances driven through your digital giving to measure its effectiveness and optimize as needed. This also serves as a great way to see the appetite for your congregation on keeping this online presence once regular services commence.



Digital Small Groups

- ▶ Encourage people to meet digitally for Bible study or home viewing parties of the weekly sermon. We recommend using Zoom or [Google Hangouts](#) if you don't have another vendor you use. This is still a great way for people to still connect and have fellowship—right from their living room.



Rinse and Repeat

- ▶ Anticipate that once you have your digital strategy defined, and are up and running, it is unlikely you'll be able to walk away in a few days. Be prepared to nurture your community via a digital strategy for weeks.
- ▶ Plan ahead for future content. Schedule push notifications, email content or pre-record videos.



In times like these it's important that we take precaution and look out for the safety and health of our communities, but still find ways that will not hinder the support we provide to our congregation each week. More than ever, your congregation is looking to you to provide guidance and assurance in times of uncertainty. We encourage you to practice and implement the tips above, and know that you have the tools, technology and support to continue to foster connection, participation and giving.