

REEMERGE

Reopening the Church
After the Pandemic



GIVING LIFE TO THE BODY OF CHRIST

REEMERGE

The CORPUS team has been working with pastors, churches and network leaders from across the country and around the world during the Coronavirus pandemic. We are working with several frontline countries and states who have been leaders in emerging from Coronavirus lockdowns. There are important lessons to be learned and considerations to make with regards to reopening the church and returning to more normal operations. This free resource is provided to you to assist you and your leadership team in reemerging from the disruptions the Coronavirus has caused. Ultimately, you must decide when and how to reemerge from the pandemic. We are neither doctors or legal experts, and we are not giving medical or legal advice in this resource. Our team is seeking to help your church team think, pray, and make decisions with a circumspect perspective.

In **REEMERGE**, you will find perspective-gathering resources, checklists, and worksheets to assist you in thinking through how your team can lead your church to reemerge from the pandemic. Our hope is you will have weathered the storm of the crisis and you and your church will reemerge better than before the crisis began.

The crisis has forced the church into new models of ministry that might have otherwise taken years to develop and embrace. You must not surrender the new ground the Lord has given you. This tool builds on several of the assumptions you will find in the **RETHINK** resource that was developed by the CORPUS team on the front end of the crisis. You may need to visit the CORPUS website and click the **RETHINK** button to download this resource, too. Both resources will help you rethink and reemerge from the crisis better able to fulfill God's mission for your church.

Finally, utilizing **RETHINK** and **REEMERGE** may lead you to the place where a complete **REFOCUS** is necessary. Helping churches refocus is our team's specialty, and we would love the opportunity to help you refocus your church.

You can visit our website to learn more.



corpusvitae.org

Disruption is a perspective-gathering article that can be found on our blog at drrobpeters.com. Our belief is that it can help your team recognize the opportunity Coronavirus is providing the church.

Disruption – It may be the opportunity you have been looking for!

Thinking the COVID-19 disruption could help the church might sound strange or even devious at first. But consider that the church in North America has not been doing all that well for the past decade, and you may rethink the opportunity the crisis presents to the church.

Since upwards of 80% of churches have plateaued or are declining, you have to conclude most churches have been stuck in patterns of irrelevance and insignificance for a long time. Many pastors have been challenging the existing culture within their church, but have found their churches resistant to change. But now . . . change has been forced upon the church. The forced disruption from COVID-19, social distancing, quarantining, etc., at first caused pastors to react, but now the ongoing reality is causing pastors to rethink how they do ministry. This is not a bad thing!

Pastors started by rethinking how they streamed their Sunday morning worship service. But as time is progressing pastors, staffs, and church leaders are rethinking everything. They are rethinking how discipleship is resourced and practiced. Pastors are rethinking how they are mobilizing people for missional engagement. Churches are rethinking how they communicate to and care for their congregations. Church leaders are rethinking how they meet and make decisions.

Now marry these two ideas: God disrupted our everyday lives, and the church in North America needed to be disrupted. Could God be up to something NEW here? I think He is. Allow me to speculate a little about people, churches and pastors.

People are more flexible now than they have been in a long time. The norms and expectations have been shattered. Everything is being renegotiated. Everything is on the table when it comes to change. This is the single most opportunistic moment for change within the church since WWII, and the church needed to change. The question is: how are you planning for long-term change so when the crisis is mitigated, you and your church don't fall right back into old patterns that lead to greater decline once COVID-19 is gone?

The church is asking existential questions for the first time in a long time. These existential questions have to do with the mission of the church, how the church does ministry, and what really matters to the church. Everything else has become superfluous. People need the church now more than ever, and usually in times of crisis people gravitate to the church. However, this time they cannot "come" to church. So, churches are having to reinvent how they are sharing the gospel, discipling followers, and mobilizing members. This is driving pastors and churches back to the essential aspects of what ministry was intended to be.

Pastors are innovating and taking risks for the first time in a long-time, aka "acting in faith." Without faith it is impossible to please God, and currently some churches are in danger of pleasing God for the first time in a long time. Pastors, we have to believe the second half of **Hebrews 11.6**, too, *"that he is a Rewarder of those who diligently seek Him."* I believe if the church can get out of its way (get out of its patterns of "how we have done church" in the past) this might be the church's finest moment in our lifetimes.



REEMERGE | Disruption

God has never wasted a crisis! It was Henry Blackaby that termed the concept "Crisis of Belief" in *Experiencing God*, and he taught us how God intentionally brings His people to the crisis moment in order to cause them to act in faith and rediscover who He is. God has caused people to turn to him in faith through crisis. He has transformed people through the crisis. He has changed people's perspective through the crisis. He has revealed Himself through the crisis, and so much more.

Churches, pastors, Christians, don't waste the crisis. Let this be the moment for this generation when we rediscover and recommit to the mission of the church.

Ps 34.17-20 says, *"When the righteous cry for help, the Lord hears and delivers them out of all their troubles. The Lord is near to the brokenhearted and saves the crushed in spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all."*

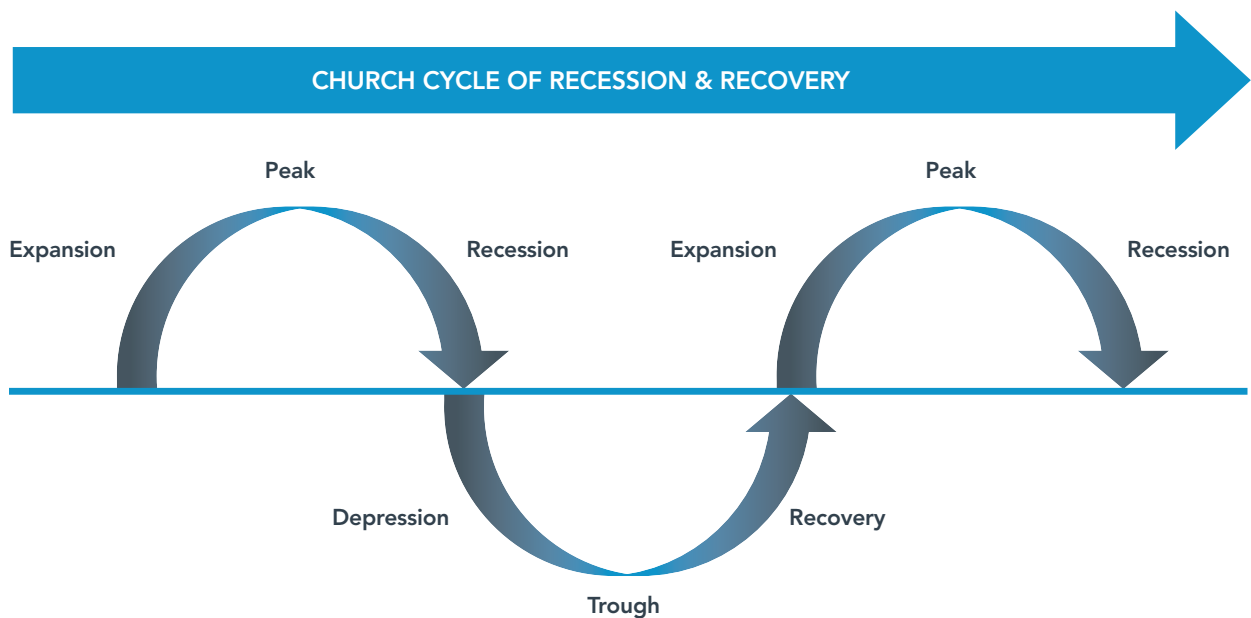
To learn more about the **RETHINK** resource, visit our website and click the **RETHINK** button.

REEMERGE | Church Utilization Cycle Chart



The following is a cycle chart adapted for church utilization. This chart combines the bell curve with the Kubler-Ross curve. The bell curve is a popular resource that many churches have drawn upon for years as they think about the cycles their church goes through. The Kubler-Ross curve has been used by churches to describe the stages of grief and how to respond to a crisis. The two charts together create for the church a chart that the business community has utilized for decades as they have measured the ebb and flow of business activity.

The business cycle chart has not been used by the church historically. However, at this crucial moment it is relevant, and our team has adapted it for use within the church. The reason it has not historically been used is that the church has rarely been at a moment when it has flushed all the non-essential ministries out of its system and rebuilt a renewed model of itself for future use that is intended to be more effective and efficient. Our team believes the church is at such a rare moment right now. We believe the church can rebuild its ministry around only essential ministries with the potential that the church can reemerge different from before the crisis, but much more effective and much more efficient than it was prior to the crisis.



This is a rare moment for the church given that we have experienced the depression and trough for the first time since WWII. This moment means many things in the church can properly die off, while many other things can emerge as a new and better version of a timeless aspect of the things Jesus intends for the church to practice. You and your team will need to determine what you want to feed so that it lives and what you want to starve so it dies. This is probably the most critical time in the life of your church during your lifetime.



REEMERGE | Church Utilization Cycle Chart

What needs to live and be fed? _____

What needs to be starved and allowed to die? _____

What needs to be promoted, and how will you promote it? _____

What have you learned that you don't want to surrender after the crisis is over? _____

Who have you engaged that you want to remain engaged with after the crisis is over? _____

TEN POST-CORONAVIRUS CHURCH NORMS

Ten Post-Coronavirus Church Norms anticipates the new norms that will emerge from the global experience with the Coronavirus.

Leading up to Easter, pastors and churches were rightly focused on Easter Sunday and the hopes of the Resurrection. Easter is the apex of all Christian hope and celebration. But since Easter Sunday has passed, pastors and churches have become very aware that post-Easter ministry is feeling very different and more long-term than anticipated.

Our team www.corpusvitae.org works with churches, networks, and denominations in 12 states and seven countries, which allows us to observe larger trends in church life. As we work with, interview and survey our partner churches, trends are beginning to emerge. Here is what we are hearing, observing and anticipating:

1. People will gather in **smaller worship settings and smaller small groups** (50% full will be the new full and people will walk out of full rooms and worship centers).
2. The church will **recover its essential ministry** and non-essential ministry will have fewer participants and get less money.
3. The church has given people permission to stay home for worship services and **worship attendance will go down** another 15%, but online viewing will go up 50%.
4. Pastoral care will **focus on psychological issues** and the church will finally engage the mental health crisis.
5. Discipleship will occur in **groups of three** during the workday and **groups of 12** or less in homes in the evenings.
6. Missions will focus more on the **immediate community** than traveling abroad.
7. The church will **redefine hospitality** in the age of social distancing. There will be no potlucks and no greeting time during the worship service.
8. The church will **partner with the business and medical community** in new and creative ways to solve community challenges.
9. Money **will flow to mission(s) and ministry** and out of programs and facilities.
10. Preaching **will focus on meaning and significance** so that the existential questions people are asking can be answered.



REEMERGE | Post-Coronavirus Church Norms

Coronavirus is changing the way people think about church. Our team believes that churches that view themselves as a movement instead of an institution can thrive in the new realities they face.

What specific changes do you anticipate your church facing after the crisis has passed?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____
16. _____
17. _____
18. _____
19. _____
20. _____

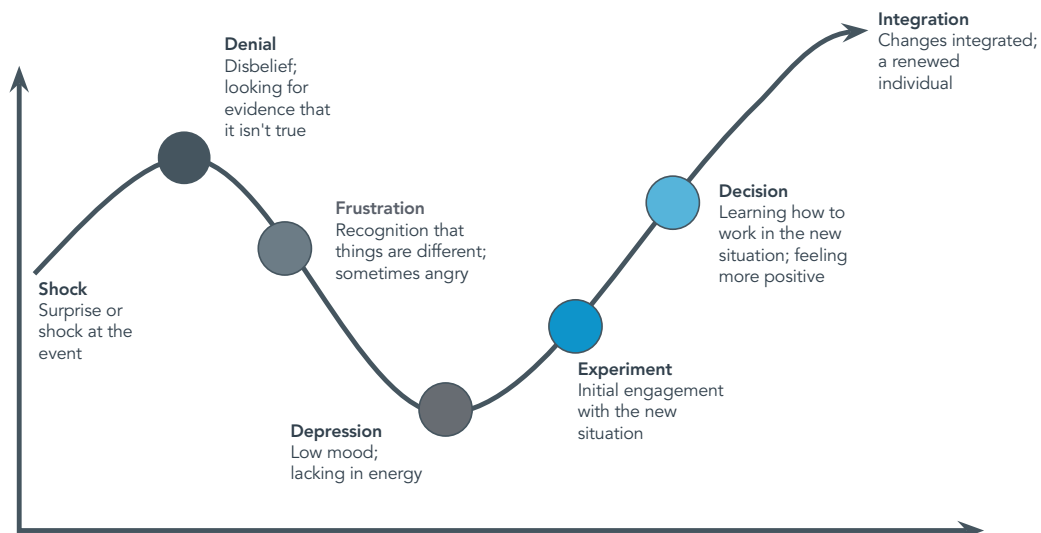
Reorientation reminds us that despite disoriented experiences in life, God is working to reorient the church and His people. Built on the five stages of grief, which the church has long used to explain the struggles people have with death and other change, this article orients leaders to how the Coronavirus has caused the church to accelerate the pace of change to a degree not ever experienced in our lifetimes. As your team begins to think about how to reemerge, **you must especially focus on the last three stages in the graph.**

FIVE STAGES OF GRIEF CURVE

When the realities set in, people were moving towards the deepest point of the grief curve. The evidence was everywhere. Personally, I heard from pastors who are helping churches and Christians whose desperation and frustration were real.

The macro-social dynamics revealed the evidence. The divorce rate in China skyrocketed. The cause? Too little money, too much screen time, too much conflict, too little communication about expectations, and uneven division of housework and childcare. **Remote therapy** surged in America. Early indications were there were not enough counselors to help those who were crying out in pain for help. **Domestic abuse** calls surged. Physical abuse, emotional abuse, and relational breakdowns were all occurring.

The **five stages of grief** inform us about the difficulty of the situation. Depression is what we experienced. (The diagram below is from a resource called **RETHINK** provided by the CORPUS team. It explains the stages of grief people and organizations are going through during the current crisis).



Create a plan
Maximize communication
Invite participation
Develop capacity
Create a movement



REEMERGE | Reorientation

Is there anywhere we can turn for help in the crisis? **Psalm 121.1-2** says, *"I will lift up my eyes to the mountains; From where shall my help come? My help comes from the LORD. . ."*

The desperation in the trough was real. And even unexpected voices are encouraging people to turn to God. The governor of Mississippi led his state in prayer on TV. A CNN news anchor asked a Christian pastor to pray on air. Hollywood entertainers are online telling people to turn to Jesus and read the Bible. A businessman stood in the Rose Garden and preached the Gospel with the President standing beside him. The Prime Minister of Australia is leading viewers in prayer on television. Things must be really bad, and they are. **In times of disorientation we find our Reorientation in the Lord.**

One of the places many are turning for help is to the book of Psalms. I have noticed more **pastors preaching from the Psalms**, more **posts on social media quoting the Psalms**, many governmental officials appealing to the Psalms, and many **churches are reading from the Psalms** during their online services. People are seeking to give comfort, hope, direction, understanding and more to their listeners. I think **the Psalms are the perfect place to turn in these disorienting times.**

It was **Walter Brueggemann** in his groundbreaking book, *The Message of the Psalms*, that provides one of the most meaningful and simplest outlines for understanding the Psalms. Brueggemann identifies three types of Psalms in the cyclical nature of the human experience. According to Brueggemann, there are **Psalms of Orientation, Psalms of Disorientation, and Psalms of Reorientation.**

While the Psalms of Orientation are a distant memory right now, most people can relate to the **Psalms of Disorientation.** Let me give my own outline to the Psalms of Disorientation. What we are facing is **disorder** leading to **disruption**, leading to **disorientation**, resulting in **discouragement** and for some even **disillusionment.**

It is at this low point of disorientation where the human heart recognizes it is empty and hurting, and it is powerless and helpless. We realize we cannot control the outcome of the crisis. We are not in charge of the circumstances. **The thin veneer of human control is shattered**, and we are asking existential questions about life's meaning: what do I truly believe? and where, if anywhere, can I turn for help? This is **life's most vulnerable moment**; however, it is **spiritual life's most valuable moment.**

It is here where the Psalms really can help us! As Brueggemann says, **"the Psalms of Disorientation teach us how to talk to God in our desperation."** The Psalms reveal **it is ok to be angry**, frustrated, and hurt. **It is ok to vent** these feelings and fears to God. **It is ok to wrestle** with these issues.

You/I are not the first to do this. As a matter of fact, **every generation must have this moment, or they are doomed to live a shallow, insignificant life.** This season of suffering has been called **the dark night of the soul**, and it is a place **where God does some of His very best work.** We learn to **walk by faith and not by sight.** We learn **the world is broken** and we come face to face with the fact that **we are broken, too.** We, like Job, sit in our sorrow and **gain a much better and more realistic view** of the world we live in and the life we live.

Thankfully, for the believer, disorientation is not the last word! There is a coming **reorientation** for those who will put their hope in God. **Psalm 73** was **King David's ultimate reorientation**. In light of his troubles, he makes his way into the presence of God confessing *"his foot had almost slipped."* But when he comes to the Lord and finds spiritual reorientation, his *"bitterness melts away and his hope surges."* He confesses his faith and trust in God, *"Whom have I in heaven but you? and besides You I desire nothing on earth. My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."*

Here are the four things David teaches us that come with our spiritual **REORIENTATION**:

1. **RELATIONSHIP** – Our isolation is overcome by the most meaningful relationship we could ever hope to experience – a relationship with God. As a matter of fact, we discover that we have been living far below what we were designed to enjoy when we were living "ordinary" lives without an extraordinary relationship with the living God.
2. **RELAXATION** – We discover we can relax, recognizing that we are not in control, but God is. He has numbered our days, and He has a purpose for our lives. He is in control and we are not. You can be anxious, but in your anxiety, you will not be able to add a single day to your life. So, relax. God's got this.
3. **RESILIENCE** – One of the things your faith in God will provide you is an unending resilience in the face of difficulty. Resilience will empower you to: A) accept your new reality, B) develop new routines, C) reinvent your schedule, D) reflect deeply about what matters, and E) reframe how you view life.
4. **RENEWAL** – Victor Frankl who wrestled more deeply with meaning and purpose than most of us ever will wrote, *"When we are no longer able to change a situation, we are challenged to change ourselves."* This is the ultimate reorientation, and this is what God is able to accomplish.

Philippians 2.5-11 was **Brueggemann's inspiration** for his three-fold outline of the Psalms. Paul reveals the ultimate gospel orientation when Jesus Himself went through this cycle of orientation, disorientation, and reorientation, and He came out on the other side victorious.

Our team believes that as the church begins to emerge from the disorientation that the Coronavirus caused, reorientation is now possible. This may be the single most important moment for your church as you reorient around God's mission.

Following, you will find reflection and reorientation questions that will help you consider how to reemerge from the crisis as a renewed ministry.



REFLECTIONS ON REORIENTATION

Work through the following six questions with your leadership team:

1. You and your team have responded to the crisis and you have learned new lessons and new ways to do ministry. What takeaways from the season of crisis should you carry forward with you? _____

2. You have learned to communicate to your people in new ways and using new resources, tools and means. What lessons have you learned about communication with your church that you should continue once the crisis is over? _____

3. You and your leadership have provided resources for spiritual development in unusual ways. How will you continue to provide spiritual resources to your people that help disciple them in the future? _____

4. You and your team recognize that people desire to reemerge and reengage as the quarantine is lifted. How will you invite your people to engage first? Next? And finally? _____

5. You and your team have developed and delivered many new things to the church and church members. How will you keep and use the capacity you have created? _____

6. You and your team have mobilized the church in new ways. What have you learned, and how will you deploy them in the future in light of what you have learned? _____

THE SIX IRREDUCIBLE MINIMUMS OF LEADERSHIP DURING AND AFTER A CRISIS

1. Define the **mission**.

Mission answers the question: *What do we do?*

2. Declare the **values**.

Values answer the question: *Why do we it?*

3. Determine the **strategy**.

Strategy answers the question: *How do we do it?*

4. Discern God's **vision**.

Vision addresses the question: *Where are we going?*

5. Decide on the next step that must be made by developing an **annual plan**.

Annual plan answers the question: *Where so we start?*

6. Develop the corresponding **goals**.

Goals answer the question: *Are we making progress and making a difference?*

Answering these six key leadership questions is required if you are going to be a competent leader. Can you answer each of the questions clearly and concisely? At CORPUS, the entire **REFOCUS** process is designed to help you provide competent spiritual leadership. Our team would be honored to work with your church and team as you begin taking a long-term view of these six minimums of leadership.



REEMERGE | Ministry Assessment

SEVENTEEN AREAS OF CHURCH LIFE

In the CORPUS new pastor on-boarding resource, we help pastors assess 17 areas of church life when they enter a new ministry. The 17 categories are essential areas of the ministry with which a new pastor should quickly become familiar. Likewise, as you reemerge from the crisis, you will need to reassess each area of ministry in light of its current condition.

	Weakness	Struggle	Average	Above Average	Excellent
1. Ministry vision and direction					
2. Church culture					
3. Staff make-up and capacity					
4. Lay leadership					
5. Spiritual climate of church/membership					
6. Financial position					
7. Organizational structure					
8. Membership makeup					
9. Large church ministries (i.e., school)					
10. Community needs					
11. Facilities					
12. Missions ministry					
13. Church calendar					
14. Budget processes					
15. Immediate opportunities/threats					
16. Life cycle					
17. Systems					

The **Red Light, Green Light** exercise provides you the opportunity to determine how ready the ministry is to emerge or how depressed the ministry currently is. The most negative feelings toward each question are indicated in the -3 range. The most positive feelings toward each question are indicated in the +3 range. If your assessment is neutral in an area, mark your response as a “yellow light” and then reflect on why that is the case. Use the descriptive line to record your thoughts as you work through the exercise.

1. How frozen is the church currently after the pandemic?



Observations/comments _____

2. How much demand is there for the church to gather together as a body?



Observations/comments _____

3. How much fear is there about gathering together?



Observations/comments _____

4. How difficult will it be to relaunch the core ministries?



Observations/comments _____

5. Our leaders will be able to lead their ministries as the church reemerges from the crisis.



Observations/comments _____



REEMERGE | Red Light, Green Light

6. Has the church become more intentional about seeing Christ formed in the lives of people during the crisis?

-3

-2

-1

0

+1

+2

+3

Observations/comments _____

7. Has the church increased its commitment to meeting needs within the church or in the community during the crisis?

-3

-2

-1

0

+1

+2

+3

Observations/comments _____

8. Rate the clarity of the mission as the church prepares to emerge.

-3

-2

-1

0

+1

+2

+3

Observations/comments _____

9. Rate how well the church is moving forward together through the crisis.

-3

-2

-1

0

+1

+2

+3

Observations/comments _____

10. Rate how positive or negative the Coronavirus has been for the church.

-3

-2

-1

0

+1

+2

+3

Observations/comments _____

11. Rate the overall financial health of the church through the crisis.

-3

-2

-1

0

+1

+2

+3

Observations/comments _____

12. Rate how effective the existing organizational structure has been through the crisis.



Observations/comments _____

13. Rate the membership's ability to adjust and adapt through the crisis.



Observations/comments _____

14. How effective is the church in meeting the needs of the people in the community during the crisis?



Observations/comments _____

15. Is the church membership mobilized for service?



Observations/comments _____

16. Can the church membership see needs outside of its existing ministry?



Observations/comments _____

17. How well-developed is the plan for intentional evangelism after the crisis?



Observations/comments _____



REEMERGE | Red Light, Green Light

18. How strong is the small group organization after the crisis?

-3

-2

-1

0

+1

+2

+3

Observations/comments _____

19. Is the small group ministry creating healthy and strong followers of Jesus Christ?

-3

-2

-1

0

+1

+2

+3

Observations/comments _____

20. How effective was the church-wide communication through the crisis?

-3

-2

-1

0

+1

+2

+3

Observations/comments _____

RED LIGHT, GREEN LIGHT SUMMARY

What conclusions do you make about the current condition of the church as it reemerges from crisis?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

You must be ready to answer the following questions:

1. What limits are there on large group gatherings and how will you have to adjust your gathering strategy to accommodate governmental limitations or people's expectations? _____

2. How will you adjust the ordinances as the church reemerges? (i.e. baptism, Lord's Supper) _____

3. How will you collect offerings? _____

4. What will you communicate about how the building, public spaces, door handles, water fountains, etc., are being cleaned? _____

5. How will you take care of babies, preschoolers, and children during church? _____

6. Will you continue your online presence and offerings? _____



REEMERGE | Questionnaire

7. How will your first impressions team be trained and how will they ensure the safety of those who gather? _____

8. What volunteer teams will you need to mobilize, and how will you retrain them? _____

9. How will you exhibit hospitality to people who attend when social distancing is still required? _____

10. How will you phase in worship gatherings, groups meeting, special events (funerals, weddings, etc.)? _____

11. Is there new equipment or a new staff position needed in order to execute your new plans? _____

12. Are there new teams you need to execute your plans? _____

13. What will your security team be advised to do when people hug, stand too close or exhibit symptoms? _____

14. How will you monitor how the phase-in is going, and how do you plan to communicate adjustments when they are necessary? _____

15. How will you account for the increased expenses and decreased income that most churches are expecting? _____

16. Will the church distribute worship guides, guest cards, and handouts? _____

17. How will you count people and will you incorporate online attendance in your weekly attendance records? _____

18. Will you offer masks and gloves at the entryway of the church? _____



REEMERGE | Questionnaire

19. Will you broadcast the worship service into the lobby and other small venue locations? _____

20. How do you plan to communicate about upcoming events like summer camp, Vacation Bible School, etc? _____

Our team is pleased you are using this free resource to help you reemerge from the Coronavirus crisis. We would love to be a part of your church's future revisioning. If you would like to schedule a free phone consultation, you can call **954-557-0855** to schedule a time.



WHAT IS REFOCUS?

REFOCUS is a church renewal training process that provides pastors with tools to assess their church and to restore vibrancy, purpose and health to their ministry.

Participants will assess the current state of the ministry, consider how to position it for maximum impact, develop all of the directional aspects of ministry, create a custom plan for disciple making, tailor a leadership development strategy, and build a custom plan for implementation.

THE DISCOVERY:

A seven-step assessment designed to synthesize data and discoveries, helping pastors to accurately evaluate the current state of the church.

THE CONVERGENCE:

A “sweet spot” exercise considering church purpose, leadership passion, and community potential; designed to identify where to position the church’s ministry for maximum impact.

THE PYRAMID:

An in-depth series of exercises designed to develop all of the directional elements for the church, including mission, strategy, values, vision, annual plan and goals.

THE PATH:

A process that helps develop a customized plan for evangelism and discipleship.

THE LADDER:

Creation of a customized, multi-level plan for leadership development, using a four-fold framework (character, competency, chemistry, and concern for the mission).

THE TOOLKIT:

Practical resources and ideas to help pastors and church leaders launch the new vision and build momentum toward its fulfillment.