

***Converge North Central exists to come alongside church leadership  
as your trusted connection  
toward focusing you from distraction to direction.***

This resource seeks to live those words out like never before. Our world and context for ministry was upended these past two months. The world we hope/long to reach for Christ, and ourselves to re-enter, has changed. A “new normal” will develop, but our “new now” provides opportunities for the gospel which must be acknowledged, processed, and planned toward.

The Truth and message of the gospel of Jesus Christ has **not** been altered (*1 Corinthians 1:17-25*), this Good News is needed, and people are responding (*Romans 10:8-13* & *1 Corinthians 15:1-4*).

However, out of necessity, our methods, down to the simple element of gathering must pivot and change.

It is likely that some of your leaders have already thought through these realities in your own context for ministry. But we know, many of you have more questions than answers. So, CNC’s intent is to come alongside you as church leaders to provide guidelines and clear directional questions for you to answer in your context.

Currently, the biggest distraction, may very well be going back to what was or how we used to do it!

Toward not making that potential error, we highly encourage you to process these pivot points with your board, staff, or key leaders. Looking at the immediate future and the next stages leading toward re-engaging and re-emerging into a new normal is essential as the people of God gather and live out our label of “church.”

This “New Now” document is formed around key questions. Yet, it is intended to be one side of the same coin as a parallel document “A New Thing.” Be sure to **read and reference** the key questions presented in that resource. Finally, on our webpage we also have links to many other resources (updated weekly) on this topic: <https://converge.org/north-central>

## WHO:

- ***“The church exists not for itself, but for others.”*** (An adapted quote from Dietrich Bonhoeffer)
  - As God has “our” attention, we need to understand **WHO** must get our focus, consideration, and mindset. God is using His people to call others to Himself. The directive to us from Christ is clear: His Great Commission clarifies **WHO** we must focus on. (*Matthew 28:18-20* & *Acts 1:8*)
- **WHO** makes up “your” church makes a difference!
  - Understanding your demographics, newly recommended protocols, and related best practices will dictate new realities for gathering, serving as volunteers, and reimagining previous ministries.
  - This must all be processed, re-evaluated, and potentially pivoted as churches make plans to open up their facilities for public gatherings.
- **Big Picture “Who”**...In order to “**welcome everyone**,” churches must adopt new strategic plans (see below) to accommodate people for whom we exist to serve. Being an essential pivot point, may we each/all take on the mindset of Jesus: *“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in*

*humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interest, but also to the interests of others.” (Philippians 2:3-4)*

## **WHAT:**

- Each leadership team will determine **WHAT** is best. These types of major decisions should be processed together and not decided independently.
  - Consequences are too great, to make quick autonomous decisions, no matter how well intentioned.
  - God has provided leadership for your church, leverage one another and together determine **WHAT** your congregation will and won't do moving forward as restrictions are changed and lifted.
  - **WHAT** others may do, does not matter. Each church must choose **WHAT** is best for their context and sphere of ministry. Sadly, choices may have broader legal implications. Think things through well.
  
- **WHAT – staff and volunteer training.** In accordance with governmental guidelines, you will determine new protocols. Thus, **re-training is** a necessary **WHAT** each church must do **prior to re-opening**.
  
- **WHAT you say and do is your messaging.** In many ways messaging may be the biggest **WHAT** that needs to be addressed. Prepare your messaging for “multiple audiences” in this new context.
  
- **Short-term strategic plans** must be **WHAT** church leadership is currently implementing.
  - Until governmental agencies allow for opening up, we recommend a two-week strategic plan.
  - Once bans on gathering for worship are lifted, we recommend adopting and implementing new protocols that adhere to governmental recommendations. Which likely may mean, various stages before fully returning to a new normal. Think through **WHAT**, these will be at your church and include social distancing, and governmental group size guidelines.
  
- **Mid-term strategic plans** should be **WHAT** each church leadership processes toward adapting.
  - Leadership should consider creating a 90 to 120-day plan, based on strategies, and goals.
  - In addition to weekly worship, this plan should address every church program and ministry that was normative before the pandemic as well as identify next steps needed with new essentials moving forward.
  - If restrictions return, consider the learnings of the past two-months toward a future scenario.
  - **Budget allocations** in your mid-term plan, churches must adjust and account for new patterns of giving. This may include short-term emergency funding, but definitely should impact budget planning moving forward. Be realistic. Ministry contexts have just radically changed.
  - We also recommend, **evaluating staffing** toward the future.
    - Every Pastor or staff role has already been impacted.
    - This does NOT mean necessarily reducing or replacing staff. Rather, it is re-evaluating needs, and assigning new responsibilities to those that can best fulfill them.
    - **WHAT** will be needed moving forward, must be identified and delegated to someone.
  
- **Big Picture WHAT** is simple and clear. **WHAT** we do, must be adjusted. Our world has changed, and we must adapt to what we do and how we do it now more than ever before.

## WHEN:

- This is the million-dollar question: “**WHEN can** we reopen our doors?”
- Churches however must reframe this question to “**WHEN should** we reopen our doors?”
  - CNC’s recommended answer to **WHEN** will be determined by how prepared your leadership is in updating protocols and procedures.
  - **We do not recommend** simply re-opening and going back to what was.
  - **We do recommend** re-opening in stages after staff and volunteers have been re-trained.
- This key question of **WHEN** will perhaps be impacted by your volunteer capacity and readiness to offer children’s ministry, and your willingness to embrace a family centric – kids included as the norm of your worship gatherings.
- In seeking to answer this question of **WHEN**...
  - Decide this based on your mission field as well as considering the context of your church.
- **WHEN your church opens** is one question. But just as important is **WHEN** will people feel comfortable returning to church.
  - Plans, preparedness, and messaging will influence people’s levels of comfort and willingness to return.
  - Peoples comfortability will be determined by many factors largely outside of what you can or cannot do.
    - Leadership must have a mindset that takes into consideration the convictions of individuals.
    - Reach out as much as possible to those who have previously connected with your church.
    - Be aware that many people may physically not “come back” right away...but continue to communicate with them in appropriate ways.
- **Big Picture WHEN** – new norms and experiences should be considered by all churches.
  - Historically, Sunday’s have been our focus.
  - Forward-thinking directs us to focus on more ministering to people Monday through Saturday.
    - Digital engagement has tremendous potential.
    - Moving forward ministries of the church should not be contained or focused on only a one, two, or three-hour period on Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights.
    - We will be better if we intentionally think wholistically related to **WHEN** ministry and “church” happens.

## WHERE:

- Church is people, followers of Jesus Christ, **not a building nor location**.
- Traditionally and historically people would gather at a physical location “for church.”
  - In the last seven weeks that option has been removed.
  - **WHERE** we have met is in our homes via video.
  - Returning to your **WHERE** is important for you to consider.
    - Pragmatically, if limited to specific group sizes, most congregations will have to determine **WHERE** multiple gathering spaces could function for those who return.

- Process gathering spaces available to you for various size groups, taking into account potential social distancing regulations and recommendations.
- Depending when you choose to come back to your physical location, it is VERY likely churches will quickly need to add multiple “venues” within their physical buildings toward accommodating worship “groups.” Thus, **WHERE** may have multiple answers even as you return to gather at the same address.
- However, most CNC churches have had or recently developed a digital presence.
  - Functionally, some churches when returning to their physical space may be tempted to stop offering their online option.
  - Yet, many people even after returning to the building, will continue to also desire to experience church digitally.
- Thus, functionally one development created by this crisis has been to create multiple congregations within the same “church.”
  - Those who will come to **WHERE** church gathers.
  - Those who engage with your church digitally, in their own self-determined **WHERE**.
    - BOTH categories of “your people” must be cared for and sought to be treated equally to the best of your ability.
- **Big Picture WHERE** ...just became far, far less important for both our congregations and the communities we serve. Thus, leadership needs to adjust.

## WHY:

- Many Scriptures speak to the **WHY**.
  - Matthew 16:18-19 | John 17 | Hebrews 10:19-25 | Revelation 2-3 & 4-5
- **Big Picture WHY** is centered on Jesus’ work on the cross, the good news of the Gospel, the great commandment to love and the great commission to make disciples! May we be “*eager (and seek) to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*” (Ephesians 4:3).

## HOW:

- In answering **HOW** your church will re-open consider: intentionally, safely, and differently than it has been done previously. We must be cautious and careful about people’s physical well-being as a part of our witness to the communities we serve.
- **Big Picture HOW** is why we have provided this resource along with the previously referenced resource: “A New Thing.” Please refer to that for many additional key questions for your team to process **HOW** to take the next steps, along with our website: <https://converge.org/north-central>