
HOW TO BE THE CHURCH DURING A PANDEMIC



Committed Community

Genesis 2:18

God said, “It’s not good for the man to be alone...”



- Nearly half of Americans report sometimes or always feeling alone or left out.
- Only half of Americans have meaningful in-person social relationships on a daily basis.
- Gen Z is the loneliest generation in American history.

Living w/air pollution increases your odds of dying early by 5%. Obesity, 20%. Excessive drinking, 30%. And loneliness, 45%... In-person interactions bolster our immune system, send positive hormones surging through our bloodstream and brain, and help us live longer. Research shows playing cards once a week or meeting friends every Wednesday for coffee adds as many years to our lives as taking beta-blockers or quitting a pack-a-day smoking habit. In short, building community is a matter of life or death.

"Physical Distancing" over "Social Distancing"

The Rise of Christianity

How the obscure, marginal Jesus movement became the dominant religious force in the Western World in a few centuries.

The Rise of Christianity
Community. Their community was selfless,
committed, and resilient.

Early Church

- Selfless
- Committed
- Resilient

American Church

- Selfish
- Lukewarm
- Apathetic

We allowed our community to conform
to the hyper-individualism of our culture.

“We don’t worship Satan. We worship ourselves...
Satan is the name used by Judeo-Christians for the force
of individuality and pride within us.”

“Satanists are free to celebrate any holidays or “unholidays”
they wish, although for most Satanists, one’s own birthday
is naturally considered the highest holiday of the year.”

“You do you” embodies our culture’s commitment to personal fulfillment... “You do you” means we get to create our own realities, our own right and wrong, and our own meaning. And if we are the creators of our own little worlds, then we are also our own little gods.

The virus will be curbed when people embody a spirit of self-sacrifice. A posture of self-denial. We must limit our travel, limit our social contact, even limit our “fun” so that the virus won’t spread. And that requires a worldview that gives us a reason to deny ourselves. A reason to think of others... In short, “You do you” won’t work.

But there is always hope... the good news of the gospel is, at its heart, about a Man who laid down His life for the good of others. After all, it was Jesus who said, "If anyone would be first, he must be last of all and servant of all" (Mark 9:35). The "you do you" worldview may at first appear to be life-giving, when in actuality it is life-taking. In contrast, the Christian worldview may at first appear to be life-taking, when in actuality it is life-giving. Ironically, then, it's in the midst of a tragedy like the coronavirus when Jesus' words ring most true: "For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it" (Matt 16:25).

Romans 12

And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you to give your bodies to God because of all He has done for you. Let them be a living and holy sacrifice—the kind He will find acceptable.

This is truly the way to worship Him. Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know

God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect. Just as our bodies have many parts and each part has a special function, so it is with Christ's body.

Romans 12

We are many parts of one body, and we all belong to each other. In His grace, God has given us different gifts for doing certain things well. So if God has given you the ability to prophesy, speak out with as much faith as God has given you. If your gift is serving others, serve them well. If you are a teacher, teach well. If your gift is to encourage others, be encouraging. If it is giving, give generously. If God has given you leadership ability, take the responsibility seriously. And if you have a gift for showing kindness to others, do it gladly.

Romans 12

Don't just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other. Never be lazy, but work hard and serve the Lord enthusiastically. Rejoice in our confident hope. Be patient in trouble, and keep on praying. When God's people are in need, be ready to help them.

Always be eager to practice hospitality. Bless those who persecute you. Don't curse them; pray that God will bless them.

Romans 12

Be happy with those who are happy, and weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with each other. Don't be too proud to enjoy the company of ordinary people. And don't think you know it all! Never pay back evil with more evil. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable. Do all that you can to live in peace with everyone. Dear friends, never take revenge. Leave that to the righteous anger of God.

Romans 12

For the Scriptures say, “I will take revenge; I will pay them back,” says the Lord. Instead, “If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals of shame on their heads.” Don’t let evil conquer you, but conquer evil by doing good.

Three Guiding Values for Reopening

1. We will prioritize the great commandment first:
"Love your neighbor".

Hebrews 10:25

Let us not neglect our meeting together,
as some people do...

Matthew 22:35-40

An expert in religious law, tried to trap Him with this question: “Teacher, which is the most important commandment in the law of Moses?” Jesus replied, “You must love the Lord your God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.” This is the first and greatest commandment. A second is equally important: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ The entire law and all the demands of the prophets are based on these two commandments.”

Galatians 5:6,14

The only thing that counts is faith working through love...
For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment,
“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

1 Peter 4:8

Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins.

1 John 4:7-8

Beloved, let us love one another, because love is from God; everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. Whoever does not love does not know God, for God is love. Those who say, "I love God," and hate their brothers or sisters, are liars...

James 2:8

You do well if you really fulfill the royal law according to the scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.”

Expressing the first amendment should never take precedence over expressing the great commandment.

Three Guiding Values for Reopening

1. We will prioritize the great commandment first:
"Love your neighbor".
2. We will gather immediately as love and wisdom allow.

- Fellowship
- Encouragement
- Accountability
- Teaching
- Prayer

- Worship
- Testimony
- Communion
- Baptism

Three Guiding Values for Reopening

1. We will prioritize the great commandment first:
"Love your neighbor".
2. We will gather immediately as love and wisdom allow.
3. In the meantime, we will be creative in finding ways to be in community.

- Zoom calls for guests
- FaceTime small groups
- Online prayer movements
- Pre-Recorded funerals
- Digital ordinations
- Tele-health counseling
- Medical workers praying
- Video-game sessions w/middle schoolers
- Socially distanced parking lot meetings
- Old-School phone trees
- Handwritten notes
- Lobby to food pantry
- Birthday parades
- Online Church

Online Groups - necchurch.org/anywhere

1. Get in an online group.
2. Start an online group.
3. Restart your group online.