

Thoughts on Reopening

These are compiled from different sources, conversations I have been a part of, etc. Not all of these ideas will be relevant (or even wise) for your setting, but they will enable us to have a starting point for talking:

- 1) Now is the time to make sure your building is clean. You want to communicate to people, “We are ready for you to come back.” What can you do and provide to help people feel safe?
- 2) You may need to reopen in stages. For instance:
 - *Start with just worship service and continue Sunday School classes or small groups on Zoom for a time
 - *Have congregation together and wait to start children’s worship, nursery, etc.; encourage family seating
 - *One church in Oklahoma is asking senior adults to wait a few more weeks to start attending
- 3) Speaking of children . . . think through issues related to children’s ministry. Children are not as easy to convince to practice physical distancing. What about nursery ministry, which requires more physical contact, changing diapers, etc.
- 4) Recognize various anxieties that people will have and how, not only to assuage them, but to minister to these people as our Wonderful Counselor would.
- 5) Give thought to your online audience. Many of them will not come to the church building when you reopen, but they are still out there. What are you going to do something to continue shepherding them?
- 6) Admit it, there has been at least one time in your ministry that you have said, “I wish we could just stop everything for a few weeks, retool, and then restart.” Now is that opportunity. If you’ve haven’t read Rainer’s book, “Simple Church,” in a while (or ever) . . . now’s a good time to get reacquainted with his suggestion to identify the 3 or 4 things God wants you to do and do them well.

Speaking of the opportunity for a reset, allow me a final personal word that expresses my heart as to what I believe is the most important thing for us to consider as our churches prepare to reopen. As we reset, this is the time and opportunity to refocus on winning the lost to Christ. In a video meeting with state executive directors, Ronnie Floyd said, “God is doing something bigger than a church, convention, or denomination. This is a big God moment. We can’t lose this moment. We can’t afford to miss what God is saying to us.”

The church’s mission is the Great Commission. In our busy, be all things for all people mindset, we often forget that the church belongs to Jesus and He has the authority to establish our mandate. And, He has: *“As you go, make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all the things I commanded you.”* He adds to that the comforting promise, *“Remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age”* (Matt. 28:19-20).

Know that I and your Dakota Baptist staff are here to pray for, encourage, resource, and assist you in any way that we can as you shepherd your people through this time. And, who knows, perhaps God has put each of us where we are, *“for such a time as this?”*