

CHURCH HAS CHANGED. HAVE YOU?



Adapting to a new &
improved normal.

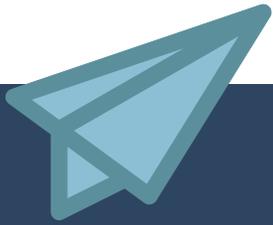
The Sound of Inevitability

It's been said that the winds of change blow constant. In other words, change is inevitable. Fighting it is like beating against the wind. Instead of bracing for change to come, we should be harnessing change to shape our future.

The COVID-19 pandemic has only exaggerated and further defined what was already happening in your church - change. Perhaps the best thing your ministry can do is embrace the opportunity presented by this unforeseen season. You can create more certainty in your circumstance and start finding solutions for your situations.

This resource was created to guide you through the new changes that COVID-19 has required or inspired. The hope is not that the mission, vision, and trajectory of your church would change but that you can adapt to the times to make the most of the season.





COMMUNICATION

What's Changed?

You'd think that, with people staying at home more, there'd be more attention given to electronic communication, such as email or video announcements. The truth is, the opposite is starting to occur. With so much noise, distraction, and a million little rabbit holes vying for attention, people are starting to unconsciously filter ancillary messages.

As people try to return to normal, the trend of ignoring emails and long-form communication is sure to last.

People are only listening to what they care about and what's delivered right to their digital doorstep. Communication needs to have context and needs to be front and center.

Changes You Can Make

The most important thing you can do is to focus on individual and group communication that's delivered to mobile devices. Rely less on mass emails and general announcements and depend more on contextualized texts, group chats, and posts to get your point across.

You can change:

- Your weekly mass email into segmented group messages
- A social media post to a post in your own private groups
- Templated, generic messages to personalized, specific messages
- Single-source messages to decentralized communication
- One-time announcements or content dumps to smaller cohesive tidbits over time

Making these types of changes to your communication workflows might prove difficult at first. Personalized, contextualized communication takes more time to consider and draft. But the extra work will be worth it because people will be more inclined to listen, respond, and get engaged. After all, what's the point of shouting if no one is going to listen?



A Note About Texting

Email used to be the primary method of electronic communication that you could count on. And it still has its place. But well before COVID-19, the move toward texting as a primary form of communication was already fully underway.

Mobile apps are a great way for people who are connected to your church to stay connected and grow in deeper connection. They are super valuable. But what about the people who haven't downloaded the app you're using? Or who have installed it but don't have notifications settings adjusted to stay in the loop?

Text messages are the new go-to for reliable, consistent communication. You have to make a change to texting.



GROWTH

What's Changed?

Many church leaders would argue this has already - and has needed to - change. Regardless of the existing discussion about being a missional church, what's changed is that churches can't rely on people coming to you. It's time to go to them.

It's no secret that God will bring people through the doors of your church, and it's your job to nurture those opportunities to lead people to Christ and into community. But what do you do when your doors are closed? Or when they reopen to trepidatious onlookers, unwilling to venture into public settings?

Let's face it. It could be many months before potential visitors will overcome both the already-existing common fears associated with visiting a new church and the new unknown fears of the potential risks of contracting COVID-19.

With that in mind, churches must maintain a proactive approach to reaching people where they are if they have a real intent to continue growing beyond the immediate season.

Changes You Can Make

The most important thing you can do is experience a shift in mindset that acknowledges that being "fishers of men" means casting many specific nets for a wide reach, not sitting on the shore with one line in the water hoping something bites. It means you need to embrace a creative approach to identify people outside your normal circles and invite them into community. It's less about attracting them to you and more about finding them and pointing them to Christ.

You can change:

- An invitation to a church service to inviting people to multiple “watch parties”
- Generic community groups to specific discussion or study groups of interest
- Community-wide events to neighborhood service projects

The goal is to find ways in which you can speak to a variety of new audiences in ways that reach them, not just teach them. To let people see that you understand what they need so they'll reach out when you offer to meet it.



GIVING

What's Changed?

Virtual ministry is our current reality. Right now, we can't physically pass the collection plate. Yet church communities can thrive and remain strong despite being absent. We know that, for many years, churches and members have been moving toward a preference for eGiving. And this crisis proves the value of eGiving to both members and churches. By promoting the use of eGiving through Realm among your members, you will help maintain your church's finances, grow your members' desire to give, and reinforce your feeling of community.

Changes You Can Make

This is the moment to get your members to use your eGiving tools. Churchgoers across the nation are continuing to make gifts to their churches, and eGiving tools are designed to make that easy. Right now, the most important thing churches can do is to make members aware of how they can give and provide tools to make giving convenient and consistent.

You can change:

- How you talk to members about the benefits of eGiving for your church and your members
 - Members want to give. Your church needs members' generosity. When you talk to members, connect these ideas and explain that eGiving is the best solution for supporting your church during virtual ministry.
- The difficulty and barriers to eGiving
 - Tell members who have never given online how simple and fast it is. Walk through your eGiving options and explain how they work. Offer a staff member or volunteer to be the point person for questions and help when members start eGiving.



CHILDREN'S MINISTRY

What's Changed?

If you thought parents were concerned about their kids' safety before COVID-19, just wait until they come back. Not only will parents be concerned about the integrity of the teachers but also they'll now be looking at the space, setup, congestion, check-in surfaces, and general cleanliness.

Don't be deceived. Even with all the new concerns, parents will still be worried about the backgrounds of your volunteers and the quality of your programming. These are just new things to add to the list of concerns you must address.

Changes You Can Make

An important part of calming parental fears is taking visible action that signals your understating of their concerns. When parents see teachers and children's ministry workers proactively caring for the things they care about, it goes a long way in telling them that you have a handle on things and they don't need to worry.

You can change:

- Paper sign-in sheets to electronic check-in kiosks
- Self-service check-in kiosks to volunteer-assisted kiosks
- Common assumptions to explicitly explain expectations
- One long line to multiple shorter lines
- Fear and trepidation to confidence and assurance

The main goal is to try and address fears upfront so you can eliminate them before they grow into problems and complaints. The more you can do to reduce congestion, speed up check-in, and communicate about the lengths you're going to for their kids' safety, the better.



VOLUNTEERS

What's Changed?

A lot. That's the point. Volunteers will have a lot to catch up on, retrain in, and wrap their minds around. They need to be retrained to adapt to the new expectations. Greeters will have to rethink the handshake. Ushers will have to refrain from the handout. Prayer teams will have to pull back from the laying of hands. And so on. You get the picture. Changes are coming to the way we serve our churches, and volunteers need to be ready.

What you need for volunteers is a lot of communication, specific training, and an environment of accountability that fosters excellence and engagement.

Changes You Can Make

One of the most important aspects of preparing volunteers for how church has changed is to understand that, while you've had months to prepare and ponder, they've been out of the loop. While you've been thinking, rethinking, and overthinking solutions, they've been waiting, wondering, and wishing they could just get back to normal. What volunteers need is patience and clarity from their leaders on what's expected of them.

You can change:

- Clear and consistent training for new positions and new things in old positions
- Weekly communication on the ever-changing restrictions and fallout of societal norms
- Accountability to keep everyone on the same page and pulling in the same direction
- Processes for recruiting, assessing, and onboarding new volunteers

The goal in all this is to give your volunteers a fresh start. It's an opportunity to say the things you've been meaning to say, to hit refresh, and to re-energize your teams for a new season of ministry.



A Note on Volunteer and Staff Training

It should go without saying that any training your offering to volunteers should apply - and more so - to staff. A big part of what's changed that you and your teams need to adapt to is the requirement for online training. Not only is it a necessity but also it's a super convenient way to create consistency and excellence among all your volunteers and staff.

Teams will have to be trained in how to operate your systems - software, communication, protocols, procedures, etc. They'll also need to be trained on ministry best practices, new tools and solutions, and general ministry knowledge - all of which needs to be customized to a mobile and online context.

Simply put, your church needs to change the way it trains your teams to place an emphasis on comprehensive and consistent online training.



ONLINE TECHNOLOGY

What's Changed?

For many churches, developing an online presence was an option. It has recently become a necessity. Even when worship service restrictions are completely lifted, many people in your congregation will choose to continue engaging online; some for the sake of convenience, others for safety concerns. Either way, you'll have people to reach, so maintaining an online presence remains essential.

Streaming services and a robust web presence are strong tools. But where the rubber meets the road is how you connect, collect, and assimilate the online onlookers. By now, you've no doubt had some new people start watching your services online but are they connecting? Are they getting involved in other discipleship materials and member events you have going on?

What's changed is not just that you need a good web presence, but that, as the first point of contact, **you need to move people from watching online, to participating online.**

Changes You Can Make

Assuming you have people watching your services and assuming those services are attracting a growing audience, you need to initiate systems that will make additional connections. That means not just, “Hi, how are you?” but something closer to, “Hi, would you like to join an online group where you can grow in your faith?”

To do this, you need a church management software (ChMS) to keep track of all your members, groups, communication, giving, discipleship, etc. In this case, you need a ChMS that provides engagement tools so you can move people from watching online to engaging on your online platform.

You can change:

- Small groups from homes to online community groups
- Discipleship from in-person to an online step-by-step pathway
- Sending visitors to your website to sending online visitors to a private group where they can learn more
- Having prayer meetings at the church to having prayer meetings in online groups

Basically, you can change almost any of your church functions to happen on your ChMS.

The goal here is to be creative. Sure it'd be better to have people show up in person when the time is right. But don't let people's hesitance create distance between them and your church. Tear down the walls of engrained thinking and start thinking outside the box to reach more people and bring them into the fold of your church and God's Kingdom.



A Note on Technology & Support

You need a technology solution and a support staff that can keep up because more people are working from home, offices are decentralized, and ministry is changing faster than ever before.

With your volunteers and staff dispersed, your software solutions can't be installed just on an intranet, or worse, desktops in your office. Ministry software has to be always on and accessible 24/7 from any device.

What's more, your team needs access to support that doesn't require a ton of time commitment to get answers. Your people need access to data and insights, support, training, and technology resources that are always available and ready to work.

Your technology and support solutions have to change to adapt to the current and future reality that necessitates an online and always-on society.



Embracing Change

The times are changing, so seize the day and avail your church of the opportunity to look ahead and look out for the next big thing God will do through this circumstance.



Realm provides solutions that will make your ministry and life easier. It is cutting-edge church management software that combines administration, accounting, and community into one system. It also connects your entire church and personalizes each person's involvement in your ministry.

We'd encourage you to explore all that Realm makes possible by taking a demo, walking through a self-guided tour, or speaking with an associate today!



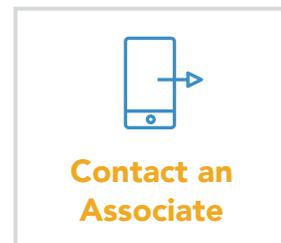
Take a Self-Guided Tour

acstechnologies.com/products/realm/demo



Sign Up for Live Webinar

acstechnologies.com/products/realm/demo/tour



Contact an Associate

1-800-736-7425

Our Mission: To help you have *real* ministry impact

ACS Technologies has provided over four decades of services and software to churches of all sizes throughout the world. During that time we have accumulated data, gained vital insight, and received thousands of first-hand testimonials on best practices and methods that most effectively help ministries.

Our years of service have allowed us to become the world's largest provider of ministry solutions to churches of all sizes. It is our mission to furnish advice, examples, tips, and information to help you turn your ideas into real ministry impact.

Powered by the people of **ACS Technologies.**



Family owned
for over 40 years



#1 rated
in service



Nearly 50,000
churches served



Over 400 staff
ready to serve



Best place
to work

www.acstechnologies.com

1-800-736-7425

0620 Copyright © ACS Technologies Group, Inc.