

Roadmap to Reopening Summary

Jeremiah 29: 5- 7 reminds us that while we may be in an unfamiliar, uncomfortable, and frustrating era, it may be that we have to grow some roots in this land. We may prefer not to be here, yet Christ remains with us even during this time of change. He continues to call us to go out and make disciples.

However, when confronted with an obstacle, we tend to focus on the obstruction to avoid rather than where we need to go. This was shown to be true time and again in a television show called *Canada's Worst Driver*. While we can't make the obstacle disappear, as church and ministry leaders, we must focus on where we need to go as a church to get there. Look where you want to go. Indeed, what is the desired outcome of your church ministry? And what needs to happen for your church to get there? This is the message of Paul to the Philippians in 3: 12- 14.

This summary is divided in two parts. The first reviews the challenges of reopening our church building to in-person worship. The second part sums up the ideas shared to meet the opportunities that are presented to the church.

As you read these challenges and opportunities, how would you answer them in your context? Use these challenges and opportunities as conversation starters with your church board and your ministerial.

The Challenges

- Getting all the pre-pandemic congregation back to worship in person
 - Most realise this probably will not happen as some have transitioned to on-line permanently or have fully disconnected from church.
- Pastoring a digital congregation
 - Most have expressed how difficult this is.
 - How does one know if that congregation is engaged and being disciplined well?
 - How does one pastor people who will never come to an in-person service because they do not even live in the community? This may be the only church they come to know.
 - Most wish to keep some form of online church presence.
 - With so many churches online, will this add to the stress feeling like we have to compete for space and viewership?
 - A few participants mentioned a desire to make this online presence less appealing to entice people back to in person service.
- Having to pastor two congregations, an in-person one and an online one
 - Where should the energy go? Which one matters most?
 - What is the best way to integrate the two or is it impossible?
- Navigating and healing divisions that emerged in the pandemic
 - Division with in-person service verses online service
 - Division over allowing non-vaccinated people in person
 - Division over types of ministries to offer
- Sadness and grief over the loss of fellowship
- Dealing with the fears and anxieties of congregation
 - Fear to return to church yet go shopping...

- Visitors come to in-person service but do not return
 - Is it because the congregation is now small and there is no fellowship the way it used to be?
- More new people are attending the in-person service, making it a large percentage of those present.
 - Will those who finally return to church feel like strangers in their own church? How to prepare them for that?
- Lack of volunteers. Many have not returned to in person worship or programmes.
 - This limits what the church can offer
- The inability to have fellowship as a body, sharing a meal.

The Opportunities

- View reopening not as the reopening of what was, but the launching or re-launching of something new!
 - This is a great time for new initiative!
- Newcomers are joining in. They can bring fresh ideas, new perspectives.
 - Creative gathering spaces for fellowship: parks, parking lots, skating rinks
- Moving ministries away from church building-centric programmes
 - Finding the right third place to launch new initiatives: Counseling, coffee shop ministry, connecting with workplace environment
- How best utilise the building now that it is not used as much by the congregation?
 - Can we partner with community organisations or other not for profits?
 - Can the building be used to connect with the workplace?
- Look for ways to address needs identified in the community especially because of the pandemic:
 - Mental health
 - Loneliness
 - Anxiety
- Ideas to meet these needs:
 - Offer Christian meditation
 - Teach congregation how to be a friend
 - Focus on intergenerational relationships
- Engage with the online community.
 - Offer new learning opportunities through asynchronous training platforms
 - Suggestions:
 - [Right Now Media](#)
 - [Instructure](#)
 - [Cypher Learning](#)
 - [Moodle](#)
- Embrace new technology
 - On-line small groups
- Re-engage with children and youth in innovative ways. The best time to do this reengagement is now!
 - [CBOQ Kids](#)
 - [CBOQ Youth](#)
- Offer two worship services: One for vaccinated people and one for non-vaccinated people
 - Use sanitizing fogging machine between the services

You are encouraged to watch a lecture series with Anna Robbins, President of Acadia Divinity College and scholar of culture and faith. She speaks of the obstacles that may be in your church's path as you seek to minister to your community. <https://acadiadiv.ca/event/hayward-2021/>

Finally, as some of our restrictions ease, remember to contact your local public health office. They will tell you what your church is allowed to do in terms of singing, masking, and gathering for fellowship.