

# Coronavirus (COVID-19) Church Planning Template

# STEP 1: *Planning Template*

**Use the following planning template to help your church prepare for COVID-19.** This plan will be most useful if you continue to add new ideas and adjust regularly as you learn more and respond to changing circumstances. As you work on completing the planning template, be sure to consider how your church might help care for vulnerable and underserved individuals and communities. When completing the template, consider how to care for health, spiritual, psychological, and emotional needs in your congregation and community.

## **Actions: Start with Prayer, Reflect on Scripture, and Leverage Existing Ministries and Activities**

✓	Get Organized Checklist:
	Regularly monitor coronavirus risk and impact on your church and community.
	Schedule time for your health team (in person or virtually) to go through the guide's step-by-step planning process.
	Prepare to open your meeting in a word of prayer to seek God's comfort and guidance and pray for those in need.
	Share a Scripture reading and reflection to draw out biblical wisdom that can help your team plan effectively. Verses and reflections are provided at the beginning of each step in the planning guide.
	Share the manual with church staff, health team, and potential health team members. Step 1 (Get Organized) and Step 2 (Creating a Health Team) will likely overlap.
	Other:

*Prayer: God, help us listen intently for what you're asking us to do and plan realistically for what we can accomplish.*

## STEP 2: *Planning Template*

### **Actions: Frame Preparedness Efforts in Terms of Health, Recruit Lay Leaders, and Define Roles and Responsibilities.**

Add as many people who are necessary to prepare and respond well, while remembering this team will likely need to be nimble and make quick, informed decisions. Depending on the size of your church and community, most teams will be able to perform well with sizes ranging from 5 to 12 people. Additional individuals may be added to help each of the 5-12 leaders carry out their responsibilities as needed. You want to find a balance in numbers that will provide enough people power to do the work at hand while being cautious of having “too many cooks in the kitchen.”

### **Health Team Coordinator (HTC) and Back-Up HTC Contact Information**

The HTC for our congregation

Key responsibilities

Phone

Email

First alternate HTC

Key responsibilities

Phone

Email

Authorized emergency  
spokesperson (if different from HTC)

Key responsibilities

Phone

Email

**Health Team Member Contact and Skill Information Form**  
**(to be completed by each team member)**

Name	<input type="text"/>
Position (vocational role at church, home, or company)	<input type="text"/>
Key responsibilities on health team	<input type="text"/>
Home address	<input type="text"/>
Phone	<input type="text"/>
Social media	<input type="text"/>
Email address	<input type="text"/>
Emergency contact	<input type="text"/>
Relationship	<input type="text"/>
Emergency contact phone	<input type="text"/>

Ensure this information is collected from each team member and distributed to the rest of the team and to the church staff.

Original language from Bloomington Public Health. L. Brodsky, M. Drews, K. Henslee, N. Kafumbe and M. Schweizer, "Ready, Set, Go! Faith Community Emergency Preparedness Toolkit." Produced by the City of Bloomington (MN) Public Health Division with the support of the Minneapolis - St. Paul Metropolitan Medical Response System (MMRS), 1800 West Old Shakopee Road, Bloomington, MN 55431, [www.bloomingtonmn.gov](http://www.bloomingtonmn.gov)

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### Monitor Coronavirus Risk and Impact:

The health team should work together to determine and update each category at least weekly (or more frequently if warranted due to possible rapid changes in the outbreak). In the table below, rate the possible risk and impact using the following scale:

High=3 Moderate=2 Low=1 None=0

PROBABILITY	HUMAN IMPACT	MINISTRY IMPACT
Likelihood coronavirus will directly impact your church and community	Possibility of illness (from mild to life threatening) among staff, members, or community	Likelihood to interrupt or cause modifications to existing services or ministries

**Based on our current risk and impact assessment, we need to take these actions:**

**Based on our current risk and impact assessment, we may need to make these decisions soon:**

*Prayer: God, may we identify the right people for the right roles, and may we support each other along the way.*

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## COVID-19 HANDOUT: CHOICES YOU CAN MAKE TO STAY EMOTIONALLY HEALTHY

### Pay Attention to Your Body and Your Emotions

It's natural to experience stress and anxiety in the face of a threat we cannot control. Because every person reacts differently, notice what your body and emotions are telling you:

- Listen to your emotions, noticing any anxiety, sadness, anger, or detachment;
- Listen to your body, noticing any change in appetite, new aches and pains, or feeling particularly hot or cool; and,
- When you notice troubling symptoms, pause to care for your body and mind. If you become unable to manage or function well, seek the assistance of a professional.

### Embrace Best Health Practices

Though there's much about the COVID-19 outbreak over which you have no control, you can choose to embrace the kinds of practices that will keep you and your loved ones safe. The Center for Disease Control suggests:

- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- Stay home when you are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a tissue, then throw the tissue in the trash.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces using a regular household cleaning spray or wipe.
- Follow CDC's recommendations for using a facemask.
- Wash your hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.

### Access Reliable Resources

You can choose how you will receive and consume information about the outbreak. If you rely on panicked phone calls from your anxious loved ones, you're likely to suffer more than if you choose to rely on credible sources. Two reliable sources for health news include the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and World Health Organization. Also, if you become consumed by breaking news about the spread of COVID-19, you can also choose to step away from media reports for a time.

### Share Reliable Information

Another way to care for yourself is to care for others by sharing the best information you've discovered. When you find a reputable resource that's particularly helpful, share it with a loved one. When you learn about practices that keep people safe, let a relative who is vulnerable to illness know. In a culture where people are feeling anxious, you can be a gift to others.

*Continued on next page*

### **Practice Self-Care**

In the midst of a stressful season or situation, many self-care practices are the same ones that prove helpful in everyday living:

- Maintain your normal routines.
- Connect with family and friends.
- Eat well.
- Stay active.
- Get adequate rest.
- Do enjoyable activities.
- Employ coping skills that nurture your spirit, like mindfulness exercises or prayer.

### **Support Each Other**

We aren't created to go through extreme stress alone, so this is also a time as part of God's family to care for each other. Here are two questions to keep asking yourself:

- What opportunities do I have to help others?
- What is overwhelming right now that I should ask someone for help with?

While it feels like there is a lot we can't control amidst concerns over COVID-19, every one of us can make choices to stay emotionally healthy.

<sup>3</sup>This section adapted with permission from M. Starbuck. (2020, March 3). How to Stay Emotionally Healthy During the Coronavirus Outbreak [Blog post]. Retrieved from <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/hope-resilience/202003/how-stay-emotionally-healthy-during-the-COVID-19-outbreak>

# STEP 3: *Planning Template*

**Actions: Leverage Familiar Communication Platforms, Be Intentional in Communicating with Vulnerable Groups, and Prewrite Messages**

What should you communicate?	Who are you communicating to? (Ex: congregation, staff, local government)	Who should communicate the message? (Ex: Health Team Coordinator, Pastor)	How should it be communicated? (Ex: electronically, phone call/tree, mail)	Preparatory Actions (Ex: talking points, key messages, training)
Impact on church to date				
COVID-19 Impact				
Church services or gatherings (e.g., Bible studies) offered or changed				
Funds or supplies needed				
Volunteers needed				
Other				



**Directions for updating the church voicemail, including remotely:**

Person responsible:

Alternate:

**Directions for sending churchwide emails and texts, including remotely:**

Person responsible:

Alternate:

Ensure you are clear with the church how you will use these different channels of communication. For example, how will they learn if the Sunday morning service is canceled? And also consider that different people may have different tools available (e.g., if some don't have a computer or email address).

**Additional communication directions:**

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Sample Calling Tree (Note that some churches may have a prayer chain that can be adapted for this purpose):



Instead of using a “prayer chain” model, some churches may decide to divide a list of vulnerable people who need to be checked in with regularly among staff and laypeople. For example, each person would get a list of several people who they are committed to check in with daily or every other day. In these circumstances it can be as simple as:

### Check-in List

Person Responsible  
name and number:

Check-in recipient  
name and number:

Check-in recipient  
name and number:

Check-in recipient  
name and number:

*Prayer: God, free us to lead our communication not with fear, but with power, love, and self-discipline.*

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## STEP 4: *Planning Template*

### Actions: Provide Vetted Information from Trusted Resources and Focus on Underserved Individuals and Communities

Select a few of these services from examples below that you will provide to underserved church members and communities and describe how each will be carried out:

✓	Sample Outreach Actions	How Action Will be Achieved
	Church staff and lay leaders model preparedness	
	Promote faithful preparedness (e.g., in Sunday school, sermons, Bible studies)	
	Disseminate vetted information from trusted resources to reduce panic	
	Pastoral services (spiritual care)	
	Outreach & support to vulnerable populations	
	Advocacy	
	Health services	
	Home visits/or calls if advised against meeting in person	
	Language translation	
	Legal assistance	
	Listening	
	Managing volunteers	
	Managing donations	
	Food services (cooking, feeding & distribution including home delivery)	
	Improve access to community healthcare services	
	Special or alternative (e.g., Streaming) worship services	
	Encourage individual/family preparedness:	
	Other:	

# STEP 5: *Planning Template*

## Actions: Work with Other Churches and Consult with Local Public Health Agencies

Use the following checklist to consider ways your church might plan to build collaborations to help better prepare:

✓	Sample Collaborative Actions	How Action Will Be Achieved
	Connect with a network with other churches that shares preparedness ideas and resources.	
	Identify other churches or agencies in your community who are working on preparedness to learn from, consult, and network.	
	Host a webinar or seminar on how to prepare for the coronavirus for your church and community members (or consider joining one of the Humanitarian Disaster Institute's limited run of weekly webinars on preparing churches for coronavirus; visit <a href="http://wheaton.edu/hdi-covid19">wheaton.edu/hdi-covid19</a> to learn more).	
	Other:	

*Prayer: God, help us recognize and lean into our need for each other.*

## STEP 6: *Planning Template*

**Actions: Stay Informed, Consider Modifying Practices, and Adapt Services if Needed**

✓	Implementation Checklist
	Regularly monitor coronavirus risk and impact on your church and community.
	Assess your church's activity and progress toward helping your church and community prepare.
	Make gaps in your plan and preparedness known to other leadership so that you can work toward solutions.
	Revisit your plan regularly and update the plan so it remains viable.
	Continue to communicate your plan as it changes to church members and partnering churches and agencies.
	Other:

*Prayer: God, lead us to be do-ers, loving our neighbors out of gratitude for your love for us.*



### About the Humanitarian Disaster Institute

Founded in 2011, Wheaton College's Humanitarian Disaster Institute (HDI) is the country's first faith-based academic disaster research center. Our mission is to help the church prepare and care in a disaster-filled world. HDI carries out our mission through research, training, convening, and resourcing.

HDI offers an M.A. in Humanitarian & Disaster Leadership at Wheaton College Graduate School that can be completed in one year on campus or two years online (which includes a week of on-campus coursework at the beginning and end of the program). We have also partnered with the School of Psychology, Counseling, and Family Therapy at Wheaton College Graduate School to offer a new Trauma Certificate in a specialized track specifically tailored to humanitarian and disaster responders. Learn more at [wheaton.edu/HDL](http://wheaton.edu/HDL).

### Contributors

Jamie Aten, Ph.D., is founder and executive director of the Humanitarian Disaster Institute at Wheaton College. Follow on Twitter at [@drjamieaten](https://twitter.com/drjamieaten) or visit [jamieaten.com](http://jamieaten.com).

Kent Annan, M.Div., is director of Humanitarian & Disaster Leadership at Wheaton College. Follow on Twitter at [@kentannan](https://twitter.com/kentannan) or visit [kentannan.com](http://kentannan.com).

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### Contact Us

Our website and social media accounts provide ongoing updates and resources for preparing your church for COVID-19.

Email: [hdi@wheaton.edu](mailto:hdi@wheaton.edu)

Facebook: [facebook.com/WheatonHDI](https://facebook.com/WheatonHDI)

Twitter: [twitter.com/WheatonHDI](https://twitter.com/WheatonHDI)

Instagram: [@wheaton\\_hdi](https://www.instagram.com/wheaton_hdi)