

COVID-19 Response: A Letter From Michael Moore at City Church Albany

Hey Pastor,

As you know, this is an ever-changing time for the Church. Many pastors are overwhelmed with how to reformat their church model while not losing engagement of their congregation. We have created this PDF as a guide to what we did at City Church in Albany, NY. Please note that this is just a guide. Our situation may be more severe than yours. At the point of writing this, the Governor has issued a 100% stay at home order for the workplace. Meaning, everything except essential business are now shut down. Thankfully, he is allowing churches to meet together for livestream only. Below, here are the steps that we are taking and some resources to do this with a low budget.

Livestream

As 95Network has been sharing through this season, don't feel the outward pressure to livestream a service with the same "feel" it typically would have. It's okay if you just want to sit on your couch, hold your phone, and go live directly on Facebook. But, put simply, it's crucial to engage your congregation and community online.

What you need:

- 1) Online platform to send out livestream signal. We are using streammonkey.com
- 2) A camera. It does not have to be an expensive camera. We use a basic video camera that supports HDMI out.
- 3) An audio interface. We are running a small soundboard that is connected to a USB audio interface.
- 4) A video decoded. We are using an Elgato capture card that lets the camera plug in via HDMI and connect to the computer via USB 3.0.
- 5) A decent computer. This computer doesn't need to be the best one out there, but a standard laptop won't work. It will be handling the transcoding of the video, audio, overlays and then broadcasting over the internet.
- 6) A good **wired** internet connection. Streaming doesn't require a large amount of bandwidth, but does require a steady connection. Best results are if you have the computer hard wired and not using Wi-Fi.
- 7) Know the software you want to use. Most streaming services will require you to send the video over what is called the RTMP protocol. The software we use is OBS (Open Broadcaster Software). In this software, you can connect video and audio services. You can also use text/images as overlays and record the stream.
- 8) Test, test, test! You should also test the setup before you go live. This doesn't mean just setting everything up in the software and seeing that it's working. Let it run for 30-60 minutes to ensure your computer processing keeps up, your internet doesn't drop, and all the connections are solid.

The livestream through Streammonkey.com is sending out signal out to our website (www.citychurchalbany.com), Facebook Live and YouTube Live.

A few things we are doing every Livestream:

- 1) Pushing our main email for all questions, request, prayer request. info@citychurchalbany.com
- 2) We have set up a “text in” number for Giving, Groups, Salvation, Resources. The reply is a link to our website for people to take next steps.
- 3) We are addressing the reality of what is out there, while offering hope to all who are watching
- 4) We are keeping it simple. Not a full band, laid back environment, sticking to the gospel of Jesus Christ, offering practical help.

Discipleship:

Keeping community and discipleship engagement is a must during this time. Here are a few things that we are doing:

- 1) Encourage groups to meet online. We are offering Microsoft Teams (free for non-for-profits) to hold online meetings. There is no time limit for video calls and you do not have a maximum of people on the call.
 - a. We are also making Zoom available for anyone who would prefer to use Zoom Meetings.
 - b. Both platforms give you the option of sending out an external link for people to click and open on their web browser or through the app.
- 2) We are doing daily Bible studies on Monday – Thursday via Facebook Live and Instagram Live at 10am to continue to engage people in spiritual growth. This is led by our staff.
- 3) We encourage your church to be enrolled in RightNowMedia.com. This is a resource that people can use in their homes with their families. It will promote family discipleship as well as over 1000 kids’ videos and resources. (There is a discount if you’re part of 95Network Membership!)

Kids Ministry

Parents are probably being pushed right now to new levels of stress. To try and alleviate some of their stress, we are offering Kids Church for the parents at home. We are doing this by:

- 1) Orange Curriculum. They are sending out weekly emails with video lessons, activities and games for the parents to do with the kids. We send these emails out on Friday or Saturday, depending when we get the material.
- 2) Midweek Activities. We are looking at different resources out there to send midweek activities out via email for parents to do with their kids in the home.
- 3) We are considering (no decision is made yet) on making home Kids Ministry bags to be dropped off at each house.

This promotes family discipleship but also gives the parents the assurance that their kids matter to our church community.

Serving our Community:

Again, this is going to vary by state and region. In our area, we have seen a massive layoff take place in the past week. So, we are focusing on 5 essentials to serve our community.

- 1) We are asking our church to give, donate and promote individual cases of people they may know.
- 2) We are communicating with our church via email. (info@citychurchalbany.com). We are asking that all request go to this email address to have a centralized location for everything.
- 3) We are focusing on serving. We know that there are many needs. We would love to be able to meet them all; however, we are only focusing on 5 essential areas at this time:
 - a. Diapers
 - b. Formula
 - c. Essential Clothing
 - d. Essential Food
 - e. Toiletry / Sanitary Items
- 4) We are making appointments for drop off. During drop off, there will be no human contact. Instead the person dropping off the essential items are texting or calling the person in need and leaving the items at their doorstep.
- 5) We are using social media, specifically Facebook, to communicate with everyone who is willing to serve and drop off donations.
- 6) We are also working with getting information out to people who are in need for resources that we do not have with other churches or agencies who are offering these services.

Resources: With everything changing so quickly, we recommend creating a landing page that has all the information for your church. Here is ours www.citychurchalbany.com/coronavirus

There you will find links to groups, giving, parent resources, livestream, and how to serve our community.

Some Other Tips:

- 1) Remember that this is an opportunity to see the Church step into her beauty.
- 2) Encouraging words are always appreciated. As a pastor, you are the primary spiritual leader for your community and people need to hear from you. I am constantly doing Facebook Live videos, Instagram Stories, and posting to encourage people in our community.
- 3) Constant Communication is key. This includes email, social media, and livestream.

- 4) Have online prayer and worship nights. This is something that we have tried. We may continue to do it and see what kind of engagement is there.
- 5) Offer an opportunity for people to submit a Prayer Request. We are doing this through our landing page.
- 6) Have Fun. Yes, it seems weird, but use social media as a tool to make people laugh. Post funny videos of your kids, let people know that you are human. And try to relax.

If you have any questions please feel free to reach out to me directly via email. I am honored to help and assist anyway that our team can. michael@citychurchalbany.com

We are standing with you and praying for you during this season. Let's be the salt of the earth, the light of the world and let's see people come to know Jesus.

Michael Moore

Lead Pastor, City Church Albany

OTHER RESOURCES FROM 95NETWORK

[\[Article\] 30 Things You CAN Do While You Can't Meet In-Person](#)

[\[Article\] 10 Ways to Effectively Lead Through COVID-19](#)

[\[Podcast\] COVID-19: This is a Time for the Church to Shine](#)

[\[Podcast\] COVID-19: Yesterday's Essentials Are Not Today's Essentials \(w/ Kem Meyer\)](#)

[\[Podcast\] Easter: How to Plan When You Can't Return to What You Know](#)

[\[Podcast\] Inside Out Podcast w/ Michael Moore – COVID-19 Response](#)

