

Ken Braddy

Encouraging & Equipping Sunday School & Small Groups

APRIL 18, 2020

KEN BRADDY

JR

24 Questions Your Church Should Answer Before People Return

**This post initially had 20 questions – but several comments from readers revealed the need to add to this list.*

This week we all received good news from our president: the country is going to slowly reopen, and that (<https://kenbraddy.com/2020/04/18/20-questions-your-church-should-answer-before-people-return/mask-2/>) includes houses of worship.

I can guarantee that we will not go back to “business as usual” as a country, and that includes our churches. If you think we’ll all rush back to church and pick up where we left off, don’t kid yourself – it’s not going to happen. Or at least it *shouldn’t* happen. We need to think and plan carefully so we do not endanger people simply because we let our guard down and believed that the Coronavirus crisis had passed. Now, as believers let’s agree to live by faith and not operate in fear, but let’s also agree to be proactive and to act in wisdom towards our members and guests, especially those among us who are most susceptible to becoming infected with COVID-19.



We have a short time to prepare for the return of the church to the church campus. As I have thought about my church, and listened to friends and ministry experts over the past several weeks, I've compiled a list of things that most of our churches are not thinking about. Don't let the excitement of finally coming back together cloud your judgement or cause you to ignore the "new normal." Let's think through 20+ things that we must think about before the church returns to the building:

1. **What if your worship gathering is initially limited to no more than 100 people?** Never happen, you say? Remember that we've been limited to gatherings of no more than 10 people in the recent past. Take my church, for example. Pre-COVID 19 we averaged 350 in worship (two services). Should we be planning on adding a third service, reducing the time to 45 minutes with a 15 minute "passing period" so that worshipers can either go to Bible study or go home? One friend in ministry has said, "My church runs 2000 people in worship – we can't have 20 worship services all weekend long! What will we do?" If we are limited to a smaller number of people by our government leaders, what's the plan at your church to provide a place and time for them to worship?
2. **What adjustments will you make to the Lord's Supper, baptisms, and your choir ministry?** Do you believe you can conduct communion like you have in the past? Your church's tradition may involve passing a plate of elements, or it may include drinking from a common cup in some denominations. Will you use the self-contained juice and cracker cups? What about baptism – it's going to be impossible to practice physical distancing in a baptism pool. And as one reader said, "What do I do about my church's choir program?" He realizes that people standing side-by-side won't be practical.
3. **Are you canceling camps and VBS, or delaying them until later this summer?** This is a big question on people's minds. One church leader asked me, "May I return \$6000 of VBS materials we've purchased?" There are alternatives, and I know many churches that are delaying VBS until August, using it as a big back-to-school event. Other churches are using their VBS materials in backyard Bible clubs (so that groups are smaller). Other churches are going to do VBS over 5 weeks, one day a week (such as Sunday night), or they plan to use VBS resources during Fall Break. [Click here to read an article by LifeWay about VBS in the wake of COVID-19.](https://vbs.lifeway.com/tag/coronavirus/) (<https://vbs.lifeway.com/tag/coronavirus/>)
4. **Is a physical "pass the plate" offering a thing of the past?** How would you feel if you were the 100th person in a worship service to touch the offering plate that 99 other people just touched? Would you be worried about COVID-19 transmission? Sure you would. So how will you take up your weekly offering? Will you install boxes at the doors of the worship center, and perhaps place some of those in the lobby, so that worshipers can slide their envelopes, cash, or checks into those secured boxes?
5. **What are you doing now to sanitize and sterilize your church building?** Now is the time to wipe down all classrooms (especially those where children meet because of the toys and other items they touch during the course of a Sunday or Wednesday class experience). Have you sprayed pews and chairs with disinfectant? Who is wiping door knobs and handles? Have you had carpet cleaned and disinfected? Now is the time for all this to take place, not the week of the "you can go back to church" announcement by government officials.
6. **Are you going to continue offering children's church?** Can you guarantee moms and dads that

- their children will be absolutely safe in a room in which dozens or hundreds gather for a kids' worship time? This is going to be a top concern for parents of younger children. They may view kids' worship as a Petri dish into which they are throwing their children. As an alternative, is it time to encourage family worship as *the* primary option in these COVID-19 days? Should parents take their kids to worship, practice physical distancing, and keep a close eye on their little ones?
7. **Are you going to continue hosting special events?** Will your church continue to host weddings? How about funerals? Revivals? Dramas? Bible Drill events? Children's programs/choir? You get the idea – there are a number of special events that our churches might host. Which ones will continue, and which ones will be put on hold? And how will you explain which ones continue and which ones don't?
 8. **Are you continuing to provide coffee stations on campus?** Many churches have invested serious dollars in creating a coffee shop experience. My church has a coffee station in the center of our foyer (a self-serve station). Is that a good idea anymore? Tables and chairs may need to be placed in storage so that people don't congregate within a couple of feet of one another.
 9. **Will you continue offering virtual online worship?** Some churches may think of their recent foray into Facebook Live as a means to provide a worship experience for their people a thing of the past – a stop-gap measure during some really strange days. Happy they can meet together again, Facebook Live services may give way to worship experiences on campus. But is that the right strategy? I have heard of church after church whose leaders tell me their worship attendance and group attendance are up – significantly – because people are finding them online. It was reported that one Hispanic church in Las Vegas, Nevada, had 1300 people watch their service online a few weeks ago. Why is that a big deal? They normally average 100 on campus.
 10. **What is your plan when volunteers step down?** I'm already hearing that older volunteers are telling their church leaders they aren't coming back to teach their preschool and kids' classes until a vaccine is readily available – it's just too risky for them because they are most at risk from COVID-19. Will you be able to fully staff your classes like you did back in February? If you can't find enough volunteers (younger families may be hesitant to return because of the fear of exposing their children to COVID-19, which means their parents won't be leading younger children's groups), what will you do?
 11. **What's your strategy to clean and sanitize your church in real time?** It's one thing to prepare in advance of people's return to the church building, but how will you keep the place clean and disinfected on a Sunday or Wednesday? Does this give rise to a new team of people on campus whose ministry it is to walk around wiping door knobs and other surfaces? Who is going to clean restrooms throughout the morning or evening? Remember you'll have hundreds (some of your churches may have thousands) of people touching things while they are on campus.
 12. **Do door greeters do their jobs differently, or at all?** Not have door greeters? Seriously?! We've always had door greeters. But in a COVID-19 world, do you really want a door greeter holding the door open while a parishioner walks by within a foot or two of them? That's not in line with good physical distancing practices, is it? The new normal may be for greeters to stand back six feet, inside the church building, and welcome people verbally without opening the door for them. You experience that at big box stores now. A greeter is there to say hello, but they don't make you pass within a foot of them! Welcome to the new world COVID-19 has created.

13. **Is this the time to end your church's "meet and greet" time?** Because of physical distancing rules, it is. This practice has been on the decline in recent days, and many churches have already abandoned it because of its ineffectiveness with guests, not because of COVID-19 concerns. Thankfully my church eliminated this about 18 months ago, so we're ready. How about your church?
14. **Because people may return very slowly to church, how will you count attendance and effectiveness?** The question has already been raised about should we or should we not take attendance during online worship and online group Bible studies. It's almost a sure thing that worship attendance on campus will not be what it was pre-COVID-19. You need to decide now if you're going to count on-campus only attendance, or merge and add online attendance, too. And how will group leaders take a count in their online groups and go about reporting that?
15. **Should you add and/or shorten worship services to allow for social distancing?** I touched on this in #1 above, but let's drill down a bit. If physical gatherings are limited in size, you have a few options: (1) offer more services (2) encourage people to continue worshiping online (3) remove chairs from your worship center to help people avoid close contact (4) block off pews so that people no longer sit right behind someone, reducing the chances of them sneezing or coughing directly into the back of the person in front of them. If your church reopens with the "worship only" option, you'll have to decide these things now.
16. **What are you going to do about larger Sunday School groups?** Let's get real for a moment – no one is going to want to sit in a crowded room for Bible study, yet so many of our classes have been allowed to grow to have very large attendance. Do you feel good about letting 25 or more senior adults meet in a room that holds, well, 25 or 30 senior adults? Not me. If you have space to start new groups, now is the time – help people spread out. But if your church is out of space, like mine is, what's the next step?? One option is to start another hour of Sunday School. For my church, we'd go from two hours to three. Yours might go from one hour to two. Or another option is to place some groups online while others remain on campus. There's not going to be a quick and easy solution to this.
17. **What's your plan for Sunday School curriculum?** Most churches have provided print products – we call them Personal Study Guides (for group members); some adults still refer to them as "quarterlies" because they are distributed at church at the beginning of a new quarter. But because of social distancing and the new emphasis on virtual groups, should you keep print products but add digital ones for those groups meeting off campus? Thankfully, my company, LifeWay, creates digital versions of all its ongoing Bible study products, so we can meet whatever demand the church has. I have been providing print products at my church, but I'm about to add digital so my groups can be flexible in meeting on or off campus.
18. **Will you reopen the doors of your church with a "worship only" strategy?** I am hearing of more and more churches that are choosing this option whenever we are allowed to meet again on campus. They are adding services, removing chairs, practicing social distancing, and focusing on regaining momentum in worship. Bible study groups will remain online for safety in the short-term, and will be added back to the on-campus experience in time.
19. **Do you have a plan for reducing expenses if your church's offerings don't rebound?** This is the time for a "budget scrub" – while offerings are still decent and expenses have been lower because

of reduced activities. Churches need to be thinking, “What if...” – what if our offerings don’t hold steady because of rising unemployment of members? Before the church returns to the building, every church needs a “plan B” strategy just in case giving drops in late summer or early fall. I have friends in ministry that I deeply respect who believe we (the church) have not felt the financial impact of COVID-19 like we will in the days and months ahead. I think they may be right.

20. **How will you deal with the rise of COVID-19 related addictions?** One mental health expert said in a webinar meeting last week, “I’m hearing that porn sites are giving away free memberships during COVID-19...just what people don’t need.” In that same webinar last week on mental health, the presenter assured the audience that substance abuse is on the rise, too. Alcohol sales are soaring. He cautioned us to be ready to do lots of counseling and referring of people to professionals in our post-COVID 19 reality.
21. **Are you going to decrease the fellowship time between on-campus worship services?** Some churches that have multiple services and Sunday School hours schedule up to 30 minutes of time between those events because they value the opportunity to gather, have coffee, and fellowship. In a COVID-19 world, it is a good idea *not* to let that happen. Shorter times between worship services, and the elimination of coffee bar areas (yes, I know...it’s sacrilege to think about not having coffee stations around the building!) will help keep people moving to their next destination, a worship service or a Bible study group, and it will help reduce the “let’s hang out and give each other COVID-19.”
22. **Are you going to cancel mid-week Wednesday night services, meals, and Bible studies?** This won’t be a forever thing, but in the near future following the return of the church to its buildings, will you continue a virtual, online prayer meeting and Bible study time? Can you find volunteer workers to support a Wednesday night strategy on campus? Do you want to put many people around tables for the traditional mid-week meal on Wednesday nights?
23. **Should you be investing in new digital equipment right now?** Yes, we’ve all hopped online and used Facebook Live to broadcast our worship services. Some of us are doing that with iPads and other devices, but is this the time to admit that online worship is probably here to stay? If yes, then it makes sense to invest dollars now so that cameras and other equipment can be purchased that will help the church be more professional in the new online world of worship.
24. **Will a new staff or volunteer position emerge from COVID-19?** Because the church has permanently moved online now, could it lead to the adoption of a new position of leadership? Will churches turn their attention to a Virtual Pastor whose job it is to oversee the technical aspects of the new digital frontier? Will they become responsible to develop groups and strategies to reach people online? It’s highly likely that this is going to take place; the role may first be added to a staff person who is currently serving the church, but when it is possible to split that role and afford a new person, churches may hire online pastors.

This list of questions is not exhaustive. It’s representative of many things we should be thinking about right now, before we get the OK from government leaders to gather again.

What would you add to this list? What have I left out? Let's pool our experience and wisdom to help Jesus' bride be prepared for the new world we find ourselves in. I'd love for you to respond to this post, share your thoughts, and then share it in social media. We've got to get the church thinking and talking about these things.

Follow my blog by signing up on my home page in the upper right sidebar. [Click here to jump to my site \(http://kenbraddy.com\)](http://kenbraddy.com) – it's free to follow!

BEST PRACTICES **SUNDAY SCHOOL**

COVID-19 **RETURN**



Published by Ken Braddy Jr

LifeWay's Director of Sunday School, Manager of LifeWay Christian Resource's Adult Ongoing Bible Studies & Adult Trainers, education pastor 20+ years, author, conference leader, and blogger [View all posts by Ken Braddy Jr](#)

215 comments

1. **Kurt Wesolowski** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 12:33 AM

It makes me wonder if there will be a significant increase in the number of full-time pastors that will have to transition to bivocational ministry because of financial considerations for the church and how many of the churches will navigate that change when it comes on top of everything else.

REPLY

◦ **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 6:51 AM

Kurt, I think the answer is yes. Here in Tennessee our state convention leaders tell us that 90% of churches have bi-vo pastors. Because of the coming financial challenges (it really hasn't hit yet) I believe some full time pastors will become bi-vocational ones. My small church doesn't have a large financial reserve and at least one of the two full time pastors has already begun planning to be bi-vocational if things go south

REPLY

- **Kurt Wesolowski** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 4:47 PM

It will likely be a challenging transition for many of those churches, especially if they haven't had a bivocational in many, many years, if ever.

REPLY

- **ken smith** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 9:10 PM

How is it ok for pastor's to work secular jobs, but somehow to dangerous to pastor a church. You have not thought this through, we need to be positive and encouraging to people rather than fearful and unbelieving. I can hear Jesus now, O ye of little faith. If I can go to walmart I can go to church.

REPLY

- **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 9:16 PM

Ken you missed my point, sir. It's not that I or others have little faith. It's about us using the common sense God has given to us. Churches will reopen. What I am suggesting is that every church and its leaders must decide how they will protect the most vulnerable members, and what level of risk abatement they will pursue. It isn't a lack of faith to act with prudence

- **Andrea** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 6:33 PM

Ken,

I think a pastor's heart will first be with his flock, but I see the need for bi-vocational pastors being a result of much smaller financial resources/ donations, not out of fear of going to church. A pastor has to make a living. It really will depend on the size and wealth of the congregation. Those who may be recently unemployed will need the church but may not be in a position to support it. Many churches in other countries have seen this happen already, even before COVID 19.

- **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 6:34 PM

Andrea, well said. Here in my state (Tennessee) they tell us that over 90% of our churches have bi-vocational pastors. That blew me away when I heard it

- **Onalee Gillette** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 7:40 AM

Great food for thought !!! I also sing in the choir. In my church(in the (Sanctuary) the congregation is mostly the elderly. Also with health issues, Also I sing in the choir When will we ever be able to feel safe. We are all victims. of everything always. What should we so?

REPLY

- **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 7:42 AM

Onalee, thanks for your reply to the blog post. Elderly congregations are facing special challenges, no doubt. All we can do is to make wise choices and trust God for protection. This won't last forever, and a vaccine will be created. Pray for scientists to discover it. Ask God for wisdom to know what steps your church should take. Thanks for your reply!

REPLY

2. **Sheila Mitchell** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 12:50 AM

Great and informative article. It contains numerous suggestions that we can implement. Thank you.

REPLY

- **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 6:49 AM

Thanks, Sheila. May the Lord guide you to make the decisions that are right for your congregation

REPLY

3. **Wendy** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 3:55 AM

We are currently a church plant and meet at a local elementary school. I'm not sure what our plans will be going forward. We have recently acquired a building but it needs a lot of renovation. Definitely creates some challenges but God knew this before we started and we have an amazingly dedicated church family that will see this through!

REPLY

- **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 6:48 AM

Wendy, bless you! My first church to serve was a church plant and I can identify with you. You are right – God knew and He is able and will see your congregation through this.

REPLY4. **Ken Stefanko** says:**APRIL 20, 2020 AT 4:50 AM**

Ken, those are some really good thoughts to ponder.

You may have covered it, but I don't recall seeing an exit plan after the service.

We are a smaller congregation, around 100 members.

However, dismissal at the end of the service needs to be considered. The majority exit the pews via the center aisle to head out which creates a bottleneck of members shoulder to shoulder exiting the sanctuary.

Do we need to dismiss a row at a time as you sometimes do at a wedding to give everyone space to self distance?

Something to consider.

REPLY◦ **Ken Braddy Jr** says:**APRIL 20, 2020 AT 6:47 AM**

Ken, that's such a good point! Wow. Appreciate your forethought on this. I had not considered the exit plan

REPLY◦ **Brendan Rhodes** says:**APRIL 21, 2020 AT 3:41 PM**

Yes, I was thinking the same thing while I was reading this. At my Church they like to congregate at the back and talk. I was thinking maybe having a couple of your deacons dismiss by pew or row. Also on the offering, it could be done after the service and if you have a couple more deacons holding the plates as they leave. Just some thoughts I had on those two categories.

REPLY5. **Trese Linton** says:**APRIL 20, 2020 AT 7:23 AM**

Perhaps door greeters will need to check each entering with a no touch thermometer.

REPLY◦ **Joe Christian** says:**APRIL 21, 2020 AT 3:50 PM**

I went to church some time back feeling ill. We were supposed to put together goodie bags after church to give away at a school. I felt so bad, I went out to the car and took a nap until my family came out. I went to the doctor that Monday. I had the flu. Even before that, a father came to church one day. I asked where his wife and kids were after I shook his hand. The youngest, he said, was getting over the flu. Great. The following week, I came down with a fever.

REPLY

6. **Cheryl Cole** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 7:26 AM

Just as stores are providing one way traffic in the aisles, this might be a consideration and exit doors for specific sections of the worship areas. Also, maybe specific areas reserved for seniors of the congregation for their protection.

REPLY

◦ **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 7:27 AM

I hadn't considered this, Cheryl...thanks for your thoughts. One-way traffic may be a good temporary practice

REPLY

7. **Donna Montgomery** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 7:48 AM

My church is already thinking about it this is good thinking

REPLY

8. **Week Six – Another Breed of Cat** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 8:06 AM

[...] example, I saw an article today that mentioned alcohol sales skyrocketing, and pornography sites are giving away free [...]

REPLY

The big difference and the big deal between physical and social distancing –

9. **Ken Braddy**

says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 8:13 AM

[...] Saturday morning just two days ago, I released a blog post titled 20 Questions Your Church Should Answer Before People Return. In one day, Saturday April 18, it had 72,000 views. By the end of the day on Sunday over 325,000 [...]

REPLY

10. **Michael Gill** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 8:54 AM

Thanks for the article as it does provide good questions and things to consider. Some of these questions we have asked while many we will start to ask now. One thing to consider is the idea of opening with worship only. Depending on the state the opening will be in stages of 10, 50, 100+ much like the closing. If that is the case why not start with Sunday School/Small Groups meeting and wait on worship services. If we as a church are to focus on training, equipping, teaching, and discipleship those things typically happen in a small group setting. Yes, the groups will need to be smaller and space considerations addressed. But is it safer to have a group of ten in an enclosed

room spread out or 100+ in a closed room spread out? Something to consider. I see this as an opportunity to refocus on small groups and as you pointed out it will have to be in a different way. Thanks for the article and the questions.

REPLY

◦ **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 9:33 AM

Michael, thanks for your excellent thoughts. So many unknowns at this time. I know that God will guide His church to make the right decisions. It won't be forever, but if we can be more ready for the return to the church building, I believe we will save lives.

REPLY

11. **Sharon Henderson Alsup** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 9:05 AM

this appears to be a very comprehensive list...thank you. As the leader of a pre school program I would like to share this with our staff...can you give me permission to copy this article for private use only?

REPLY

◦ **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 9:31 AM

Sharon, thanks, and of course. Share away!

REPLY

12. **James** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 9:11 AM

These are all good questions but there are no suggestions as to how to handle these issues. Too much negative to be honest.

REPLY

◦ **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 9:31 AM

Janes, glad you read the post. I have not been overly prescriptive because every church will have to decide how it will handle these issues...no 2 will be the same. And the post is not being perceived as negative, but as a proactive way to create discussions so that congregants are not put in harm's way when we return to the building. Be safe!

REPLY

13. **Deanna** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 10:15 AM

As a pastor's wife, it has been my experience that "COVID-Pastoring" has kept us far busier and has been far more work than our prior pastoring style. I'm not sure how my husband would have time to return to a bi-vocational style of church leadership. He's now the audio/visual department as we shelter at home in addition to shepherding.

As I read this list of items to ponder, I wonder if we will be able to take a few queues from similar places that gather in our region such as preschools, theatres, high school choirs, etc? Here in Canada, these venues are august in the eyes of our society.

REPLY

- **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 10:21 AM

Deanna, thanks for posting your comment! I have no doubt that you and your husband are tremendously busy in these days. I cannot imagine what the church world might look like if we didn't have the technologies we do. As for taking queues from other places, absolutely! They can help inform us of best practices. Some readers have accused me of stirring the pot and causing paranoia, but if we don't think about these issues now, make preparations today, and create as safe an environment as we can, some of our most vulnerable members will be put in harm's way. Thanks for your well-articulated thoughts!!

REPLY

14. **Peggy Ball** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 10:20 AM

What about alter calls in Evangelical Churches?

REPLY

- **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 10:40 AM

Peggy, that's a great one. We need to think that through. This whole thing just leads to more questions! I appreciate your thoughtful response.

REPLY

15. **Jerry Smith** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 10:42 AM

Consider also: Churches that have any kind of food service, funeral dinners, wedding receptions, sports programs, or transportation ministries. I hope this calls us all to deeper prayer in that our churches will return to be called a house of prayer.

REPLY

- **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 10:44 AM

Tremendous, excellent thoughts, Jerry. My small church has all of those things you mentioned. Wow. Lots more to think about.

REPLY

16. **Mark Adams** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 11:08 AM

I am a pastor of a very small rural church (about 25-30 on Sunday morning). We are located in a town with a population of about 160. The population of our county is less than 3,000. The next nearest church of any type is about 10 miles away, as is the school. The main building of our church is over 100 years old with the main part of the sanctuary having screwed down pews. Our congregation is an aging congregation. There is only one person under 39 that regularly attends. Nearly all are 65 or older (my wife and I are both 62). Online services are not practical as a good portion of our attendees do not have computers, and/or may not do facebook. I have been trying to keep in contact by phone with some of the attendees and by sending out a weekly letter (most are sent out the old fashion way by USPS) with some thoughts from the Bible. I am not sure what changes we will make from normal when we restart services. So far there have been no confirmed cases of Covid-19 in our county nor in the counties to the east and west of us. If that remains true, we may just start up things like they were before.

REPLY

◦ **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 11:22 AM

Mark, thank you for your comments and for letting us know about your church. I imagine this is fairly typical of many rural churches. I am praying for you as you lead your people

REPLY

17. **qtcontrary** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 11:40 AM

I am the Children's Minister and my hope is to do VBS in October instead of Fall Festival. It will save so much money as these are the two biggest events our church does. And also I've already taken a team to LifeWay's VBS training AND we have bought all the curriculum and decorations!

Second thought, and I think someone else said this, I don't see how it is possible to hold kids Sunday School classes and such while the schools are still closed. All the guidelines given by the president and our governor show schools opening way down the list of reopenings.

Awesome article, thanks!

REPLY

◦ **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 11:44 AM

Great thoughts! Thank you for sharing with all of us. I had not thought about swapping Fall Festival for VBS! Great alternative

REPLY

18. **S Johnsamson** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 12:57 PM

Should there be gap in time between services due to how long virus can lives on surfaces?

REPLY

◦ **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 2:26 PM

I believe so. Perhaps a team could run through the worship center and wipe things down. Same thing for other surface areas around the church. Hard to believe we are actually having to talk about this!

REPLY

19. **Ginger Ketzal** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 1:48 PM

Mandi – this is good stuff. If you think it appropriate/ helpful you might want to forward it to Rick....

REPLY

20. **Rick** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 2:45 PM

Request permission to share with my leadership team.

REPLY

◦ **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 2:50 PM

Rick, absolutely. Share as you wish.

REPLY

21. **Courtney** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 3:09 PM

These are great questions and they will surely help churches (and other religions) to ask even more questions. I hadn't even thought about VBS! My goodness. I passed this on to my minister. I appreciate your thoughts. I told my minister that whenever the time comes that we can all be together again, I hope the first song is "When we all get to heaven," because I've been singing it in my mind. I sometimes change the words to say, "When we all get together!" We must remember that many churches are aging congregations and we must protect our elders. We must think of them before we rush to the pews. Take a moment to think, "would I be ok with my grandparent(s) going there or doing that?" Blessing to you and to all who read this.

REPLY

◦ **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 4:19 PM

Thank you, Courtney! Appreciate your time to write this and share with everyone

REPLY

22. **Chris Booker** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 6:34 PM

Thank you so much for this thoughtful article. We like other churches are wrestling with everything you mentioned. One thing I don't think was mentioned is hymnals. Should we put them away and go to slides only? Do they need to be cleaned?

Chris Booker
Praise and Worship leader
Hunt United Methodists Church
Hunt, Tx

REPLY

◦ **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 8:50 PM

Hey Chris....aaahhhh...a fellow Texan (I'm from Arlington). The hymnals would most likely need to be wiped down...the safer play is to temporarily remove them.

REPLY

23. **George Archer** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 7:16 PM

Is God scattering the church? Interesting, not one growing vibrant church had any of these questions in their radar for the future plans. I think we might want to open our ears and seek a "new" Word from God about the church being the body of Christ in our current culture. Perhaps we were on the wrong path all along...

REPLY

◦ **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 8:49 PM

George, I have said in another blog post that we are literally experiencing the second great diaspora of the church. 4 weeks ago almost no church was broadcasting online or holding online Bible groups. God may use this pandemic to squeeze us out of our campuses and into cyberspace. I hear daily stories (I led a webinar earlier today for Pacific Rim churches) of churches that are reaching many new people. They are seeing worship and group numbers soar. The Great Commission begins with "go," which is rendered "as you go" in Greek. So now we are doing that in new ways. Maybe just one of the good things coming out of this

REPLY

◦ **Robyn Bray** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 5:28 AM

I believe God has been urging the the Ecclesia to participate in home studies and fellowships for a good while now. Many churches have “dipped into it,” but God wants the walls to come down... not just practice programmed exercises in our homes or elsewhere, but get to know each other, pray together for each other and invite friends and neighbors to join us.

Around 10 years ago, my sister and I planned monthly parties over a period of several months. Some parties had a food and decor theme, like Mexican, Hawaiian, holiday or just pot luck. Just being who we were, someone would suggest a sing along, and casually,,we began to sing whatever guests suggested. This usually merged into prayer.

People gathered, chatting, in groups of 2 or 3, encouraging and each other. People who hgad been hurt in organized church were among our most faithful guests. Because it wasn't called “church” there were no rules, expectations or judgment.

At one point, circumstances led us to discontinue, but I've had the strongest sense that at some point believers may meet as “book clubs,” “dinner clubs,” or potluck groups rather than something called “church.” We ARE the church.

It could be that such a time is approaching, or already dawning. This doesn't necessarily solve sanitation or social distancing issues, though each small group would be exposed to far fewer people than in a larger class or congregation.

If worst came to worst and building were not affordable, connected fellowships could still meet on a larger scale in a public place or park... if leaders felt it was necessary. Or group leaders could meet for prayer and support.

I know this is long. I'll likely clean it up and post it on my website, but I felt this a forum where it might be a catalyst for prayerful thought and spark other ideas.

I thank you for your article. It blesses me to see people taking on reality in a positive way. It often takes crisis to crwck our shells of habit and tradition, then we can be amazed at how God brings us to life in a Spirit led, world changing dynamic!

REPLY

- **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 5:34 AM

Robyn, this was well-said. I believe like you, that the church is experiencing a second great diaspora. The first one sent it scrambling out of Jerusalem in Acts 8. This one is sending us online and will lead to more groups meeting on days besides Sunday, and in places besides the church building. Thank you for sharing your thoughts here!

- 24. **Rhonda Talmadge** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 8:31 PM

Your article is well done and very realistic. A couple of my thoughts...

As handshaking is such an automatic response for meeting someone (whether in church or elsewhere, and especially in the south), AND one of the #1 ways of spreading germs, it seems that church leaders should be very proactive in discouraging this practice among congregants.

Obviously, the idea of no handshaking won't sit well with many, so there needs to be a clear and polite way for a person to communicate with others that he/she has chosen to refrain from this practice. For an alternative to handshaking to be effective, it is imperative that it start with the top leadership of the church and be introduced in a positive manner. There are several good suggestions online for alternate methods of greeting, depending on the personality and preferences of individual church bodies.

My last thought is a strong suggestion that touch-free hand sanitizer dispensers be placed at strategic locations around the church building...then highly advertised and promoted.

Thanks for the great ideas and the opportunity to add more.

REPLY

- **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 8:45 PM

Rhonda, you are so right. Church leaders must set and initiate examples of good interpersonal contact. Churches could have some "fun" with this and introduce a new way to greet one another that is unique to their church. I'm personally hoping that Mr. Spock's Vulcan hand greeting takes hold at my church...I learned to split my fingers and do that greeting years ago.



You're also right about hand sanitizing stations. And do we come back wearing masks initially? So much to think through

REPLY

- **Rhonda Talmadge** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 8:55 PM

Yes, my husband agrees with the Spock greeting! 😊

REPLY

- **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 9:00 PM



- **Cheryl Aufderheide** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 12:35 PM

Our interim pastor has introduced us to the Namaste gesture, used along with the words "the divine in me greets the divine in you." The quarantine came before it could be widely adopted, but I hope that will change when we're able to worship together again. Thanks for your useful information, and for the comments and questions it inspired.

REPLY

- **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 12:44 PM

Thanks for sharing that, Cheryl. I had not heard of it before your comment. I'll look it up!

- **sophiegramma** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 12:47 PM

Before we had to go to strictly online worship, our interim pastor introduced us to the Namaste greeting (see link below) which she used along with the words “the divine in me greets the divine in you.” It didn't get widely used because the quarantine, but I hope it will have a place when we are together again.

<https://www.yogajournal.com/practice/the-meaning-of-quot-namaste-quot>

REPLY

25. **Stephen Parks** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 8:33 PM

I would add- how is your church equipping parents to have family worship together and how are parents be equipped to train and disciple their children at home?

REPLY

- **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 8:42 PM

Stephen, that's a big opportunity right now. Thanks for bringing it up here!

REPLY

26. **Cedric** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 9:10 PM

Thanks for this insightful article! As churches begin planning for return to church buildings, we will also need to consider how we will conduct ministry beyond the church walls, i.e. visits to sick and shut-in whether at homes, hospitals, or nursing homes? Also, our church has a van for picking up seniors from their homes for church services. I think we will have to consider if and how we resume this service in light of social distancing. If the van is even half full, I don't know if there would be enough distance between the passengers.

REPLY

- **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 9:14 PM

Great thoughts, Cedric. Thank you for posting them

REPLY

27. **Melissa Jensen** says:

APRIL 20, 2020 AT 10:55 PM

So glad I found this as we are having similar conversations. While logic dictates small groups and classes first because they are smaller than larger corporate worship. So many classes couldn't meet in their current space and have adequate social distancing, plus all that passing one another in hallways, corporate worship seems easier. Plus that's so many surfaces to keep clean. I'm suggesting no tables in our rooms it's easier to spread chairs. How will people respond to asking them to wear masks if we can't insure social distancing? So many questions on how to come together safely. We will continue to have a robust online presence.

REPLY

- **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 12:09 AM

Melissa, those are great observations. Glad we are thinking and planning now to ensure as safe a re-entry for our most vulnerable members as possible

REPLY

- **Sammie** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 1:51 AM

Have the plans been set for bathroom facilities

REPLY

28. **Becky Smith** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 12:50 AM

For those churches who elect to have multiple services, how are you going to be able to clean the entire church in the short time you will have between services?

REPLY

- **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 5:22 AM

Becky, that's a practical question. Schedules may need to be altered as we go back to the building to allow for a quick cleaning between services. Thanks for asking about this. Challenging.

REPLY

29. **Ron Allen** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 1:34 AM

We have a special needs ministry (Joyful Praise) for the emotionally challenged. I am wondering what that class looks like when we return? Some of them will not comprehend social distancing. One of the guys is a compulsive handshaker. Wow... this is going to be hard for him.

One thing that is on my list, I call it a "high-risk room" like an overflow room but for the high-risk, or early service is the high-risk service. (like some of the stores have first hour for seniors.) it provides space for social distancing, anyone in the room must have a mask, must use hand

sanitizer station at the door. temp check before entry, no touch offering and communion.

One more item on my list, as a Security Director in the Motor City, (Yes, we rank high on the list you don't want to be on.) what is my Safety Team doing with someone who starts coughing? Could be a dry throat, could be an intentional disruption, could be COVID. I'm thinking ask them to step out and temp check them, get them some water... let them go back in if temp check is good?? If temp check is bad, document who was around them so maybe the whole church is not forced to quarantine.

REPLY

- **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 5:20 AM

Ron, these are great questions you've asked. I had not thought about security issues nor special needs ministry participants. Thanks for sharing these with us

REPLY

30. **COVID-19 Resources Update #4 - Looking Ahead Together - Anglican Compass** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 6:08 AM

[...] here is a great set of questions each congregation should be answering as we look ahead together from Ken Braddy of Lifeway [...]

REPLY

31. **Coronavirus: The Latest News and Precautionary Guidelines - INUMC** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 8:14 AM

[...] a list of questions churches should consider before they open their doors to the community. Read more>> Center for Congregations Offers Connect Through Tech Grant The Connect Through Tech grant is [...]

REPLY

32. **Sheila French** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 8:58 AM

Our church has about 25 full time attendees. 75% are elderly. Our online service has been very popular. ..with about 45 in attendance. But some of our elderly do not have online capabilities. Any recommendations?

REPLY

- **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 10:16 AM

Hello Sheila. Thanks for your comment. There isn't an easy answer to this! Some churches are recording their service and mailing a CD to older members. Others have deacons contact their elderly members and pray with them and maintain contact (not an answer for how they might view worship, though)

REPLY

- **Mark Adams** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 11:07 AM

If they are older and do not have online capability there is a likelihood that they won't have the ability to play CDs

REPLY

- **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 11:10 AM

That may indeed be true. A church could provide a player for each home. They've dropped in price to \$25

33. **George Master** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 10:40 AM

Ken, Thank you for this really necessary "food for thought." I have no suggestions at this time. But, our Vestry is meeting tonight (Zoom) and this hits right one of our agenda items. Like many my church is on the elderly side (I am too), and I worry about many of them returning before there is a vaccine and good recovery meds. I will say that our attendance is up on Zoom, so that will probably be a platform we will be using going forward, esp. for those who are sick, or shut-ins, or traveling. But, everyone hungers to be together again. And, the Good Lord willing along with the common sense the the Lord has given us

REPLY

- **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 11:13 AM

George, thank you for your carefully crafted reply! There are so many unknowns right now, but churches I talk to are erring on the conservative side. Mine will, too. As leaders we are shepherds of God's people, and one job of shepherds is to protect the sheep. Time to use that rod and staff! I hope all goes well in your meeting tonight, sir.

REPLY

34. **Arie Freeman Jr.** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 10:51 AM

Everything I've read from your article is of serious consideration. At my church we have made adjustment and more will be made. It's no longer business as usual.

REPLY

- **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 11:11 AM

Thanks, Arie. My church is about to work through the list and decide what level of risk we are comfortable with. It will surely be a church-by-church decision. Thanks for your comment!

REPLY

35. **Reginald Gabel** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 11:12 AM

Maybe Christ wants us to do some ‘house cleaning’ Like His cleansing of the Temple.... back to focusing on being a House of Prayer instead of a place for socializing.

REPLY

◦ **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 11:13 AM

Thanks for that thought, Reginald. This may be a refining fire.

REPLY

36. **D.D.** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 11:27 AM

Reading this article, I can't help but want to cry. I feel my joy is robbed. My peace is shaken. My soul longs for every aspect the church body affords. Many speak of social-distancing these days, I can't help but wonder how one speaks of it with such ease and eloquence? My perspective is darkened; will I ever be able to step foot into my Father's house without the list of "dos and don'ts?"

REPLY

◦ **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 11:34 AM

D.D., thank you for baring you're soul. You've articulated your position well. It is sad that we cannot meet with our reindeer and fellow church members, but it's not forever...it's just for a short while. In the midst of this pandemic, God is moving. The church is teaching and reaching more people than ever. The church moved online in less than 2 weeks and has a new medium for telling the Gospel. Any list of do's and don'ts will only be designed to preserve life and to help our most vulnerable members until this passes. Be encouraged. God is still our Father. He has our best interests at heart at all times. He strongly supports those who trust Him. It's a good day. We will be the people who see the church evolve in ways it hasn't up to this point. I'm glad we are leading. God has placed us in our churches "for such a time as this." I just prayed for you. May God's peace, comfort, and presence be felt by you in new ways this week. Thanks for your time to comment about the post!

REPLY

37. **Julie** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 12:02 PM

Questions to give consideration too. May I use with my church leadership?

Thank you.

REPLY

- **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 12:14 PM

Hello Julie...of course...my church's leadership team is going to go through them one by one this weekend. I hope they help generate good conversations about the steps your church might want to take

REPLY

38. **drsquire** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 12:58 PM

Thanks for capturing and articulating some the issues we have under consideration and others we had not identified. For us, everything has changed and as the lead pastor for our church, the paradigm shift begins with me, the pastoral staff, leadership team, keeping in mind our stewardship in shepherding God's people during this critical time. Digital church meetings, small groups, alternative avenues for connectivity, dealing with how to engage our senior population and underserved population with technology is a new dynamic in terms of how we will serve. With the challenges COVID-19 brings to the body of Christ comes great opportunity and excitement for Christian service in the days to come. Thanks again – sharing with my team and colleagues!

REPLY

- **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 5:34 PM

I totally agree! Great days ahead and days of innovation and advancement for the body of Christ!!

REPLY

39. **Elbrist Mason** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 1:19 PM

My reply is simply wait and move slowly. I pastor a small membership congregation. Currently our reopen plan is based on the following:

*we are complying with current CDC guidelines

* As a team led church we are using available digital resources; we are sharing everything we can safely in and our community

*engaging everyone's gifts / graces

*weekly contact tree so everyone knows what is happening and it will continue as we reopen

*our approach is to look and listen and then respond

*

REPLY

- **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 5:33 PM

Elbrist, you have a great "re-entry" plan here. So glad you have given great thought to it!

REPLY

10. **m** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 7:19 PM

These are good questions. But on the flip side, over reaction can cause as much harm or more. This to shall pass and is nothing that has not occurred (Spanish Flu). I assume life mostly returned to normal after some time had passed.

And although “meeting” online is helpful in a pinch it can not and should not replace worship with others.

Pandemics do pass and they have passed. Let’s not react like a world that does not place our hope in Jesus.

REPLY

◦ **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 7:33 PM

Thanks for your comment. I agree that overreaction isn’t healthy; neither is the other extreme. Hopefully churches will find the right balance as we come back into the building

REPLY

11. **DBeck** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 9:25 PM

Excellent article on the challenges for churches in what will become our “new normal” in the future. Another example of an area of concern is in the morning worship services that include a “children’s sermon” as a part of worship. Additionally, the internal day to day workings of the church and staff will have to be considered. All the operational aspects of shepherding a flock (communications, connections, and publishing) will need caveats/procedures for employees and volunteers. (Do we use no contact deliveries?).

So many detail things to think about in keeping everyone safe and in being able to trace and quarantine any kind of small outbreak. Unfortunately, this is not over in the short term. Fortunately, we have God on our side as we are all “children of God.” That is a blessed connection.

REPLY

◦ **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 21, 2020 AT 9:27 PM

You’re exactly right...great comment! Thank you for sharing this with us

REPLY

12. **Reopening the Church: 4 Phases for an Orderly Return – Ken Braddy** says:

APRIL 22, 2020 AT 8:00 AM

[...] To see a list of 24 questions the church should be answering now about COVID-19 related issues, click here to jump to my April 18 blog post. [...]

REPLY

13. **FlechMe** says:

APRIL 22, 2020 AT 9:09 AM

Hi,

I'm a french Pastor in France, can I translate this article ?

Thanks

REPLY

◦ **Ken Braddy Jr** says:

APRIL 22, 2020 AT 9:10 AM

Absolutely! Thanks for doing that

REPLY

◦ **p0k3** says:

APRIL 22, 2020 AT 9:26 AM

Thanks a lot, it's a blessing for our churches !

REPLY

14. **From Online to Face to Face – Presbytery of Nevada** says:

APRIL 22, 2020 AT 10:46 AM

[...] Ken Braddy of Lifeway has 20 questions to answer before people return [...]

REPLY

What Will Worship Look Like as COVID-19 Restrictions Reduce? | Renewing

15. **Worship**

says:

APRIL 22, 2020 AT 10:55 AM

[...] 24 Questions Your Church Should Answer Before People Return. [...]

REPLY

[Blog at WordPress.com.](https://kenbraddy.com)

