

NOW & NEXT

HOW THE CHURCH IS CHANGING FOR GOOD

presented by  AMPLIFY MEDIA

Episode 9 – Homecoming: Bringing Everyone Back Together

Watch this episode on demand and download related resources at
AmplifyMedia.com/NowandNext/homecoming/.

Host – Rev. Lisa Yebuah, Lead Pastor, Southeast Raleigh Table, Raleigh, NC

Panelists –

- Sophia Agtarap
Director of Communications, Vanderbilt Divinity School, Nashville, TN

- Rev. Tom Berlin
Lead Pastor, Floris United Methodist Church, Herndon, VA

- Rev. Justin Coleman
Senior Pastor, University United Methodist Church, Chapel Hill, NC

- Rev. DJ del Rosario
Lead Pastor, Federal Way United Methodist Church, Federal Way, WA

Most of us can't wait to physically be in the same space again with those we love. For church families, that's especially true. But what will it look like when we're back together? How do we responsibly meet together and share our joys and concerns?

During the episode, the importance of getting feedback from your congregation was discussed. Tom Berlin shared that his church's staff surveyed their congregation, and 95% said they were not ready to return to in-person worship. You can continually get feedback from your community by something as simple as asking open-ended questions on Facebook or working with a service like Survey Monkey to find out their concerns about returning to in-person worship and what virtual experiences have been the most meaningful.

Tom Berlin also recommended reading Alex Shanks' article "Why Reopening a Church Is Different" when discussing with your staff and congregation how and when you will resume in-person meetings. You may read that here: churchleadership.com/leading-ideas/why-reopening-a-church-is-different/.

Continued on next page.

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Now and Next: How the Church Is Changing for Good is a series of webinars to encourage and equip leaders during the challenges COVID-19 has created for their communities.

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Continued from the previous page.

This conversation between the panelists was an open and vulnerable dialogue about their concerns and hopes around re-opening church buildings. Some of the conversation points included:

- Many churches – because of their size and spaces making physical distancing hard – will not open for worship until 2021. That doesn't mean that the building isn't open for smaller, mission-related functions like hosting AA meetings and food banks.
- Online meetings have made some tasks, like committee meetings, more efficient, and this practice might continue even after in-person worship has resumed.
- One concern around continuing virtual worship is the rite of communion, and the theological discussions needed.
- This time period has offered a lot of opportunities for creativity and news ideas. This spirit of “yes” should continue.
- As a staff, consider the practices during this time that had the most engagement and continue those, such as daily virtual prayers and/or devotions.
- Even if you don't have a large staff or church, what virtual activities are other churches doing that your community can participate in?
- Learn from community organizations to see how they model mutual aid.
- Continue to have conversations with mental-health and medical professionals as needed as you consider both your own health and the safety of your community.
- When thinking about re-energizing volunteers, consider the practices that have been encouraging during this time and routinize these practices so they can continue for 12 to 18 months.

As we consider these questions, do so gently. Discuss with your staff: Why are we doing this? Does it work? What is the cost? And use those answers for mapping a plan for the future.