

COVID-19 Substance Emergency Plan:

By Peter Haas

Always look for the Opportunities in this Chaos

5 Huge Assumptions:

- (1). The need to cancel gatherings will last longer and be more intense than people think.
- (2). The sooner we embrace the pain and plan our contingencies, the better off we will be.
- (3). God has uniquely designed us to win – especially in times of crisis.
- (4). Video technology & Social media will not only help our message but can usher our church into its greatest outreach ever.
- (5). A small group strategy is the single greatest investment we could make, especially in crisis.

5 Assumptions Expanded:

(1). The need to cancel gatherings will last longer and be more intense than people think.

According to the CDC, this meeting ban is going to last longer than people realize (at least 8 weeks). President Trump communicated this will likely last into July or August. Even if this peaked Mid-Apr, the vigilance can't / won't stop domestically until early May. Even then, people might be reticent to come out and gather again. As leaders, it's O.k. to hate it; but, it's not o.k. to live in denial of it. As a church, we must lock down spending on the wrong things.

(2). The sooner we embrace the pain and plan our contingencies, the better off we will be.

No matter what we do, people will be upset about it. This is normal. The world is grieving right now. Many will prefer to stay in denial to avoid change, avoid the extra work, avoid discomfort. Some will even "spiritualize the old ways." accuse proactive people as being "over-reactionary." We must value them; be patient with their frustrations of our leadership; but, we also believe: "*comfort is a train that left the station already!*" It's gone. It's now: Adapt or Die. We need to constantly focus ppl on what we CAN change. And we can't lock into a single strategy. Things will change fast. We must assume that some leaders won't want to get on board; yet, we *move with the movers*.

(3). God has uniquely designed us to win – especially in times of crisis.

It was BECAUSE we made a fast adjustment last weekend that we reached close to 40 people! We had over 25k people watch our service all the way through. We had 56 people text our salvation text-line. And the numbers are still pouring in. Yes, people were mad that we didn't do "physical church;" but, the numbers don't lie.

Historian, Rodney Stark, says Christianity overtook paganism when 2 plagues around 160 and 200s wiped out 1/3 of Mediterranean world. While everyone ran to save themselves, Christians stayed to care for the sick and dying. It showed a love greater than all fear—even of death. As a result, Christianity won the day. And the same can happen today. (see "The Triumph of Christianity")

(4). Video technology & Social media will not only help our message but can usher our church into its greatest outreach ever.

Because we own a film company as a church, we are uniquely postured to produce films for the greater body during this season. We are not merely going to film our weekly service but, we will up our production 10-fold. Right now, there are surgical mask companies and hand sanitizer plants working around the clock to strike it rich. They do it for money. But we are increasing our productions for a harvest of souls that will be unlike anything else we've done. Now is the time for us to fill the chaos with the words of Christ... to speak to the storm.

(5). A small group strategy is the single greatest investment we could make, especially in crisis.

We do not know when things will return to normal. But we do know that small groups is always a good investment. The number one predictor of church health and church growth has always been small groups. Therefore, ALL of our staff will join the "small group dept." in the coming months.

The Micro-Campus Strategy:

Our church has 4 large locations. But now, we have to subdivide our church into "Micro-campuses." What are Micro-campuses? They are similar to small groups; however, they exist to temporarily supplant our lack of a weekend service. We will pitch Micro-campuses as a "Resource Base" for pastoral care; for needs (like toilet paper ;) or for anything Substance. This is a "flow chart" of pastoral care.

But many people in our church do not yet have a small group. Nobody "knows them." So, the top of our funnel is now going to be (A). Facebook Live; & (B). Our streaming services on our Website. Ultimately, we want to funnel everyone away from Facebook to our website stream. But, Facebook is where most people are comfortable living right now. So, we will use it as an onramp to a greater strategy (which funnels them to our Micro-campuses).

For example, we are currently redesigning an emergency version of our website to have "Virtual Services" (based on our normal campuses). Thus, imagine if people go to our Downtown campus: They go to our website SubstanceChurch.com and they click on our Downtown Campus AND their particular service time. (We want to force people to still have a Sunday morning routine at a special time). They click onto a special page for that service with a virtual lobby (where people can chat with our campus pastors.)

Before the service starts, their typical campus pastors can talk to them. They will be a reassuring face for people.

Campus pastors do an emcee slot – intro our service online. Then the campus pastors invite people to take next steps: Virtual Growth Track.

But ideally, a person will attend the service WITH their Micro-campus. Their Micro-campus Leader will be the lead-initiator... the person who insures everyone in their group shows up. They insure people understand how everything works. They insure everyone is taking care of. And as this progresses, they may even watch the service with their Microcampus ON zoom.

So imagine this: We identify all of our top leaders who have influence. We teach them how to facilitate a church service in two different ways:

(A). Through teleconferencing: When people are not allowed to gather in person.

(B). Through their homes: for when restrictions begin to lift.

These “Micro-campus” Leaders will:

(A). Recruit a team of people: An Admin.; a communication person; a prayer person; a hospitality person.

Why? Because, the 2nd biggest predictor of spiritual growth is a weekly ministry. They need ownership.

- If there is no weekend service, people lose their ownership; thus, we provide a place for them to serve.

(B). They will “Host a Service”– This will begin through a teleconferencing software & eventually in homes.

BEFORE THE SERVICE:

- They will invite people to join them (in watching a service) on Sunday morning (same times as church)

- They will welcome people into the “virtual foyer” through Zoom or other software.

- They will teach people “teleconferencing tips” – how to mute; etc.

- They will give people the service schedule.

DURING THE SERVICE:

- Watch 5-10 minutes of worship / worshipful prayer

- Message must always funnel ppl into Online Growth Track

- Online Growth Track funnels people into Microcampus.

AFTER the MESSAGE they will:

- Invite ppl to go through our Online Growth track.

- Which funnels ppl into Micro-campus.

- Invite ppl to “Online Give” at SubstanceChurch.com/Give

- Invite ppl to “repost” the sermon from Facebook > boost it.

- Finally, do prayer requests; Administrative stuff; Close in Prayer.

The Ultimate Goals of these Micro-Campuses:

(1). Create Fellowship amidst the Isolation (which is the biggest statistical predictor of spiritual growth)

(2). Create Ministry Ownership (which is the 2nd biggest statistical predictor of spiritual growth)

- People need to have purpose amidst a crisis. Give it to them inside of these microcampuses.

(3). Invite people to a Next Step. People will not jump into deeper circles on their own. They need an invite. They need a next step. They need a leader who takes the initiative with them. The main goal of these micro-campuses is to constantly invite people to: (A). Pray; (B). Share w/each other; (C) Give online; (D). Repost the message;

(4).To Presence Pastors Peter and Carolyn(+ the normal campus pastor). Eventually, things will return to normal. We want to remind them that they are a part of something bigger.

(5).To Maintain a Sunday Morning routine for our church. Eventually, we will resume our Sunday services. We do not want our people falling out of the habit of getting up and going to church on Sundays. We also don't want them just "pressing play" on our church services whenever they feel like it. Rather, we want to add some "Sunday morning structure" to their week by taking more initiative.

Lastly,

(6).To Create a Clear Authority structure of pastoral oversight. The pastors of Substance will communicate with these micro-campus leaders on a weekly basis. We will share with them the "weekly ask" (Eg., "Push online giving harder;" or "Share toilet paper with one another!!!") Ultimately, when all of this craziness is done (and normal church services resume, we will convert many of these Micro-campuses into "Connect Groups" – our typical sermon processing small groups (that meet every other week).

Practical Action Steps:

- (1). Recruit Top Leaders (people we trust to lead these groups)
 - Make a list with top staff
- (2). Train these leaders on how this works
 - Be patient if leaders are scared to do this.
 - Give them time to digest the new idea
- (3). Have them commit to weekly meetings with our campus pastors
- (4). Equip them on Building their teams; Running the services; etc.