

From: Fr. Michael J. Lumpe
Sent: Friday, May 1, 2020 4:08 PM
Subject: Update Letter to Priests
Attachments: COVID Parish Kit.pdf

Brother priests:

We received word today that Msgr. Ed Fairchild is moving this afternoon from Mother Angeline McCrory Manor, where he has been undergoing rehab and occupational therapy, to assisted living at The Villas. Please join me in continued prayer for Ed's healing, and in congratulating him on moving to assisted living.

I have a couple of priest appointments to share with you today. Father Christopher Tuttle has been appointed to serve as Pastor of Saint Peter Parish (Columbus); he succeeds Father Mark Summers, who was recently appointed Pastor of Saint Agatha Parish in Upper Arlington. This appointment will take place in July. Also, as we begin to slowly and methodically emerge from the coronavirus situation we need our priests to focus full-time on what needs to take place in their parishes. With that in mind I am appointing Msgr. John Cody to serve as Administrator *pro tem* of Our Lady of Perpetual Help Parish (Grove City), effective Monday, May 4, 2020. Msgr. Cody succeeds Fr. Michael Lumpe, who took on this added "temporary" assignment in addition to serving as Vicar for Priests and Vice Rector at the Josephinum. Thank you, John, for coming out of retirement to take on this pastoral assignment, and to Mike for balancing all of your major responsibilities.

Again, as we begin to emerge, Fr. Adam Streitenberger has some resource material that should be quite useful in your parishes. Please read over the attached. If you have any questions, please contact Adam via e-mail at astreitenberger@columbuscatholic.org.

The Department of Religious Education also asked that this information be shared today: **Department of Religious Education - Parish Leader Check In:** We will be hosting a weekly check in for any parish leaders to share concerns, information, and resources with other leaders throughout the month of April and May. Calls will be on Thursdays at 3pm. [Register Here](#)

I pray that all of you have some time for quiet prayer over the weekend, in-between any times that you may be hearing confessions. It's nice to begin walking again on the path of our pastoral ministry, doing that which we were ordained to do.

Fraternally,

+Bishop Brennan



Helping Catholic Dioceses and Parishes
Respond Well to COVID-19

MINISTERING IN THE NEW REALITY



Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION: COVID-19 and the Church

SECTION 1: Messaging – How Can We Get in Touch and Communicate?

- Maximizing Your Website
- Using Email
- Social Media
- Text Messages

SECTION 2: Meeting – How Can We Gather Digitally As Church?

- Live Streaming the Mass and other gatherings: Liturgies, Technology and Equipment
- Sacrament of Reconciliation
- Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick
- Youth and Student Ministry Online
- Children’s Ministry Online
- Small Groups Online (including RCIA, mid-sized groups and formation/catechesis groups)
- Staying effective when everyone is working remotely

SECTION 3: Ministry – How Can We Go Out and Bless the Community?

- Equipping Your People to Be the Church
- Prayer in a Digital World With a World in Need
- Serving Your Parish and Serving Your Community
- Sharable Content: Images, Quotes, Messages

SECTION 4: Money – How Can Our Giving Survive the Coronavirus?

- Digital Giving Technology
- Talking to Your Church about Money
- Balancing the Budget and Cutting Expenses



THE CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19) PRESENTS UNPRECEDENTED CHALLENGES.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations.

- Matthew 28:19

Nobody has ever dealt with anything like it. However, we also believe that our dioceses and parishes now have an unprecedented opportunity to answer the Gospel call to “Go make disciples” (Mt 28:19). In fact, never in our lifetime has the chance to demonstrate the heart of Christ and the mission of the Church been greater. We offer this resource primarily to assist parishes, but much of its content is also applicable at the diocesan level. We hope that it will also help those parishes where diocesan leadership has already taken the initiative and developed an action plan.



However, we also know the challenges are real, the pressure on our priests and bishops has never been greater and we all find ourselves in uncharted waters. That's why we are providing inspiration and helping equip you in three ways.

1 THIS RESOURCE KIT

Divine Renovation currently works with hundreds of parishes in over forty dioceses around the world, helping them move from maintenance to mission and start to chart a path through these unprecedented times. This kit draws on the insights and experiences we are gaining as we learn what works and what doesn't and our hope is that, by making it available for free, we will bless Catholic parishes and dioceses around the world. It's also worth noting that we're learning more every day and new resources and ideas are becoming available. That's why we will be releasing updated versions over time so if you'd like to receive this updated content please go to www.divinerenovation.org

2 OUR REGULAR FREE WEBINARS

We would love for you to join our free webinars happening several times each week. In these we provide practical, actionable insights on how to respond well to the challenges and opportunities of these times. We also share examples of great innovation from around the globe. To view past webinars or sign up for details of what's coming up see www.divinerenovation.org

3 WIDER SUPPORT

We also support parishes and dioceses in other ways including a library of action-oriented resources and through group and 1:1 coaching for both bishops and for parish priests and their teams as they lead from maintenance to mission. You can find out more here: www.divinerenovation.org

**We know that all things
work together for good
for those who love God,
who are called according to
His purpose.**

Romans 8:28



Over the years at Divine Renovation we have also come to recognize that **we can and should learn from other Christian traditions**, especially in the area of online and digital where those churches are often much further ahead than most Catholic parishes and dioceses.

In particular, we want to acknowledge the generosity and support of our friends at ChurchFuel who shared a lot of their content and insights in this space and allowed us to dream bigger on what might be possible for Catholic parishes and dioceses moving into the online world as never before. ChurchFuel continue to pull together some of the best innovation and ideas across their tradition and you can find out more at <https://covid.church>.



COVID-19 and the Church

The coronavirus (COVID-19) presents unprecedented challenges. Nobody has ever dealt with anything like it. As a result, our parishes now have unexpected opportunities. Never in our lifetime has the chance to demonstrate the heart of Christ and the mission of the Church been greater.

NEW CHALLENGES MEAN NEW OPPORTUNITIES.

This season will shape future generations and the rest of our own lives. It will also shape the way we “do church” now and, most likely, in the future too. We have the opportunity to not only reevaluate existing norms as a church in order to meet temporary needs but to make a decisive shift from maintenance to mission. Prayerfully, this season will reignite the passion of our people (and perhaps ourselves) for gathering as a church for worship and for living in our communities as witnesses to the peace and hope we have in Jesus.

**Though one may be overpowered,
two can defend themselves.
A cord of three strands is not
quickly broken.**

- Ecclesiastes 4:12

Most of us have wrestled with questions about how to respond to the new world we find ourselves in. In our work with dioceses and parishes around the globe we see attention shifting from “how can we look after the people we’ve got?” to “How can our parishes get out to both the people we already serve and to a world in desperate need?” The question is: So what do we do now? Where do we go from here?

Together, we are forming new ways to proclaim the gospel, to make disciples, and to be a community of faith in the midst of fear, confusion, inconvenience, and skepticism. Recent weeks have truly been uncharted territory for us all—not just parishes. Social distancing, pandemic, and “stay in place” orders were not topics covered in our formation. Leaders have the responsibility and privilege to serve their parishes and the wider community as the “new normal” continues to take shape for the unforeseen future.

QUICK DECISIONS CAN BE INFORMED DECISIONS.

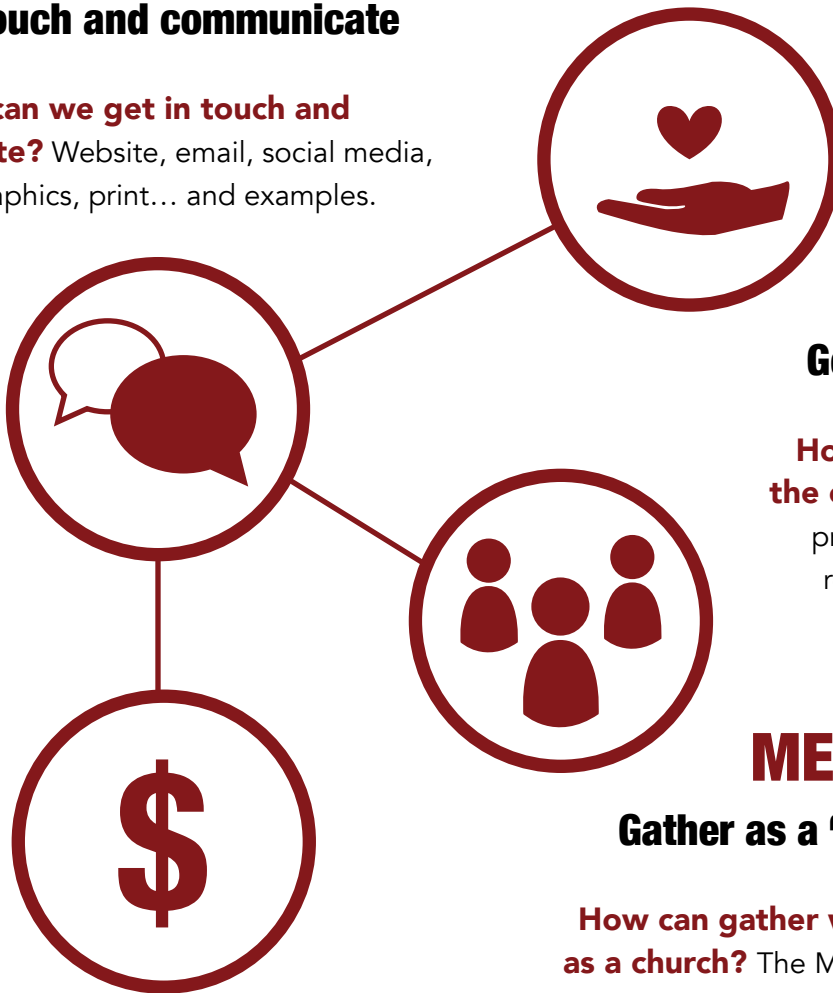
COVID-19 AND THE CHURCH

The needs of our communities and parishes will continue to change—so should our ministries. We need to quickly help one another stabilize and strategize. Leaders will need to make decisions quickly and prayerfully, but they can be informed by wisdom, experiences, and outside-the-box ideas from others facing similar circumstances. This guide is a map-in-the-making to navigate the challenges we are all facing. We've collected best practices, real church examples, and practical tools to equip you for what's ahead and grouped them into four areas which address the most common questions and pressing needs:

MESSAGING

Get in touch and communicate

How can we get in touch and communicate? Website, email, social media, texts, graphics, print... and examples.



MINISTRY

Go bless the community

How can we go out and bless the community? Mobilizing people, prayer, sharing the Good News, reaching out... and examples.

MEETING

Gather as a “distant” church

How can gather while social distancing as a church? The Mass, live-streaming, music, Reconciliation, Anointing of the Sick, students and youth, children, small groups and staying effective while working remotely... and examples.

MONEY

Give during COVID19

How can our giving survive the coronavirus?

Technology, communication, budgets, salaries and fixed expenses... and examples.

SECTION 1:

Messaging

HOW CAN WE GET IN TOUCH AND COMMUNICATE?



On any given day, the number one complaint or problem that any organization has is communication. Add sudden changes in most people's daily routines, empty shelves in the grocery stores, and growing concerns about a mysterious pandemic and you have the perfect recipe for a real mess.

As soon as news of social distancing restrictions and the likelihood of building closures began trickling through the grapevine, the first questions raised by pastors were related to knowing how to ensure prayerful and informed decision making, drawing on the experience of staff, key leaders and volunteers, and then communicating with the parish at large.

The most common questions we have been hearing include:

- **How do you talk to your staff or leaders?**
- **How do you talk to the parish at large?**
- **How do parish members get in touch with you or other leaders?**
- **How can the community get in touch for prayer or material needs?**
- **Does everyone know what's going on... even among our most faithful members?**

At a very practical level, the top priority for parishes, in communion with their bishop, was and still is to set the rules of engagement for life and ministry in the new reality of COVID-19. It's vital to set clear expectations and instructions for the primary channels of outgoing and incoming communication. Establishing the ground rules as soon as possible will provide everyone with a sense of stability, ease concerns, and lessen the likelihood of misinformation and unnecessary drama.

SECTION 1: MESSAGING

STEP 1

Recognize and respond to immediate needs, communicating the temporary plan.

STEP 2

Consider how to “not only survive but thrive” under the current circumstances. Nobody knows how long this season will last. Putting everything on hold isn’t an option. You want to be careful while making practical decisions that they will align with your philosophy of ministry. In particular, we need to recognise that this is a golden opportunity to evaluate everything we are doing and align it to our primary mission as parish – making disciples who can share the Good News of Jesus Christ with the world. How many times have you found yourself saying about a particular program or ministry, “I wish we could just shut this down.” Guess what? It just happened! As clumsy and awkward as the adjustment period may be, it can truly be a time of huge opportunity, fresh growth and enthusiasm.

As a parish, you want to be a source of peace, hope, and stability in uncertain times. As pastoral leaders, we know the power of words. Now more than ever, people in our parishes and communities need a word of encouragement and clarity, without downplaying or dismissing the seriousness and complexity of the situation. We simply aren’t experts when it comes to handling a health crisis... no matter how many podcasts, articles, posts, or tweets we’ve been exposed to. We are, however, called by God and empowered by His Spirit to lead His people in love for the greater glory of God.

Let us hold unwaveringly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another—and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

Hebrews 10:23–25

Be sure that the words and tone of parish communication relay a message of unwavering hope and unselfish love. You love your community and the parish wants to take necessary precautions to promote the wellbeing of everyone in your area and beyond.

FOR THE TIME BEING, THIS IS OUR NEW NORMAL.

SECTION 1: MESSAGING



Website

Your home page is the front door to your parish. Today's best practices emphasize the power of first impression and ease of finding relevant information on your website. If that's right under normal circumstances, the importance of that fact just grew exponentially in size. Right now, just about any site you visit has COVID-19 information front and center. This should especially be the case for parishes—a place for gathering and for seeking help and hope in tough times. Provide a clear message and plan for how you will communicate and meet, along with how people can get in touch with you too.

Under normal circumstances we should always expect that non-churchgoers will visit our websites, but even more so in this new reality. Look at the front door through the eyes of someone on the outside. Is it welcoming to them, or does it communicate that it is only for insiders?

Update your landing page

Update your landing page to share the most **important** and **urgent** information. This is an opportunity to be informative and connective.

Review your analytics

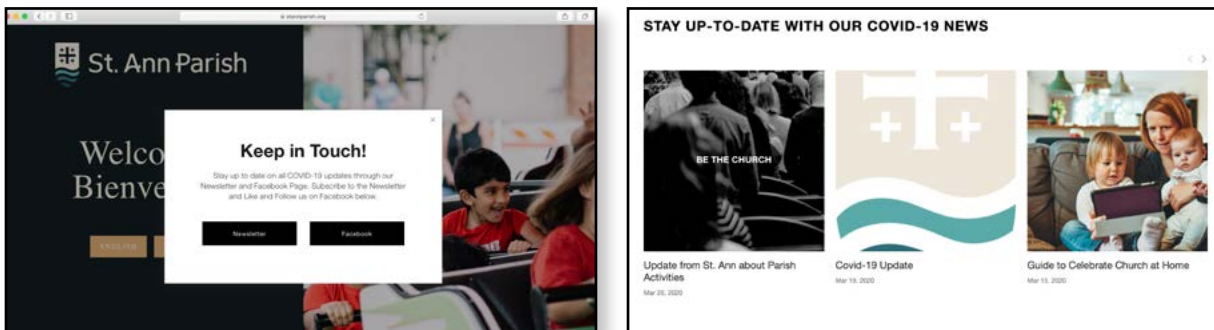
See what people are looking for by noticing what pages they're visiting. Most likely they are searching for **Mass information** and **resources**.

SECTION 1: MESSAGING

Examples of Website Messaging

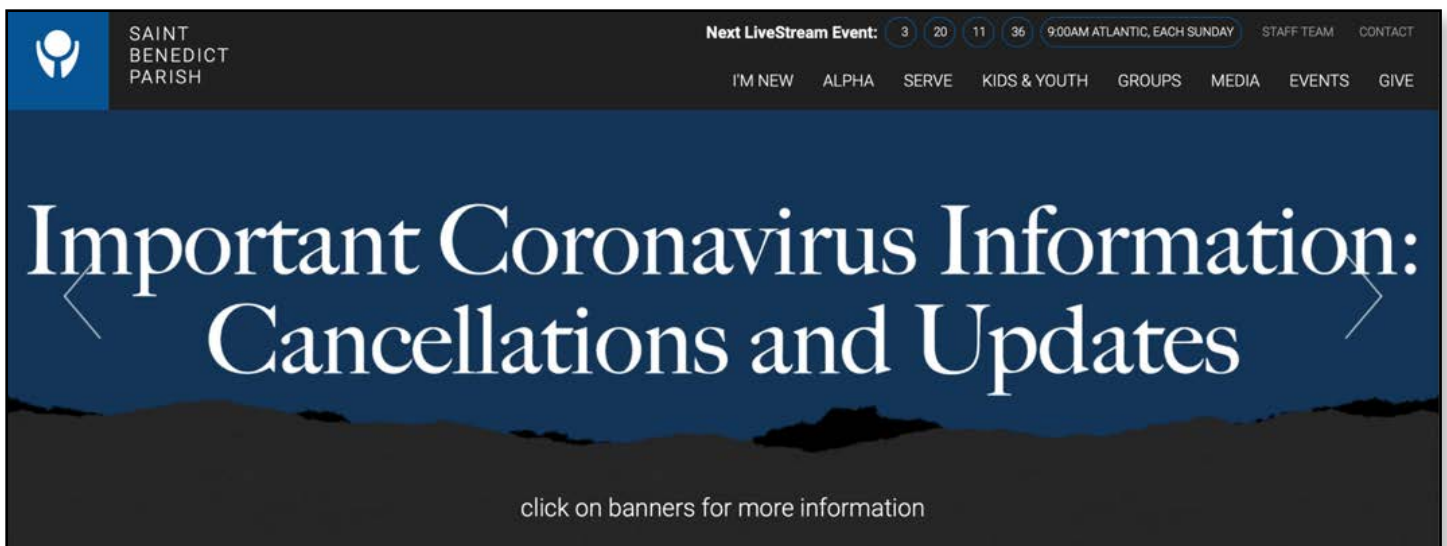
Check out the different practical ways that parishes are using their websites. (Share your ideas with us so we can share them with other parishes by emailing stories@divinerenovation.org. You can also find and share more ideas online at divinerenovation.org and covid.church)

Make sure your landing page gives people immediate access to essential information on what is happening and how they can connect in this season.



St. Ann's Parish in Coppell, Texas, USA offers anyone arriving on the landing page a selection of different ways to keep in touch on all COVID19 related updates and information on parish activities, where to find updates and resources for celebrating the church at home are all easy to find on the main page.

Saint Benedict Parish in Halifax, Canada also has also updated its landing page to direct people straight to the information they are most likely to need. Their page also tells the user when the next Livestream Mass will be and makes it easy for folks to join in through a "watch live" button when that's an option and a link to another page detailing service information. They have also included links to their province's health department to help people find reliable information.

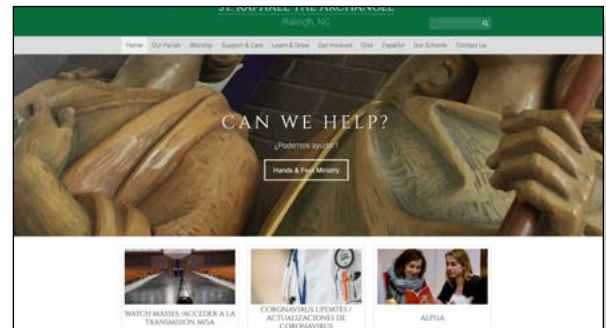


SECTION 1: MESSAGING

Over time, you can evolve your website so it is really easy to navigate and there are clear “calls to action” for the different groups of people who use it (existing parishioners, parents of kids; people wanting to reconnect with their faith; those who are curious or seeking to connect in this season). There are lots of great examples out there including this one from Elevations Church: <https://elevationchurch.org/>



Consider providing ways in which parishioners with time, skills or resources can volunteer them to help out both those in the parish and the wider community (e.g. food banks, clothing donations, benevolence, etc...). The website from **St Raphael the Archangel, North Carolina** combines easy access to key information (Mass Livestream, COVID updates) with a clear to call to action on reaching out:



Make one of your main calls to action is to prayer. Add it to the copy of your page, or as a menu item. Tools like **YouVersion's new Prayer app** can help your church pray together, even if you can't meet together.

One other thing: You can expect that you'll have a lot of new visitors on your website. A **Church in Virginia** noted that of their recent website visitors, **93% of them were brand new**. Make sure that you're prepared to capture their attention and information so you can connect with them... and make sure you give them a choice of different ways to do this (by email, on social media etc).



SECTION 1: MESSAGING



Email

Even though most communications professionals talk about social media, right now, email is still one of the best ways to communicate with your parishioners, particularly during times of crisis.

Any communications strategy should certainly include social media, but you might not want to rely solely on it. Email, even though it's boring, is your best opportunity to share your message.

Even as you look to communicate instantly on social media, don't forget that email is one of your most useful tools during this time.

Email is the best opportunity to share your message.

- It gives you more space to expand your thoughts, share important information, and tell stories.
- You can include multiple links.
- It doesn't disappear from feeds quite so easily.
- People can easily save.
- It's easy to forward and share.

On the first Sunday of digital-only Masses in the USA, one of the largest parishes in the country closed the livestream with this encouragement: "If you're not on our email list, make sure you go to our website and give us your email address...it's how we can stay in touch and share important updates with your family."

Here is one of the USA's largest parishes, with more resources than most, encourage viewers to sign up for email updates. They know email is one of the most effective communication methods.

Times of uncertainty mean we have to experiment with new communications platforms and mediums. However it really helps when we can complement that with approaches like email that are already familiar to your parishioners.

SECTION 1: MESSAGING

Email Tools

If you use a Church Management System like Church Suite, ParishSoft, Planning Center, Church Community Builder, Flocknote, Realm or one of the many providers, you have the ability to email your parishioners.

Keeping this database accurate and up-to-date is an important responsibility as your email database will be a primary source of communication.

In some cases, you can connect your database to a third party software like [Mailchimp](#), [MailerLite](#) or [Convert](#). Email lists like this give you the ability to create quick sign up forms and will help you understand who is opening your emails.

Here are some email marketing companies that do a great job.

- **Mailerlite** - Free up to 1k subscribers
- **Send In Blue** - Free up to 300
- **Convert Kit** - Free up to 1k subscribers
- **Mailchimp** - Free up to 2k subscribers, robust, use if planning to segment audiences

Email Style

When you create your email updates, know that you don't have to use a ton of graphics, templates, or fancy style.

Think about the emails that hit your Inbox. You immediately think the ones with a bunch of graphics and formatting are from companies selling something. The messages from a real person with mostly words feel more like a personal message.

Here are some other tips for crafting email messages to your parishioners.

1 WRITE LIKE A PERSON

Write like a person. When you're crafting your emails, write like a regular human being, using regular words and phrasing. You're not writing a dissertation or a government report...keep it personal.

2 SEND CHURCH EMAILS FROM A PERSON

Send church emails from a person. Don't use `admin@churchname.com` or worse, `noreply@churchname.org` as your sender. These emails are more likely to go to the spam folder.

3 WRITE TO A PERSON

Write to a person. Just like you should write like a real person, imagine you're writing to a real person (not a group of people).

SECTION 1: MESSAGING

Great Email Messaging

Here are some examples of the practical ways that parishes have announced major changes via email. (What about you? Let us know how you're innovating in this space at stories@divinerenovation.org. You can also find and share more ideas online at divinerenovation.org and covid.church)



Pray- Protect- Pursue, Fr Simon Lobo.

This message went out the last weekend the church could celebrate Mass with a parishioners and cast a vision for how the parish would respond over the coming weeks as well as some practicalities on how to connect



Permission to Stay Home, Andy Stanley.

This email went out the week before services were cancelled.



COVID 19 Update, Andy Stanley.

This email announced the move to digital and gave three reasons.



No Services This Sunday, Dan Sweaza.

Great email announcing the change and answering questions.



A Pandemic Is A Terrible Thing To Waste, Andy Stanley.

Connected people to their livestream, and encouraged people to invite their friends.



Are You Remotely Prepared?, App Sumo.

Practical life advice laid out in a way that is helpful, informative, and high value.



A Note To Our Community, Fab Fit Fun.

A message of hope that continues their company's mission statement of bringing "happiness and well-being to your doorstep".



How To Help...A Note of Encouragement, Light & Airy.

With the mission of helping people find & capture the magic in the everyday, they took an empathetic and practical approach to how you can do things you can do to help others and ways to find joy or be productive when you're at home. Practical value add with a message of hope and help.

SECTION 1: MESSAGING

Build An Email List For Your Community

You need to be able to reach out to your parish and let them know about changes or how you're addressing concerns. Email is a great tool for that.

But how powerful would it be if you could email thousands of people in your community to answer their questions or let them know how you're here to serve? Imagine the power of being able to connect with them directly, not through media outlets or press releases.

Think of your database of parishioners as your internal list ...whereas the email list of people who live in your community (who don't go to your parish) is an external list.

If you don't have an external list like this, now is a great time to start one. Use one of the email marketing tools to start a new list.

Here are some ideas to get you started:

1 ADD AN OPT-IN FORM

Add an opt-in form to your website.

Opt-in Monster is a powerful and popular tool for lead generation.

2 CREATE HELPFUL RESOURCES

Create resources that would be helpful to your community and give them away for free on your website. It could be resources for parents and kids, prayer guides, or community-driven news. Ask for an email address in return.

3 KEEP A SEPARATE LIST

Keep your community email list separate from your parish database.

SECTION 1: MESSAGING



Social Media

Social Media is one of the best tools we have to continue ministry outside of the hour on Sunday. All the time is a great time to spread the gospel of love and hope, but people are listening now more than ever.

Social media doesn't have to be complicated, and it doesn't have to be perfect. It just has to be relational.

It is vital that we are active on our social media accounts. Post in the feed, go live, share stories, ask questions, and comment on other people's posts.

Consider the emotional ramifications of social distancing. We're asking people to isolate themselves and stay home. How can we work against the effects of loneliness, boredom, stress, anxiety, or hopelessness?

We can help by being present. We can help by sharing information that isn't based in fear, but based in hope.

**SOCIAL MEDIA DOESN'T
HAVE TO BE COMPLICATED, AND IT
DOESN'T HAVE TO BE PERFECT.
IT JUST HAS TO BE RELATIONAL.**

SECTION 1: MESSAGING

Examples of Social Media Messaging

Check out some of the practical ways that parishes are leveraging social media. (Let us know how you are innovating in this area so we can share those ideas with other parishes by emailing stories@divinerenovation.org. You can also find and share more ideas online at divinerenovation.org and covid.church).



Saint Benedict Parish, Halifax, Canada is sharing its Masses over Livestream and Facebook live.



A group of Catholic priests are working with volunteer group **Peter's House** to run the "Lent in Isolation" project sharing a series of short, daily video reflections from all sorts of different Catholic pastors and leaders to support parish communities in journeying together in a Lent like no other.



The Parish of our Lady in Walsingham is using social media (as well as more traditional methods) to reach out to the community and invite them to connect with the parish through a short video and link which lets them fill in a simple form to connect.



The Church of the Nativity in Timonium using social media to invite people to submit their prayer requests so the prayer team can pray for them.

SECTION 1: MESSAGING

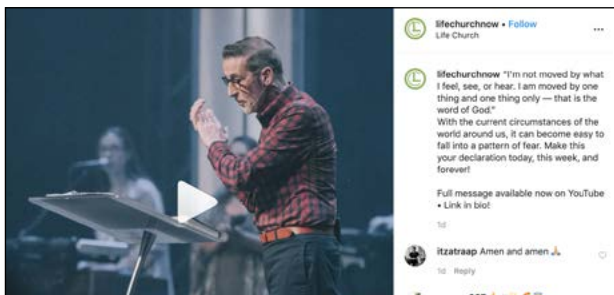
Examples of Social Media Messaging - Continued



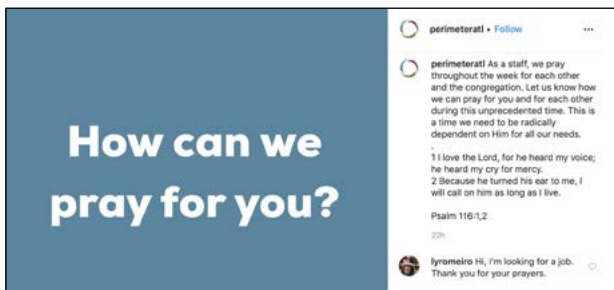
Holy Trinity Pastoral Unit in Halifax, Canada is responding to local needs by holding a drive through food drive.



Mile City Church has a scheduled guided prayer time every morning at 7am for their church members to join.



Life.Church is posting messages of hope.



Perimeter Church is opening up Instagram for prayer requests.

SECTION 1: MESSAGING



Text Messages

Email is a great way to connect with everyone about major updates and information. But it can feel overloaded with people sharing their COVID-19 responses, and it's not nearly as personal.

However, if you send a text message (assuming you have people's permission to do so), **98% of people will open it and read it.**

If you don't have people's numbers make the ask on social media and via email.

You can also utilize a texting service like [Text In Church](#), and have people text a unique number to "sign up".

Whatever you do, be wise about the information you share. No one wants to be spammed, so make sure you have [permission to text](#), and only text urgent and important information.

Tips and Tools for Texting

- [Text In Church](#)
- [Pastor's Line](#)
- Use a [Google Phone Number](#) so you don't have to share yours.
- [Superphone](#) texting service
- [Community](#) texting service

NECESSITY IS THE MOTHER OF INVENTION.

SECTION 1: MESSAGING



Shareable Graphics

In the wake of the pandemic, being able to communicate digitally is even more important. If you don't have a graphic designer, companies are offering free social media and announcement slide graphics to help you get messages out to your church members and community.

Websites with Free Graphics

- [Church Media Squad](#)
- [Church Motion Graphics](#)

Use Snail Mail

Even though there are incredible digital solutions to help you gather online and stay connected, don't forget about the old fashioned mail (provided local guidance from health authorities still allows this).

Target some of your ministry budgets to reach out to those in your community who are particularly likely to not be on line, for example the elderly.

If you're able, add a handwritten note for a personalized touch that will carry a huge impact.

SECTION 2:

Meeting **HOW CAN WE GATHER DIGITALLY AS A “DISTANT” CHURCH?**

The second priority for parishes, is figuring out a plan for gathering weekly for the Mass, followed closely by ministry areas within the parish like small groups, kids and student ministry, etc. Parishes and dioceses also need a plan for regular meetings with staff, volunteer leaders and the wider volunteer pool during this season.

When it's not considered safe to gather in person, it's time to get creative, utilize technology, and be the Parish outside of the building in new ways. We have to think of ways beyond Sunday mornings' "in house" to love our faith family.

Live Streaming is one way to broadcast your Mass. If your parish is starting from scratch with live streaming, we've put together the things that you'll need to know. If you've been livestreaming for a while now, you are still probably considering new ways to engage people in the new dynamic of "parish at home."

If Livestreaming a full Mass feels like a step too far right now then another option is obviously to direct people to a parish which is already livestreaming it's Mass ([for example livestream.com/saintbenedictparish](https://www.livestream.com/saintbenedictparish)). However, even if you do this, we'd encourage you to consider how you can use some kind of livestreaming to enable the pastor to connect with his parishioners on a weekly basis – for example by sharing a homily or a weekly message and reflection.

To make things as practical and simple as possible, we've split the following into two sections.

- Some overall thoughts on what to bear in mind if you are Livestreaming a Mass
- Practical advice on how to do Live Streaming well. We will provide some pointers that are specific to the Mass as well as some wider best practices you can use for any kind of engagement.

You are the light of the world. A city built on a hill cannot be hidden.

- Matthew 5:14

SECTION 2: MEETING

Overall Thoughts On Live Streaming The Mass

As we figure out how to help Catholics pray the Mass in a virtual, online world, it can be helpful to consider this through the lens of two questions:

1 WHAT DO WE BELIEVE ABOUT MASS?

2 WHAT CAN BE DONE SIMPLY AND DIFFERENTLY?

To elaborate on those two key questions, use the following questions as a filter for thinking through how we invite people to enter in the Mass online (or anything else) in this new season.

What do we believe about the Mass?

- How does our theology and ecclesiology shape the celebration of the Mass?
- How can this provide opportunities to teach people about the meaning and significance of the different parts of the Mass as well as its connection to the practice of our faith in times like this?
- How could you explain the various elements of the Mass so those who are joining on-line for the first time in a very long time (or ever) can engage?
- How can you support your parishioners in making a Spiritual Communion as well as acknowledging the very real pain that not being able to receive Communion can cause?
- What is essential and cannot be changed for any reason?

What can be done simply and differently?

- Can this be done while staying within the guidelines from public health authorities and the diocese on the number of people who can be present? (e.g. a livestream may look very different if you have several people to help and still use the parish building)
- How might you livestream the Mass if a 'stay in place' order comes into effect?
- How might I do this if I wanted to strengthen families at home? If I wanted parents to grow more confident in discipling their children? If I wanted couples to grow comfortable discussing their faith and praying together?
- How might I do this if I wanted to reach those who have not practiced their faith in a long time?
- What would I do to make those of no faith who are checking us out feel welcome, loved and invited to be part of our community regardless of what their starting point or life situation might be right now?

SECTION 2: MEETING

A Specific Note on Easter

There's no doubt that Holy Week and the Triduum will look very different in most parts of the world this year. While each ordinary will set the direction on how individual dioceses will respond, **this webinar from Divine Renovation** explores both the challenges and the opportunities in a digital Easter... both for those practicing their faith and the many who are looking for answers in these challenging times.

Live Webinar | Friday March 27th | 12pm ADT

HOW TO DO DIGITAL EASTER

Join Father James Mallon and Archbishop Anthony Mancini
As They Share With Us The Diocesan Plans For Holy Week

The graphic features three circular headshots of the speakers: Father James Mallon, Archbishop Anthony Mancini, and a woman. The background is a dark red color with white text and a white horizontal band behind the headshots.

SECTION 2: MEETING

Doing Live Streaming Well

Although people can't hug and smile at each other as they would in person, you still want your livestreaming parish's experience to be edifying and engaging. Regardless of what platform you are using (Livestream, Facebook live, Instagram Live...) there are lots of simple ways you can make this a much better experience.

Most live streaming services have a chat feature that makes the online service interactive. Have staff or volunteers log into the chat early to host this well including welcoming people, encouraging them to interact on chat, responding to comments and questions and asking questions to engage the online audience.

The chat feature is also a wonderful way to make sure that the Mass is accessible for everyone. For example, one parish set up tech support to help senior adults get set up to view the Livestream. Another sent snail mail to every household with instructions on how to participate in the Mass on multiple platforms.

It's worth saying that your livestreaming does not have to happen at the time(s) you would usually have had Mass. Pick a time when the audience you want to reach is online. Most streaming services have audience insights and for using Facebook live, your page's [Facebook Insights](#) can help you see the most popular online times for your audience.

It's important to know the people you are trying to connect with and try to anticipate needs and questions. But don't overthink it—most of this can be done from a smartphone. No matter how simple your setup (even if you're streaming from an iPhone on your desk), people will appreciate the consolation and challenge of a homily, a familiar liturgy, and the ability to connect with others.

Comments and questions to engage a livestream audience:

- Let us know where you're watching from today!
- What were your biggest takeaways from the homily?
- Remember to follow us on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram and share your notes to encourage someone!
- Please send us your photos of where you are watching from today, or tweet them with a hashtag.

KEEP IT SIMPLE. DON'T OVERTHINK IT.

Most smartphones can do this.

SECTION 2: MEETING

Getting Started in Live Streaming

In a matter of days, thousands of parishes realized the need to livestream a Mass or other event online.

1 You don't have to replicate, you can innovate.

Too many parishes are trying to reproduce everything from their in-person gathering online. It doesn't work and it's a mistake to try.

At least for most parishes.

If you're new to Masses online, don't try to recreate everything. An online experience can become something new, something fresh.

You can show pre-produced music. Or you can downplay music and keep it all more contemplative.

You can share an informal message from a small temporary chapel rather than a polished homily from your main church.

These things are not better or worse...they are different.

And it's okay to be different.

2 Start where you are.

It's easier than ever to show up online, and you don't need fancy equipment and expensive tools to go live online.

Some good news in a time of widespread distress: there's no shortage of options for live streaming your parish Masses and continuing to share the real good news about Jesus.

SECTION 2: MEETING

Examples of Live Streaming Options

There are a whole range of tools that parishes use to live stream.



Facebook Live

Streaming through Facebook Live is a simple option and a great place to start if you're new to livestreaming. While it does have its drawbacks, such as the difficulty embedding a replay onto your website.



Vimeo.com

Allows video streaming as well as publication to other channels (e.g. Facebook, Youtube). There are a range of options from a limited set of free capabilities through to unlimited live streaming with sophisticated user interaction and analytics



Instagram Live

Instagram Live lets you broadcast video live to your Instagram followers and engage with them via chat. However, the mobile app remains the best way for followers to watch this (the desktop/laptop browser experience is much less intuitive) so bear that in mind that this channel works best when most of those watching will be doing so from their phones.



Church Online Platform

This streaming tool is a free resource from Life.Church that includes features for real-time chat, live prayer, chat moderation, and more.

The best way to get started is easy and free, right? These are not only free to and easy for you to use, they're easy for people to watch as well.

Divine Renovation have produced a series of free webinars and podcasts covering different aspects of livestreaming including:



Is online church still church?

However, just before you throw up a camera and start live streaming everything, there is one other topic to consider first: **if you want to use music then what do you need to be doing about copyright?**

SECTION 2: MEETING

Copyrighted Material

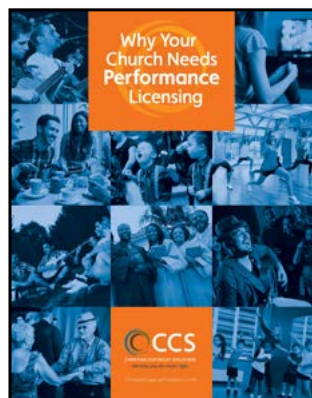
Christian Copyright Solutions (CCS) provides many parishes with the licenses they need each week. Did you know that each of the following may require a license by law?

- Playing pre-recorded music
- Performing songs live in person
- Projecting or printing song lyrics
- Live Streaming any / all of the above

A lot of parishes assume that if they have one of these licenses, everything is covered. This isn't the case. For example, many parishes use **CCLI** to cover their use of music during Mass or praise and worship nights. CCLI also has a live streaming add-on license that you'll need to check into, since that's what we're talking about here. Here's a quick breakdown of what they are along with links to more detailed information and action steps (in their own words, since this is all specific legal language).

Don't Forget the Lyrics

Need to show lyrics? This feature is only available with the CCLI license and only for the titles in the CCLI catalog. There is no blanket lyric streaming license for secular music available currently. Neither license allows you to stream sound recordings.



A Quiz For Your Specific Needs

If right now you're thinking that you went to seminary, not law school, then one thing that might help you make sure whatever we do on livestream is done with total integrity and consideration for the other men and women who bless our parishes by writing the songs we love to sing.



CCS has put together a super-helpful quiz and free guide to help you make any decisions for your parish.

Streaming Licenses

The WORSHIPcast Streaming License covers more than 25 million secular and Christian songs across all genres from ASCAP, BMI, and SESAC.

The CCLI Streaming License covers more than 300,000 Christian songs from the CCLI catalog. If your plans are only to stream Christian music, and your parish already has a CCL Copyright License, the CCLI streaming license is a good fit. If your parish plans on streaming any music outside the Christian genre, perhaps for small group use or for when you are gathering online for something other than livestreaming Mass, then you will need WORSHIPcast or an equivalent.

If you plan on streaming just your Masses, the CCLI streaming license has you covered. For streaming a mix of different ways of gathering on line (e.g. live streaming Mass; on line praise and worship; bringing together all your parish leaders on line including a time of sung prayer or if you are doing a series with guest speakers with music during times of reflection) then your parish will need the WORSHIPcast license or an equivalent.

SECTION 2: MEETING

Royalty Free Music Libraries

- [Church On the Move Seeds Music Library](#)
- [Facebook Sound Collection](#)
- [YouTube Audio Library](#)

Paid Music Libraries

- [Artist](#)
- [Soundstripe](#)
- [AudioJungle](#)

Additionally and for a limited time, [One License](#) is offering a free one month license to help ease the transition period for parishes dealing with COVID-19.

Examples of Worship and Music

Here are just some of the ways parishes have adjusted their liturgies for streaming. (We would love to hear how you are handling this so we can share great ideas with other parishes – drop us an email on stories@divinerenovation.org. You can also find and share more ideas online at divinerenovation.org and covid.church).

- Whether you're a small parish that isn't sure about licensing or sharing via livestream, or a larger parish looking to try something new with people at home, one creative idea is to create a Spotify playlist that people can play in their own homes in place of the hymns at Mass.
- Consider a simpler approach to music with a single, unaccompanied cantor. It may help people feel less self-conscious about singing along from home.
- A good tip for both cantors and preaching is to make "eye contact" with viewers by looking at the camera to build a sense of connection. Avoid creative but unnatural camera angles that remind viewers that they are spectators to something happening somewhere else. You may be preaching to a physically empty church, but the Church of living stones is listening.
- Don't feel like you have to pretend that things aren't "business as usual." Presiders can and maybe should address viewers at home.
- Some parishes are incorporating at least one more kid-friendly song in the music they use. Remember that whole families will be praying together, maybe for the first time!
- One way of bringing the liturgy to life might be to encourage families to put the Livestream on mute and have family members read the readings from a liturgy guide like that from [The Word Among Us](#).
- From the end of March, [Saint Benedict Parish](#) in Halifax, Canada has been running an online parish service for kids to provide them with an age appropriate experience of the Mass.

SECTION 2: MEETING

Ideas and Best Practices

Here are some good ideas and best practices drawn from how parishes are livestreaming Mass.. but principles apply equally well to any live stream event you may do:



Before the Livestream starts, have a slide on screen so those joining know they are in the right place and what the expected start time is. You may want also want to have some music playing in the background.

Put the inbuild chat functionality on platforms like Facebook, Vimeo Livestream and Instagram to work! Have one of you staff 'hosting' the chat throughout:

- welcoming people
- asking a question or two about where people are from or is this the first time they have joined Mass by live stream
- being available to answer any questions that arise during the chat (remember, it won't just be regular parishioners on line... parishes are also seeing those who have been away from the parish and those completely new to the faith starting to engage so we want our welcome to be warm and to meet them where they are at)
- reminding people towards the end of the link to where they can find other ways to connect with parish as an online community... as well as when the next Livestream event can be and how to sign up to receive details of those automatically



Saint Benedict Parish, Halifax keep the camera rolling after Mass for a "digital Foyer" where the priests answer questions from those on the chat feed.

SECTION 2: MEETING

Ideas and Best Practices - Continued

For the celebrant: a helpful rule of thumb here is to make this as welcoming as possible for anyone who is joining for the very first time! Parishes around our network are seeing people who have never connected with them before starting to engage online so we need to provide as loving a welcome as we possibly can, and be clear they are very much part of the community right from day one. Some practical tips from those who have presided at on-line Masses include:

- Always introduce yourself by name and welcome everyone before the sign of the cross or after the opening greeting.
- Acknowledge this may be a new experience for at least some people who are joining, we're so pleased they could join and please do feel free to sing along with the cantor or hymns and pray with the words that will come up on screen.
- If it's a special feast or specific moment in the liturgical year provide a short explanation of this which makes clear why this matters to someone who isn't even practicing their faith right now but who has joined to check it all out (e.g. "today we are celebrating/focusing on the feast of the Annunciation when Mary said yes to God's invitation and Jesus was conceived in her ... and that matters to you and I right now because it means we believe in a God who isn't distant from us but who enters right into the joys and struggles of our life so we never have to face anything alone...")
- Consider providing micro explanations of what is happening at key points in the Mass
- Throughout the Mass, if at all possible have the words of any songs as well as the words for participants come up on screen
- At Communion, show on screen a slide with the words of a prayer for making a spiritual communion.
- At the end, make sure to thank everyone for joining; highlight any ways they can connect with the parish throughout the week and let them know when the next livestream event will be and how they can get details of that.



Parishes are coming up with inventive ways for parishioners to feel involved on livestream... even if it's something as simple as reminding them the advantage of listening at home is they can tailor the music volume to their taste!

Church of the Nativity, Timonium is inviting those joining for Mass to leave their prayer requests in an online prayer room.

SECTION 2: MEETING

Reconciliation

While we are unable to celebrate some of the sacraments of our faith, some sacraments can still be celebrated in creative ways. As people are able to go shopping for groceries there is no reason why the Sacrament of Reconciliation cannot be celebrated.

Many priests are finding creative ways to do this in a way that respects guidelines for social distancing including this example of “drive through/parking lot” Confessions.



Sacrament of the Sick

Many priests are ministering to the sick and are celebrating the Sacrament of Anointing of the Sick. Hospitals and dioceses have particular guidelines on this, but we encourage you to send us any stories or insights you may have as we respond to this pandemic at stories@divinerenovation.org.

SECTION 2: MEETING

Connecting People Online

Connection and community may not be happening in the parish buildings, but we can make sure that it's happening online. It is our job to come alongside our people and equip them throughout the week. It may not happen in the lobby, but it can happen online in digital groups. It's not a building that makes the parish, it is the people.

That same thing can apply to your small groups, RCIA and discipleship groups and wider parish gatherings. You don't have to cancel your groups, you can just move them online.

The Language of Core Messaging

When it comes core messaging, we're seeing parishes use language such as:

- Church isn't cancelled, we're just meeting online.
- The church is open, the building is closed.
- We might be socially distant right now, but we're spiritually close.

Regardless of the particular group of people you are gathering, parishes are finding the following offer some of the most usable solutions for online groups.



Zoom

We've talked about zoom before, but this is a great solution for your groups.



Go To Meeting

Covers much of the same functionality as Zoom



Google Hangouts

This is another group conference solution that will work great for online small groups.

SECTION 2: MEETING

Staying Connected

Just like you want your parish to stay connected outside of the Sundays, you want your small group to stay connected outside of group meetings.



Whats App

This app provides an easy way for small to mid-sized groups to communicate (2-20). Both mobile and desktop versions are available and it works across all major platforms (Apple, Android, Windows etc). The platform allows text, picture and short video messaging and also offers free phone and video calls to other Whats App users



GroupMe

This app is a great way for groups to stay in touch throughout the week. Leaders can ask questions, share prayer requests, and more.



Facebook Group

Each small group could set up their own Facebook group and stay in touch that way. Your parish might also have a private Facebook group so your members can stay connected.

Group Text

Some people love them, some people hate them. But if the group isn't too big, group texts are great ways to stay in touch.

THE KEY ISN'T THE TECHNOLOGY, IT'S INTENTIONALITY.

Group leaders need to be encouraged to LEAN IN to their small group. Lead and shepherd people, which means staying connected.

But what about the needs of specific groups:

- Youth and Students
- Children
- Discipleship and catechesis groups including RCIA groups
- Your own parish team (whether staff, volunteers or a mix)

Here's some of the key considerations and best resources we are seeing right now for each of these different groups.

SECTION 2: MEETING

Youth and Student Ministry Online

When the news about COVID-19 began influencing large gatherings, all parishes scrambled to figure out what to do when they couldn't gather in person on Sunday.

That realization quickly extended to other ministries too. We need to get our youth and student ministries online, too. And we need to create new opportunities for these groups to stay connected in a way that also respects and diocesan safe-guarding policies or other considerations around age etc.

Youth and students' lives have been significantly affected during this time – nearly every environment in their lives has been disrupted. School, friends, work, and parish have all been affected. This can be really tough on young people so it's important to reach out to them and provide age appropriate ways to connect during this time and with the right level of safe guarding.

Examples of Live Streaming in Student Ministry

Most of the livestreaming advice that applies to other parish liturgies will also apply to your youth and student ministry. But there are a few specific pointers that will help you serve student better. Non-Catholic Christian leaders are leading innovation in this area:

Doug Fields, co-founder of Download Youth Ministry and the Youth Pastor at Mariner's Church **[shared a helpful video about how they are responding with a YouTube Live service.](#)**

[Addison Roberts has a great tutorial video on how to get started with live streaming.](#)

Josh McLemore, Student Pastor at Douglas First UMC in Douglas, Georgia and one of the trailers of the **[Grow Curriculum](#)**, put together a simple guide for going live with Zoom, one of the tools we're recommending to all parishes during this time.

Other live streaming options for students include:

- Twitch
- Google Hangouts
- Instagram Live

SECTION 2: MEETING

Staying Connected to Students

If your student ministry has small groups, it's not a huge jump to shift them online meeting using a tool like **Zoom**. It's one of the more popular video call solutions and has been helping people work remotely for years. But it's also a great tool for online small groups.

Right now, they are extending their free trial, essentially removing their 40-minute limit. One of the cool features of Zoom is breakout rooms. You could have a large group teaching time and then split students up into their respective small groups.

There are also a range of other small group video chat tools (e.g. Houseparty) depending on what country you are in so it is worth talking to some of the youth or students who are already engaging with your parish on what they and their friends use most and letting that help inform your choice.

Relationships, more than programming, have always been the driving force behind student ministry. As great as it is to provide an online service or digital gathering, it might be more important to stay connected throughout the week. This just might be one place where student ministry is ahead of adult ministry.

There are some great resources already on line that you can use or direct people to:

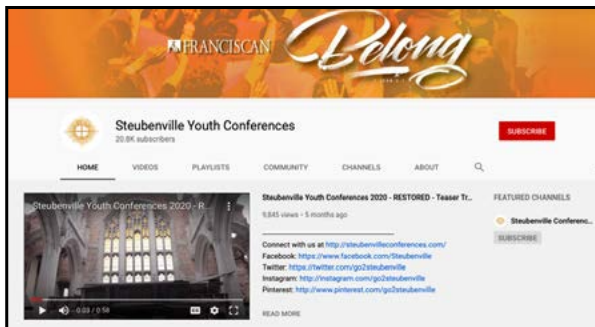


Check out the free
Divine Renovation **webinar**:

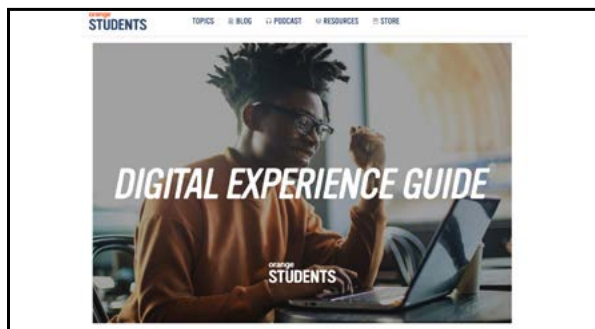


ProjectYM runs a weekly online Catholic youth night with great speakers and a range of resources to help youth ministers and parents follow up with teens.

SECTION 2: MEETING



For those already familiar with the youth and student focused **Steubenville Conferences from Franciscan University**, they are providing free access via their YouTube channel to the most popular talks from past youth conferences:



Orange have put together a free Digital Experience Guide to give some ideas on how you could continue to reach students and parents—even without an in-person gathering – and also offer a range of free resources.

Brian Lawson shares some great ideas in this online blog post: **“7 ways to minister in a time of social distancing”**. Depending on age, you could also look at using Google Hangouts, Skype, or Zoom to gather students in virtual groups. Most of these services are free and can have 10+ people on the call. Why not play a game with them? Pull out the classic games and conversation starters like Two Truths and A Lie, Never Have I Ever, or Good Thing, Bad Thing.

GroupMe is a great way to stay connected to students outside of events, even during times when you can gather. Many students already use this for school, sports, or church.

More than ever, students need caring adults to lean in and facilitate connections. Students already live their lives digitally, but this is a new opportunity for the church.

SECTION 2: MEETING

Finally Cameron Pedicord and Jonathan McKee have **some great ideas** for how you can help students grow spiritually and stay connected during this time.

Here are some of them:

- Post a short video every day. Make it fun. Give a tour of your house. Show them that you actually have toilet paper.
- Jump on Zoom or some other meeting app and take a small group through one of our free YouTube discussions (yes, these each have small group questions and scripture) or free Music Discussions (yes, Billie Eilish, Bieber, Mercy Me, For King & Country... they all have scripture and small group questions, and they're all free).
- Challenge your students to read the daily Mass readings for the month. Send a group text with comments about what you read.
- Have your musically inclined students spend time writing new worship songs. Post them to YouTube and share them with the group.
- Video Game Tournament. Ask your students... they'll tell you how.
- Short Story or Book writing competition. Seriously. They have nothing else to do. How much Netflix can one student actually watch?
- Binge watch a Netflix, Disney+, Hulu show and discuss. Did you know we have a Bible discussion posted for every single episode of The Walking Dead and Stranger Things?
- Invite your students to download the Chosen App and have Chosen not Frozen hang outs with small group discussion.
- Coffee Time: Everyone brews a cup of coffee at home and hangs out virtually. Video conference and share your secret coffee recipe.

SECTION 2: MEETING

Children's Ministry Online

Children under 10 will be heavily impacted during this time. They aren't able to go to school and see their friends. They aren't able to be around other kids which can create a lot of issues. How should parishes respond?

Programming

Just like you're taking Masses online and going live for students, with a bit of care and planning, and the right level of adult supervision and support, we can minister to children too during this season so that Sunday, although at home, can feel different.



There are a range of resources to help us to do this, although it's worth noting that some of the other Christian traditions are much further ahead in this space so there's a lot to be learnt from them.

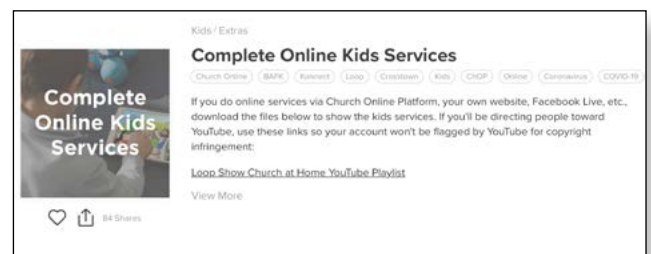
From the end of March, **Saint Benedict Parish**, Halifax, Canada are running an online kids service directly after their Livestreamed Sunday Mass to offer children some more age appropriate ways of interacting with the key messages from that week.

The **LifeKids team from Life.Church** is creating full-length video church services that include interactive elements, pauses, and worship that can be streamed online. These experiences will be relevant for children from ages two through six grade. These videos have no Life.Church branding and use license-free music. They also have a range of **other resources**.

Orange Kids Ministry have lots of free resources for online ministry right now:



Check out the free Divine Renovation **webinar**:



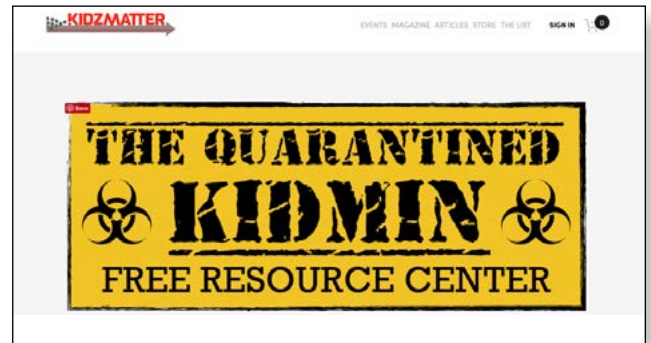
SECTION 2: MEETING

Programming - Continued

Newspring also have a range of free children and student resources which have specifically been created for use online.



Finally, **Kidzmatter** are pulling together an online resource hub with all sorts of free resources in this space:



Resourcing Parents

So many parents are trying to balance working from home, being a teacher, and being a parent. It's really tough. One of the biggest ways you can show up with your families is by providing practical and useful resources for parents.

Parishes can step into their world by becoming a trusted source for quality and helpful information. Ask your parents what they need and either find or create resources to help them during this time. Take the time you would spend preparing rooms or creating lessons and funnel that energy toward resourcing parents.

Here are some ideas of things you can share:



How to talk about Coronavirus

Resources to help parents talk to their kids about Coronavirus and what is happening.



Doodling With a Friend

Mo Williams (Author of 'Don't let the pigeon drive the bus') is hosting a Youtube Live everyday.



Helping Kids Manage Anxiety

Resource to support parents in helping their kids manage any anxiety they may be feeling



The Cincinnati Zoo

Offering videos of the zoo and different animals with facts about them every day at 3pm



Homeschooling Tips

Tips like this one "When Homeschooling is Your Temporary New Reality!" by Letty Rising



Pinterest

Share a Pinterest board with activity ideas like this one

SECTION 2: MEETING

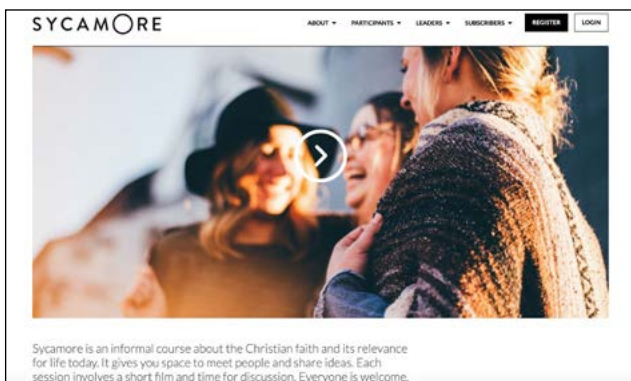
Small Groups including RCIA, mid-size groups and discipleship/catechesis groups

There are a whole range of great online resources which you can use to run small group study series and discussion groups. Some groups watch the videos together and then discuss, if internet bandwidth is a challenge, people can watch the videos beforehand and still come together for a great discussion.

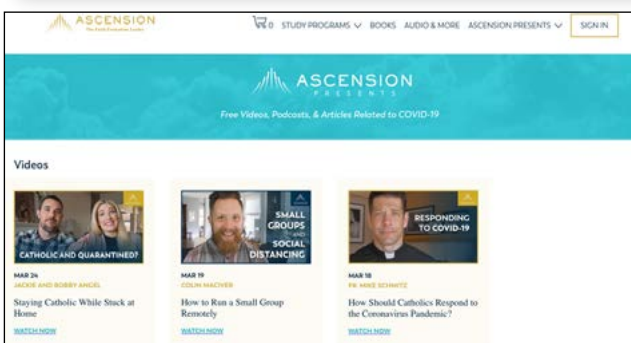
One key point is to think about this from two different angles:

- What do you want to run to **support those already in your faith community?** Perhaps to strengthen their prayer life, help them understand the Catholic perspective on topics they are wrestling with or unpacking the liturgical seasons we are journeying through as we move from Lent through Easter to Pentecost and back into Ordinary Time.
- Even more important, what do you want to run that people can **invite those of little or no faith** to? People are hungry for a space to explore the questions they have in the face of this pandemic... and even hungrier for authentic (if virtual) community and a safe, loving space for honest conversation on the big questions. If you've already been running a parish evangelization program like Alpha you will have a ready-made pool of small group hosts but, even if you haven't, you can start small with some shorter online series lead by some key staff or volunteers and then expand this out over time.

Some great places to look at for 'ready to run' resources include:



Sycamore is a Catholic organisation offering a range of free online videos exploring the Christian faith and its relevance for life today. The supporting session guides (also free) make these really easy to host and the content is particularly suitable for those wanting an 'easy entry point' for groups where people may be less connected with their Catholic faith.



Ascension Press offer some free and also a range of 'pay to use' online courses with both video and study guides:

SECTION 2: MEETING

Formed offers a 'pay to use' service (including a 'parish membership' option) which provides movies, children's programs, ebooks, audio, parish programs and studies direct to your parishioners browser, mobile or connected device. During the pandemic, it is also offering a **complimentary 40-day subscription** so people can watch, read, and listen to Catholic content for free.



If you would like to create something more tailored to specific groups in your parish you might want to consider whether you could use a tool like **Gloo's Growth Plan Builder**. This allows you to string together a series of videos, assessments, lessons, or conversations to guide a participant through a curriculum.

- *TIP: You don't have to gather face to face to pray. Tools like YouVersion's new prayer app can help your parish pray together, even if you can't meet together.*
- *(Also have a look at the later section in this document on how to run Alpha online)*

SECTION 2: MEETING

What about your own team? Parish Staff Meetings, Volunteer Team Meetings, Finance and Parish Pastoral Council Team meetings... How will it all work?

These groups can still meet, pray, and make decisions by meeting online using tools like **Zoom**, **GoToMeeting** or **Google Hangouts**. Since travel isn't required, it might be even easier to have full participation.

You can still meet with people.

You can still gather your leaders.

You can still have liturgy planning meetings.

Shifting everything online might have an adjustment period but there are plenty of people who do this and PREFER this.

If you're working remotely or want to consider extending the option beyond the time it's required, don't forget about one of your most valuable resources: the people of your parish.

Chances are, you have members who have been working remotely for years. Call on their expertise. Ask for their help. Not only will it create great conversations, you'll get to know some of your members better.

SECTION 2: MEETING

Thoughts on Virtual Meetings

Streaming video isn't just a solution for the Sunday morning problem; it's the quick 2–4 person conversation problem. Virtual meetings and working remotely due to social distancing have their upsides. Some things might be better this way.

It's not as huge of an adjustment as it would've been even a few years ago. With advances in wifi and cellular technologies, smartphones, tablets, and personal computers, many of us spend a pretty shocking amount of time looking at our screens already. Have you ever checked the screen time clock on your phone? It's pretty sobering. The bright side however is that we're familiar with the technology, most have access to streaming video from some kind of personal device, and it'd be a great improvement to interact with actual people in real time about meaningful things as opposed to crushing candy, scrolling and swiping through feeds, or reading some article about the unthinkable things that someone we'll never meet is saying.

Let's make that the first things on a quick list of positive things about virtual meetings.

It could redeem our use of technology.

Perhaps we can retrain our brains to immediately crave connection with other people rather than consuming impersonal streams of data for ourselves. Please, Lord. Amen.

It could be more productive.

From an efficiency standpoint, it's a better use of time. There's no lost margin walking or driving between meetings. In fact, The Wall Street Journal reported a few years ago that 40% of all employees waste 30 minutes per day looking for a meeting room. You also don't waste time in large meetings where your input isn't needed. The same report found that 73% of meetings were only 2–4 people.

It can help you juggle schedules.

When you're only trying to connect with 1–3 other people and there's no travel time, it's a lot easier to find available times to meet.

For some situations, digital solutions might even turn out to be the best long run solution! Even when things return to normal, offering digital alternatives might be a smart move. Right now you're forced to consider these options, but you, your teams, and your parish might benefit from the discoveries.

SECTION 2: MEETING

Working Remotely

One of the positive things that comes out of this time will be an appreciation for working remotely. It's something forced upon millions of people. But when things have quieted down, we will look back and be thankful that we learned some new skills and built some new habits.

Many people in your parish suddenly find themselves working from home, and it will be a big adjustment. In addition, thousands of parents are unsure about how they are supposed to do their job from home while being a parent at the same time. It's a strange new world for a lot of people.

And you might be facing this challenge yourself.

Many parishes are encouraging staff members to work from home. While there are some challenges, it's a good thing.

- No commute.
- Comfortable environment.
- Cost-effective.
- Fewer distractions. Okay, at least different distractions.
- Not spreading viruses.

I believe many parishes will see the value of working remotely and will continue to offer it as an option to employees, at least some days.

Let's talk about some ways to make it work for you.

Check out the DR webinars on this area including:



SECTION 2: MEETING

Psychology of Working From Home

The biggest challenges in working from home are not choosing the right tools but developing a new pattern. Many people in your parish are struggling through this. You might be facing it, too.

The Divine Renovation team is already spread around the globe, so we've had to learn how to work virtually. Here are some things we've learned along the way (some of it the hard way!)

Have a clearly defined schedule. Even if you don't have to be "in the office" at 9am, determine a schedule and stick to it. Work/home boundaries can be tough when it's all the same thing so start with your schedule. Run your morning routine, get dressed, and go to work just like you're working in an office... and switch off your computer, phone, messenger and other devices when it's time to finish the working day, otherwise you are "always on"! We are intentional about using our 'status' on Microsoft Teams so that it shows if we are available/ busy/ away... and try to respect these for each other. Finally, we know the current situation means many of our team are juggling parenting or care-giver responsibilities, so we've been intentional about letting people have ownership of when they get their work done and if that means more flexible hours then that's ok too.

Create a workspace. Whether you have a home office or find space for a desk in the corner of a room, create a space that's dedicated to your work. Not only will this help you reinforce your routine, it will help others in your house understand when you're at work and when you're at home. However, we also recognize the extraordinary times we are in and, as a leadership team, have been explicit that we know there will be times a kid pops up in the middle of a call or a pet decides to invade the keyboard and that these things happen and its ok.

Get support and buy in from others in your home.

Speaking of others in your house, this just might be the most important thing. If you're working from home and there are others in the house, you need to help them understand and support your work reality. You need boundaries so you can focus on work and not get distracted with laundry, entertainment or projects. But others need to understand and support your space, too.

Stay connected. One of the toughest things for people leaving a traditional office environment to work from home is the feeling of isolation. This is a very real thing. As a Divine Renovation team, we gather in an online video call for 30 minutes of team prayer on Mondays and Friday... we also have a 'hang out' where everyone dials in for some social chat and interaction for an hour on Thursday afternoons. On top of that, we take time on Monday to clearly communicate the key priorities for the week... and on Fridays take time to celebrate the wins and how God is working through the ministry in this season.

No conflict via email or text. We recognise that, as humans, people "type tougher than they talk" so our team do their best to connect 1:1 via video or phone if there's something causing friction or conflict. We have found that gives us the best chance of avoiding crossed wires and getting to the bottom of whatever is causing the challenge quickly and in a healthy way.

SECTION 2: MEETING

Here are two resources on the practical aspects of working from home that might be useful for pastors, staff, volunteers.. or even your wider community:

- **Critical Components for Working from Home.** This resource from Belay (the virtual staffing company we use at Divine Renovation for a whole range of administrative and operational support) is great.
- This list of **how to get set up working from home in one week.**

Remember, the people in your parish who are affected by a change in work location are also struggling to stay connected with people. They are more isolated, which means they need connection to their parish community even more.

Technology

There are so many tools and services that make it possible for a lot of people to work from home. Here are some of the most popular tools.

- **Microsoft Teams** – Chat, file-sharing, video calling, plus the Office Suite built right in.
- **Google** – offers both a free and paid set of solutions including email, online storage and shared Google drive
- **Slack** – This is the #1 work messaging platform and it works great to stay in touch throughout the day.
- **Basecamp Guide to Internal Communication** – Not only is Basecamp an excellent tool, but they set a precedent for company culture. This internal guide is full of helpful advice on working remotely.
- **27 Apps and Tools for Working Remotely** – This is a decent list of several tools and services helpful for those who work remotely.

There are plenty of others: Asana, Trello, Monday.com, and the list goes on and on. The bottom line is there are tools and services to help you manage nearly every aspect of working remotely.

Experiment quickly with a few tools but go ahead and make a decision. A lot of tools will work for you and the sooner you start mastering some, the more effective you will be.

Finally – **Techsoup** supports nonprofits, charities, and libraries by providing access to donations and discounts on software, hardware, and services from major software providers. Check their website to see what is available for your geography.

SECTION 3:

Ministry HOW CAN WE GO OUT AND BLESS THE COMMUNITY?



In a time when our society is gripped by panic and fear of the unknown, there is a great need for the Church to remind them of a God who is caring and certain. We might be afraid too, but we're in a prime position to channel our concern into loving and serving both God and people. This present moment is a tremendous opportunity to mobilize our parishioners to reach out and love and serve those who are not connected to Church or may not know God's love.

As parishes establish new norms for communicating and meeting with one another, it's important to pay attention to the needs around them. What are you doing to meet the real-life needs of people within your parish and within your community? The situation is creating opportunities to love our neighbours in tangible and noticeable ways.

The same way you have multiple ministries in-house, develop a plan to have those same ministries through virtual platforms.

This is an opportunity to be informative. Offer a list of local food banks, point people towards local clothing donations, share job services locations, etc... Let your community know that you're not only a source for spiritual growth, but you're also a source for community connection and empowerment.

**We need to start adjusting our energy from having Mass to how you can help our community.
Mother Teresa didn't simply attend the Eucharist, she lived it.**

SECTION 3: MINISTRY

Equipping Your Parish to Serve

Remind your parish that times like this are a unique opportunity to be the hands and feet of Jesus. But don't stop there—tell them how.

Identify needs in your community that your parish can help fill. Send out creative ideas for ways the people in your parish can use their resources to make an impact. Make it easy for your parish to connect with serving opportunities that have come up in your community, such as volunteering at food pantries and for other local relief efforts.

Many families live week to week and paycheck to paycheck. But there are people in your parish who aren't and would jump at the chance to help.

Rejoice in hope, be patient in suffering, persevere in prayer. Contribute to the needs of the saints; extend hospitality to strangers.

Romans 12:12-13

To find out about the needs in your community, you can encourage those who have needs to text or email to ask for help. To start responding to the needs, you can flag opportunities on your website and social media channels. You can also give your parishioners the option to receive a text or email notification about the current needs in your community that they can respond to.

Your parish could receive a text or email notification of needs and work together to fulfill them. You can also mobilize your people by creating a community response team or take up a special collection to help families make it through this tough season.

Ask yourself, "What can I do with what people are giving?" and "How is giving TO our parish also giving THROUGH our parish?"

Let's have a look at some of the different ways parishes can reach out to love and serve others in this season including:

- **Prayer in a digital world**
- **Sharing the Good News with a world in need**
- **Serving Your Parish and Serving Your Community**
- **Sharable Content: Images, Quotes, Messages**

SECTION 3: MINISTRY

Prayer

Firstly, and most importantly, is how do we help people make sure everything they do is grounded in prayer ... because while prayer on its own is insufficient, anything else without prayer will be ineffective!

There's power in numbers, and there's even more power in prayer. In these non-touch times, tools like **YouVersion's Prayer app** are a digital way to start prayer chains, share prayer requests, and keep track of what and who you're praying for.

You can record a video where you pray over different people and places and post it to social media or pray on a live stream. Using **Facebook Live** is a great way to pray for people online. Many people are stuck in their homes with access to little else other than the internet, feeling a loss financially and socially. Now is the time to minister to them and utilizing online prayer tools allows you to reach them far and wide.

Examples of Creative Prayer Tools

Check out some of the practical ways that parishes and ministries are uniting people in prayer. (What about you? Find and share more ideas with us at stories@divinerenovation.org or online via our website at <https://divinerenovation.org> and ChurchFuel's website at covid.church).



The Pope's Twitter feed (@Pontifex) and the [Vatican News](https://www.vaticannews.va) service provide regular updates on any calls to global prayer which we are invited to as Catholics such as the recent extraordinary Urbi et Orbi.



A range of parishes are Live streaming Eucharistic Adoration. This can range from simply livestreaming the video feed to more interactive versions with times of music and/or guided prayer. It is also worth thinking about different ways you can offer a warm welcome through how you host the online chat with team members who can answer questions, direct people to helpful resources to help them or others with them enter into these times of prayer or even pray for specific prayer intentions. **One example is the online Eucharistic Adoration streaming from St Benedict Parish, Halifax, Canada.**

SECTION 3: MINISTRY



Church of the Nativity, Timonium is inviting those joining for Mass to leave their prayer requests in an online prayer room:

A 7-DAY CORONAVIRUS PRAYER GUIDE

- PRAY FOR THE SICK**
Pray for those who are sick, and their families, that the Lord would heal and comfort them.
- PRAY FOR HEALTHCARE WORKERS**
Pray for those on the frontlines treating those who are sick, that the Lord would protect and strengthen them.
- PRAY FOR THE VULNERABLE**
Pray for those who are especially vulnerable to disease, that the sickness would pass over them and that they would rely on others for help.
- PRAY FOR THE UNEMPLOYED**
Pray for those who have lost work, that God would provide through their families and communities.
- PRAY FOR OUR LEADERS**
Pray for national and local government leaders, that they would have wisdom to do what is best for all.
- PRAY FOR STUDENTS & FAMILIES**
Pray for students who are out of school, and their families, that the Lord would give them patience and discipline.
- PRAY FOR CHURCHES**
Pray for churches and ministry leaders, that they would know how to best show the love of Christ in this time.

"Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you. I do not give as the world gives. Don't let your heart be troubled or fearful."
JOHN 14:27

LifeWay

A number of parishes are sharing **coronavirus specific prayer guides** like this one:

The Word Among Us are providing free access online to the daily Scripture readings along with a set of reflections and meditations to help people enter more deeply into the Word of God.

SECTION 3: MINISTRY

Sharing the Good News With a World in Need

The current crisis creates a real window of opportunity to share the Good News. Fear for loved ones, people's own health, the complete loss of control, a sense of being overwhelmed, serious health and money concerns and the reality that many of the distractions and busyness of normal life have been stripped away means that so many are currently wrestling with the big questions of life. They want to hear a word of hope that they are not in this alone, that they are loved and that there is a path forward and only God can meet them in that need. However, He calls each one of those who follow Him to be His hands, feet and voice in sharing that message of mercy, love and hope with those who, for whatever reason, are far from Him right now.

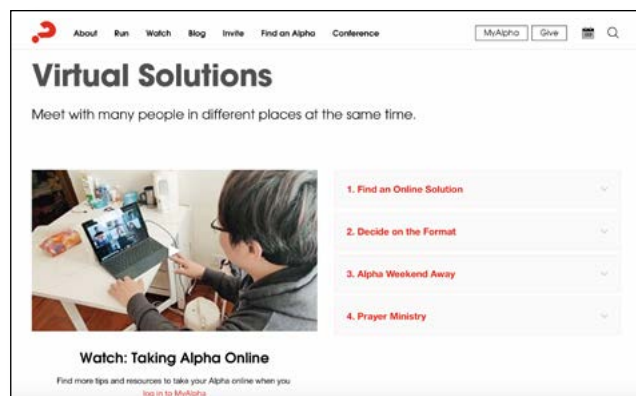
There are all sorts of different ways to share the basic Gospel message with folks who are of no faith background or for whom faith has been on the back burner. They all have in common the need to follow the approach modelled by Jesus – reaching out in love to those most in need, meeting them where they are, entering into loving relationship with them and inviting them into relationship with Christ who loves them and gave Himself for them on the Cross (Gal 2:20).

At Divine Renovation we have coached and supported Catholic parishes using a range of different evangelisation tools. However, in our experience, the one which is consistently the most fruitful in terms of making disciples in the Alpha course.

The Alpha course itself is made up of a series of 11 sessions exploring the Christian faith. Each talk looks at a different question around faith and is designed to create conversation. Alpha has been run successfully all around the globe and everyone is welcome. The videos and all the content you need to run it successfully is available for free in multiple languages and there is also a version specifically for youth.

A number of the Catholic parishes in the Divine Renovation Network have already successfully moved their current Alpha courses online in countries including the USA, Canada, Australia, the UK and Portugal. We know that this works in the online environment.

The Alpha team have developed and released a range of free additional resources to support parishes everywhere to run Alpha on-line well across a number of platforms including Zoom and VimeoLivestream. You can access all of these resources here: [Alpha Online](#).



SECTION 2: MEETING

Serving the Wider Community



A number of parishes including **St. Raphael the Archangel, North Carolina's "Hands and Feet"** programme and the **"Help" programme at Church of the Nativity** to match skills and availability in the parish with the needs of the whole community in their area.

In addition, parishes are starting to look at ways they can support the wider community in areas including:

- Navigating the challenges of being made redundant (including help with food, support with accessing benefits)
- Grief and bereavement support
- Support for marriages

Serving Seniors

Senior citizens are some of the most vulnerable among us. They can be in grave danger if they catch a virus like COVID-19, but parishes can serve them by making sure they still have what they need.

Sign Up Genius and **Meal Train** are great online tools for coordinating grocery store trips or meals for seniors. They may also need errands run, such as getting prescriptions from the pharmacy or picking up their mail. A bit of online coordination among parish members can make sure that these tasks are taken care of.

IF LOOKING FOR A SILVER LINING, THE PARISH HAS FINALLY LEFT THE BUILDING. WE'VE BEEN TALKING ABOUT IT FOR YEARS, NOW WE'RE FORCED TO LIVE IT.

Many seniors will need technology support to help them stay connected when they can't leave home or other resources for spiritual nourishment. When you set up a livestream for your parish, offer a conference call option that they can take advantage of.

But technology isn't the only way. You can print and send newsletters, CDs, and DVDs of sermons. You can assemble a team to make phone calls to check in on seniors. When the parish surrounds seniors in this way, it makes sure they don't feel alone or forgotten.

SECTION 3: MINISTRY

Spreading the Love with Shareable Content

Social media is always a popular place to be, but it's even more so when people are confined to their homes. During a pandemic like COVID-19, you can bring encouragement to millions of people through a device that's in their hands for multiple hours per day.

Post shareable content—such as homilies that you or other have preached on fear, hope, and seasons of struggle or waiting—that would minister to people in uncertain, frightening times.

**You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul,
and with all your mind, and with all your strength.'
The second is this, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'
There is no other commandment greater than these.**

- Mark 12:30-31



A group of Catholic priests are working with volunteer group **Peter's House to run the "Lent in Isolation"** project sharing a series of short, daily video reflections from all sorts of different Catholic pastors and leaders to support parish communities in journeying together in a Lent like no other.

Bridgetown Church is another great example. This Portland, OR church is doing a "Bridgetown Daily" series on their podcast, where they share a daily scripture, quote, or the life of a saint in order to help ground people in the midst of the pandemic.

You can also share graphics with Bible verses or quotes that would help such as these:



SECTION 3: MINISTRY

Share ways that people are helping each other in your community. Share books to read and prayers to pray. Whatever you do, point people to Jesus and help them focus on Him and not the pandemic. If we replace “atomic bomb” with “coronavirus” in this quote from C.S. Lewis, it sure puts it into perspective (and gives us a great word to share online with people who are in dismay!):

**“This is the first point to be made:
and the first action to be taken is to pull ourselves together.
If we are all going to be destroyed by [coronavirus],
let that [virus] when it comes find us doing sensible and human things –
praying, working, teaching, reading, listening to music,
bathing the children, playing tennis,
chatting to our friends over a pint and a game of darts –
not huddled together like frightened sheep and thinking about bombs.
They may break our bodies (a [virus] can do that)
but they need not dominate our minds.”**

SECTION 4:

Money **HOW CAN OUR GIVING SURVIVE THE CORONAVIRUS?**

For many of you, the giant elephant in the room is giving. What's going to happen during the indeterminate amount of time that parishes can't safely gather? The question raises a very real need and a serious challenge. Honestly, a lot of pastors and parish leaders today aren't great at talking about money outside of our own inner circles. Publicly and from the ambo there may be a fear of not wanting to take airtime away from feeding people to talk about cash. This simply isn't a fair contrast.

A little voice in our heads, the cartoon devil on our shoulders, argues that it'd be self-serving or a lack of faith to preach, teach, or even ask members to continue giving regularly, if not to increase their giving. There will be more needs than usual from a benevolence standpoint alone. If you're not hearing that voice, it may be the one that is genuinely scared of running people off if you talk about money. But you not only need to talk about it, you need to make a clear and consistent ask. In fact, the resistance you might be feeling right now may give us a peak behind the curtain, spiritually, at an object of worship in our culture. Arguably, it's the object of highest praise and devotion in our communities.

Hard truths:

- **Giving will likely be down beyond the impact timeframe.**
- **People give out of their discretionary income.**
- **People are worried about the economy and there will be long-term effects.**

As you move through these next few months and into the new normal, understand that giving may not return to January 2020 levels until well into 2021. You might be in for a long road.

It's a reason to pay attention, not a time to despair. Your parish needs your leadership and your focus. There is true joy to be found in giving. Jesus spoke plenty on the subject, as has God throughout Scripture.



[Check out the DR webinars on this area.](#)

SECTION 4: MONEY

Who Owns This Responsibility?

You need to make sure one real and specific person is responsible for the overall giving levels in your parish. It's likely this will be the parish priest supported by the head of his Finance Council, what's important is that a specific person needs to take up the mantle.

It can't be the responsibility of a committee. "We" is not a person....it's a recipe to pass the buck. It's everybody's worry because it's nobody's job.

Keeping the pulse on generosity needs to be a real person's job.

Not "somebody" or "someone."

- Who is going to make sure the right message gets to the people?
- Who is going to make sure communication is positive and constant?
- Who is going to make sure processes are up to date?
- Who is going to keep emphasizing recurring contributions?

It will take the combined efforts from several people to weather the storm, but we recommend ONE PERSON serve as the point person for all things generosity in your parish.

SECTION 4: MONEY

Digital Giving Options Are Worth It.

In the work we do with the parishes we coach, we've been encouraging people to not just offer the means of automated giving, but to emphasize it and make it the primary giving method in your parish. Many parishes make use of Pre-Authorized Remittance. Signing parishioners up for this service involves the filling out of forms and sending in void cheques to the parish office. Perhaps this moment is an opportunity for parishes to make a kind of quantum leap over this "older" means of automated giving and "go digital."

We know it's a difficult topic but we also know from our conversations with other parishes who have been in touch with us over the last few weeks that there are so many parishes in the wider parish who wish they had taken action years ago.

If you find yourself without the ability to meet and a community that isn't set up to give on a committed basis, it's not too late. You'll face some tough challenges, but you can lead your way through them.

If you don't offer ways for people to give on-line (with recurring capabilities so that people can set up automatic contributions), you need to get set up immediately. It was a necessary step a decade ago, but it's even more imperative today.

When choosing your giving solutions providers, here are the features you should absolutely require. You should not even consider a solution that didn't offer these.

Recurring Transactions

This is the most important feature and it's a must-have. You need a solution that would allow someone to set up automatic, recurring contributions so they can make one decision and support your parish every month.

Accepts all forms of payment

You need to accept all the relevant payment types including debit cards and every form of credit card including American Express.

Mobile friendly

Paying with a smartphone is increasingly normative for many, they will also use their mobile phone to give to your parish. So, whatever you're using needs to look great and work great from a mobile phone.

It would be easy to discuss, debate, and dissect every feature and cost of these providers. Get a few smart people together and just make a decision. You're going to be okay and you can live with whatever decision you make. The important thing is that you get up and running.

SECTION 4: MONEY

What About Fees?

While this will vary from country to country, the typical pattern we see is that fees for digital giving come in two parts. First, there are monthly fees charged by some service providers. This flat fee is sometimes based on parish size. Second, there are transaction fees on each donation. The parish pays this fee, similar to how every merchant or restaurant pays the fee when you use your card. Some solutions give you the option to pass this fee on to the donor. While it might work to offer that as an option during the donation process, we don't recommend forcing it.

Quite simply, fees are the cost of doing business.

Be wise and be a good steward, but don't be short-sighted either.

For most parishes, a .05% difference in transaction fees is not reason enough to avoid digital giving or make a switch.

Depending on what ChMS (Church Management Software) you're using, you may or may not already have the capability to promote online giving. If your ChMS offers digital giving, make sure it's enabled and easily accessible.

Popular ChMS options:

- Church Community Builder
- [Tithe.ly](#)
- [Aware3](#)
- [Breeze ChMS](#)
- [Planning Center](#)

If your parish management software doesn't handle online giving, consider making the change now so you don't have to change again later. Even if your current software doesn't support online giving, there are several options for services that will enable online giving as an option that are simple enough to incorporate with your existing ChMs:

- <https://tithe.ly/> (Within a couple minutes, you'll get a link that you can send out)
- [PushPay](#)
- [Tithe.Online](#)
- [SecureGive](#)
- [Stripe](#)

SECTION 4: MONEY

How to Have "The Talk"

If this is new to your parish, create a communications plan to make people aware of the new opportunity. Carefully consider your wording, and make it easy to find.

If you have a mostly older population in your parish, you can always encourage them to mail in their envelope or drop them off in a mailbox. The most important piece, however, is safety, and you need to reiterate it.

Places to communicate:

- In an email
- On social media
- Landing Page of your website
- Menu on the landing page of your website
- In your email signatures

Sample Social Media Post:

"GREAT NEWS: We're mobilizing our parish so we can be the parish when you need it most. We are continuing to be faithful with what God has given us, and are grateful that we get to be the parish together.

If you need help during this difficult time, please reach out. We're here to help."

Sample Email Copy:

"Dear _____,

[Introduction]

Thank them for being a part of (parish name). We are so grateful for you, and all that you bring to our parish home.

[Share the Update]

As you know, we've been making a lot of changes to keep our whole parish family safe, cared for, and protected.

So far we've implemented.

1. Thing 1
2. Thing 2
3. And we've just set up our online giving through (company name). Please create an account and set up either a one-time or ongoing donation so we can not only attend to the needs of our parish, but also our greater community.

[INSERT STORY OF A NEED YOU'VE RECENTLY MET]

[Conclusion]

Whether we are meeting in person or online, we are still called to be the Church. While I'm saddened that we are walking through such a difficult time, I am encouraged that this is when the Church shines its brightest.

May we be the light together.
(Your Name)

SECTION 4: MONEY

It Doesn't Have to Be Awkward

Choosing the right tool is an important decision, but it's actually not the most important opportunity in front of you. A lot of tools will work. It's how you introduce or emphasize them that makes the difference. The best digital giving tool in the world that isn't used by your parishioners won't move the needle.

So let's talk practically about what to do.

Ask your people to give online.

The first thing to do is to clearly ask your people to give. Let them know your parish is still meeting, you're just meeting in a different place. Let them know you're still doing ministry. Keep the conversation focused on ministry, not just bills.

When you ask them to give online, make sure you're making the process as quick and easy as it can be. Remember, the easier something is the more likely people are to follow through. People give up after too many clicks.

Amazon knows about the power of one-click purchases. They know every additional step is a barrier. The same is true for online giving.

When you catch your breath, take a few minutes to make a donation on your own website. Hit a timer and go through the process on your own. Do the very thing you're asking others to do.

Ask your people to set up automatic, recurring contributions.

Not only do you want people to give online, you want them to set up automatic, recurring contributions. This is where you want to slow down and really talk them through how to do this. Explain how it really is best for the parish. Show people the exact steps to take.

Recurring donations are better than digital donations.

Great Language from RECHURCH:

"While our public services are cancelled for now, the mission and ministry of RECHURCH is moving forward! If you would like to invest in what God is doing in and through Restoration Church, you can click below to give online (it takes just a minute or two)."

SECTION 4: MONEY

It Doesn't Have to Be Awkward

Communicate REGULARLY with those who are giving

At first, this will seem like a next level task or something to get to once things quiet down. But this is a really powerful principle and an important step to take now.

All of the people who give to your parish are all equally important to God. Everyone matters!

But there are people who fund your parish at a deeper level. Wise leaders understand this principle and recognize they have a significant opportunity to speak to regular supporters differently.

The 20% of the people who fund 80% of your ministry are more like family. They probably feel more connected to the parish and it's appropriate to give them more detail on how you are stewarding the money they are entrusting to you and the tangible difference this is making.

This is not a value question, it's just good leadership. You can also anonymize any reports and not see names and amounts. There's a way to do this and still not show favoritism.

Help people who might be unfamiliar or uncomfortable.

No matter the average age of your parish, there will likely be parishioners who are just unfamiliar or uncomfortable about making transactions online. Don't pressure or guilt them, but offer to help them.

We've seen parishes set up tech support lines for seniors (or really anyone) who need help logging onto a webcast or zoom meeting. And the same thing can apply to helping people get set up with digital giving. Let people know you can walk them through the steps without seeing their banking information or giving amounts. Help them make a small, low value donation if necessary so they can get the hang of it.

It's important to remember that people are also worried about their personal financial situation. While your donors certainly care about the parish, there is a lot on their minds. They need to hear positive, encouraging messages.

SECTION 4: MONEY

Balance Your Budget

Part of your financial reality in the next several months might be trimming the budget.

Even with proper communication and a good plan, people in your community may have fewer resources at their disposal. Even delivering a message of hope in a time of uncertainty, people may hold tighter to what they have.

It's human nature.

Wise leaders understand leaner times are coming and make adjustments even before they are necessary. If you're in that situation, here are some practical places to trim expenses.

Evaluate all of your long-term contracts, including your large standing commitments and contracts

These large, on-going expenses are a great place to start. They might include debt related to buildings; ongoing maintenance or supplier contracts or seasonal items. You may not be able to completely eliminate them, but it's possible for adjustments to be made. We're already hearing stories of businesses being willing to work with parishes.

Call your suppliers now and ask what kind of flexibility you have in the months ahead. You don't always have to go through an entire refinancing process to receive a modification. And some companies are more than willing to work with you, particularly if you're being proactive. Don't wait until you're behind to reach out.

You can apply this same decision-making process to any long-term contract you have. Maybe it's the snow removal contract or the copier. Maybe it's your insurance. Look at all of your long-term expenses and see if you can make adjustments.

Look at your short-term building expenses.

If you're not going to be meeting in person for the next few months, what expenses can you cut. Like airlines parking planes that wouldn't be used to full capacity, can you shutter certain parts of your building or your entire building and reduce auxiliary costs.

SECTION 4: MONEY

Take a look at personnel expenses.

For many parishes, this is the first or second largest expense in the budget. Simon Sinek told the story of a company whose employees collectively decided to take 4 weeks of unpaid vacation sometime throughout the year. They decided to share the burden this way to mitigate the risk to any one person. Other options can include giving staff the option to move to part time contracts or temporary lay-offs.

Be honest about importance.

Not every ministry in your parish is equally important. It sounds mean at first, but if you're honest, you know there are things that could go away from your parish that would not seriously affect your DNA. Conversely, there are ministries and programs that if they went away, your parish would fundamentally be changed for the worse.

It sounds simple, but when you make cuts, start with those non-essential programs and ministries first. Rather than knocking down everything equally, maybe you should completely eliminate things that are not core to who you are.

Tony Morgan talks more about making budget cuts in a healthy way [in this article](#).

SECTION 4: MONEY

Benevolence Policy – How Do You Respond to Requests for Help?

When unexpected situations arise – such as a global pandemic – both believers and nonbelievers in your community are looking for support. Having a written benevolence policy helps provide clarity for your parish's staff, parishioners, and outside community, prevent misunderstandings, and puts a system in place for how to respond.

YOU WILL BE ASKED FOR HELP. DO YOU HAVE A CLEAR PLAN?

Send a copy of the policy by email to ensure that key leaders are familiar with guidelines and the process. Ask everyone to review it carefully, asking any questions they can imagine coming up in conversations about the parish's assistance with food, housing, bills, etc. It's better to ask questions now than to get into a situation that potentially puts the parish in an awkward or problematic situation later.

The last thing that you or your parish needs in a time of crisis is the added strain of requests and responses feeling personal, discriminatory, or forgotten about. Not having an approved policy in place sets people up for emotional decisions in the heat of the moment. Don't risk potentially turning someone away that could have been helped or making a promise for help that can't or shouldn't be provided. On the other hand, the positive benefit of having and knowing a benevolence policy is the freedom and joy of knowing exactly how you can help an individual or family in need. Blessing someone through tangible means is a clear picture of the love of Christ and our heavenly Father's heartbeat throughout Scripture.

NOT HAVING A BENEVOLENCE POLICY IS SALT IN THE WOUND FOR PEOPLE IN NEED.

Your benevolence policy should include:

- A list of needs that the parish will and will not cover
- Information needed for financial records (amount, purpose, relationship, etc.)
- The maximum amount that can be given and to whom

A well-documented policy and record of benevolence gifts also helps protect the parish in audits and give your financial team a guide to making consistent reviews of requests.

[Click here to download an example Benevolence Policy.](#)

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Rapid Change. Unprecedented Growth

Divine Renovation was birthed out of a real experience of renewal. Fr. James Mallon along with the team at Saint Benedict Parish in Halifax, Canada transformed their Catholic parish into a vibrant community of missionary disciples. The story was told in “Divine Renovation: From Maintenance to Mission” and bishops, pastors, priests and leaders from around the world took notice.

Divine Renovation ministry with its events, books, coaching, and resources is a response to the incredible hunger for renewal within our church. Our mission is simple: to inspire and equip Catholic parishes and dioceses to be missional – that’s truer than ever in this new, virtual world.

Over the years at Divine Renovation we have come to recognise that we can and should learn from other Christian traditions, especially in the area of online and digital where parishes are often much further ahead than most Catholic parishes and dioceses.

Each day that passes will raise new questions and new solutions. At Divine Renovation, our mission is to inspire and equip Catholic parishes and diocese to be missional in this new virtual world. Right now we are doing that in three ways.

This Resource Kit: We hope you found this helpful and we will be releasing updated versions over time to share the great innovations and new opportunities that emerge. If you’d like to receive this updated content please sign up at:

<https://divinerenovation.org>

Our regular, free webinars: we are offering a series of free webinars each week providing practical, actionable insights on how parishes can dioceses can respond well to the challenges and opportunities of these times and be effective in our primary mission of making disciples and sharing examples of great innovation from around the globe. To view past webinars or sign up for details of what’s coming up please visit www.divinerenovation.org

Wider support: we also offer a range of other sorts of support. You can find out more here: www.divinerenovation.org

"Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you."

- Philippians 4:4-9



In particular, we want to acknowledge the generosity and support of our friends at ChurchFuel who shared a lot of their content and insights in this space and allowed us to dream bigger on what might be possible for Catholic parishes and dioceses moving into the online world as never before. ChurchFuel continue to pull together some of the best innovation and ideas across their tradition and you can find out more at <https://covid.church>.