

RETHINK

Crisis Management Playbook
for the Church




GIVING LIFE TO THE BODY OF CHRIST

RETHINK

Having led three churches of various sizes through three significant disruptions, Dr. Rob Peters knows the challenges and the stresses that crisis can create for local churches. When multiple hurricane events in a single hurricane season caused massive disruption to both church and school ministries, Rob led the way through recovery. Then again as senior pastor, he led the church after a fire catastrophe rendered a building unusable for ministry. He also led a church through the financial crisis of 2007 when 25% of his community experienced home foreclosures, thus creating a financial crisis for the church.

Rob knows firsthand that these types of disasters require character to meet the challenge, courage to face the realities, and consistency to see your ministry through the crisis. Drawing upon the **Kubler-Ross model** of crisis management, Rob and the Corpus team have designed this free resource to help churches navigate the crisis they are currently facing. These resources are also designed to help the church ReThink how God is using the current crisis as an accelerator in shifting the culture, and how focusing on an intentional strategy can continue to make disciples within a church's existing God-given mission.



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During challenging times, leaders know self-care and team care are of utmost importance. If you or your team members become burned out, spent, or overwhelmed, you will be no good to the others you serve.

Here is your CHECKLIST:

- Am I fostering my spiritual life through prayer, Bible reading and solitude?
- Am I caring for my immediate family and closest friends?
- Am I taking time to be relationally recharged?
- Am I taking time to be alone to think?
- Am I turning off the world to gain a long-term perspective?
- Am I eating, sleeping, exercising, and drinking enough water?
- Am I allowing others to speak into my life?
- Am I considering that one day in the future the crisis will be over?
- Am I remembering that God is in charge and He ultimately will be the one who solves the crisis?



RETHINK | Biblical Example

One of the greatest crises Israel faced was when one of its long-tenured kings died. Here is the story:

ISAIAH 6

In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. ²Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. ³And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the Lord of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory." ⁴And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. ⁵Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts." ⁶Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. ⁷He touched my mouth with it and said, "Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven."

Isaiah's Commission

⁸Then I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, "Whom shall I send, and who will go for Us?" Then I said, "Here am I. Send me!" ⁹He said, "Go, and tell this people: 'Keep on listening, but do not perceive; keep on looking, but do not understand. ¹⁰Render the hearts of this people insensitive, their ears dull, and their eyes dim, otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts, and return and be healed.'" ¹¹Then I said, "Lord, how long?" And He answered, "Until cities are devastated and without inhabitant, houses are without people and the land is utterly desolate, ¹²"The Lord has removed men far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land. ¹³Yet there will be a tenth portion in it, and it will again be subject to burning, like a terebinth or an oak whose stump remains when it is felled. The holy seed is its stump."

Isaiah faced a crisis of epic proportion. His world seemed to be ablaze and every norm that secured his society was threatened. King Uzziah had died, global threats abounded, and social and financial security were no longer a given.

When God's people face difficult times and are uncertain, Isaiah is a good model for us to consider.

1. In times of crisis, we need to remember to look to God.

- A. God is on His throne.
- B. God has not changed.
- C. God has not surrendered His mission.

2. In times of crisis we come to understand our need for God.

- A. We see our personal need and repent.
- B. We see our struggle and recommit to the work.
- C. We see the solution and act in faith leaving the results to God.

3. In times of crisis God expects us to remain focused on the mission.

- A. We are reminded to stop and hear God's voice and obey His instructions.
- B. We are reminded we are God's people sent out on His mission.
- C. We are reminded the crisis is real and the challenges we face are difficult.
- D. We are reminded we will see God at work in both those who follow Him and those who reject him.

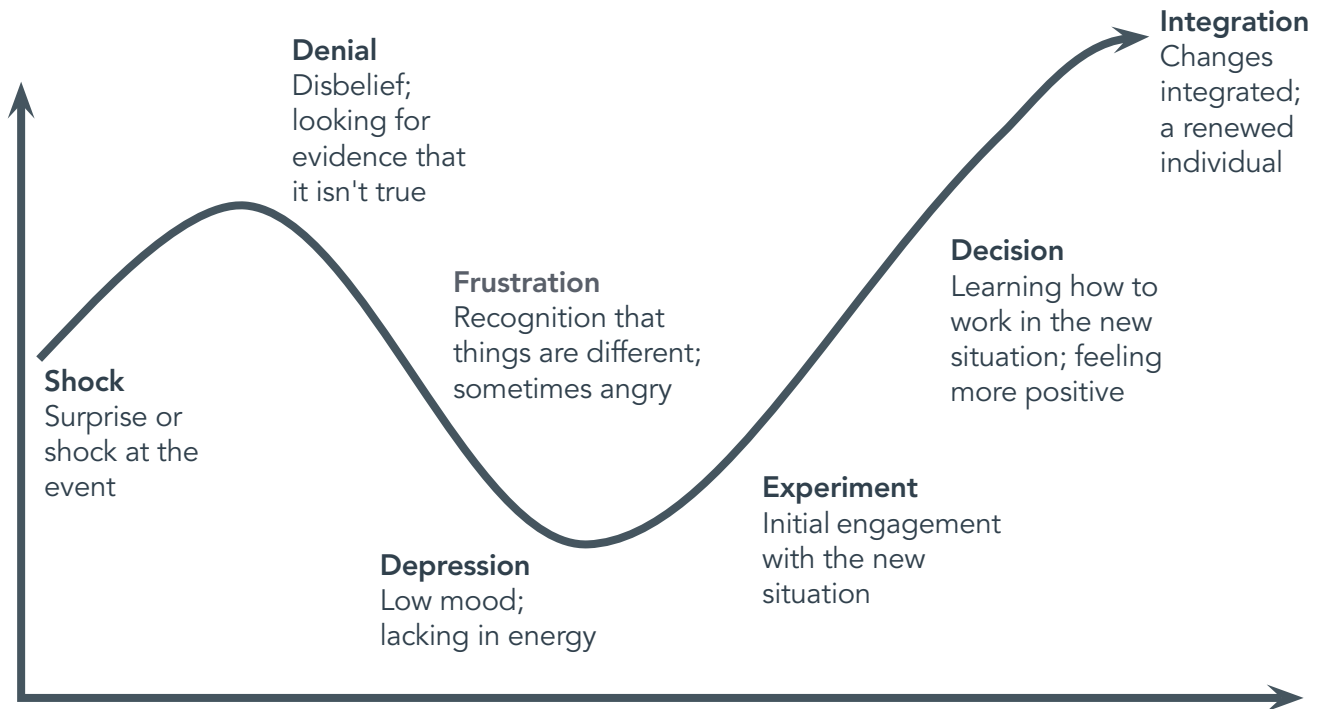


Understanding the Biblical pattern for leading, shepherding, and counseling during a crisis is imperative. Here are 10 perspectives you and your leadership must keep to remain effective.

1. Recognize the crisis is a stressful situation, and people respond differently based on past experiences with stress.
2. Provide pastoral care and leadership without trying to do everything yourself.
3. Recognize you are susceptible to compassion fatigue, which causes burnout, anger and depression.
4. Good stress can help you think clearly, achieve significantly, and act bravely, but bad stress will cause you to retreat, feel overwhelmed, and react negatively.
5. Remember, suffering is a part of how God does his work. Crisis causes suffering, so look for how God is at work.
6. Communicate clearly and love generously, for love overcomes a multitude of sins.
7. Learn from what others are doing, but don't think you have to do everything they do.
8. Do not project the worst possible scenario into the situation. Act in faith and offer hope to others.
9. See the big picture of the ministry you lead and lead toward the vision God has given you.
10. Do not waste the crisis. The crisis will be the easiest time to change how you do ministry. You can shift culture, change strategy, and reallocate resources during a crisis that otherwise could not be changed.

The **Kubler-Ross Change Curve**, which is also known as the five stages of grief, is a model consisting of the various stages of emotions which are experienced by a person who is approaching death or is a survivor of an intimate death.

The Change Curve is a popular and powerful model used to understand the stages of personal transition and organizational change. It helps you predict how people will react to change so that you can help them make their own personal transitions and make sure they have the help and support they need.



1. TRIAGE

At the SHOCK stage, triage is necessary. This is what most pastors/churches do early in a crisis.

2. REPOSITIONING

During the DENIAL phase, good leaders are anticipating their challenges and beginning to work with their leaders to reposition the church/ministry for their new reality. This is the stage where strategic changes should be considered.

3. COMMUNICATION

During the crisis, people desire information. A lack of information causes fear and FRUSTRATION. Having a clear and consistent communication plan helps people know how to participate. Remember, people begin to hear something when you are tired of saying it.

4. MOTIVATION

At the low ebb of the crisis, DEPRESSION sets in. This is when vision, a clear strategy, and good communication can help people out of fear and uncertainty by allowing them to be a part of the solution.

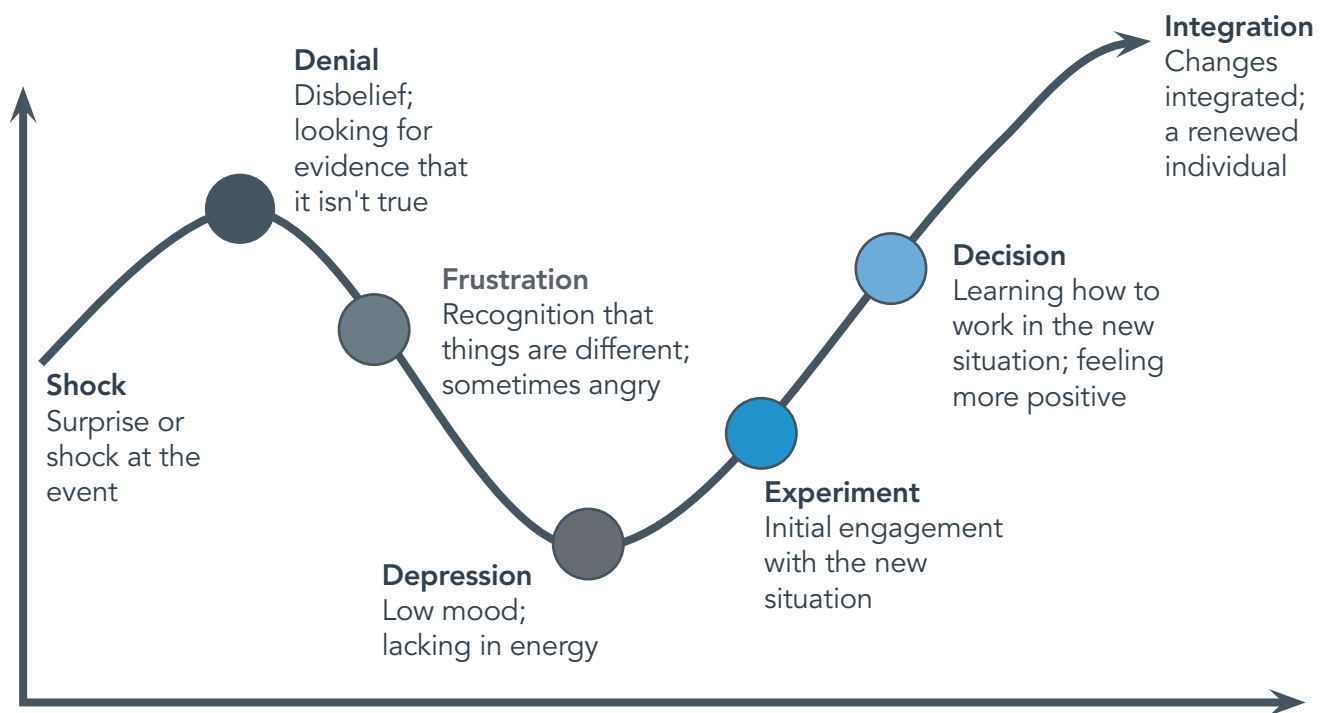
5. MOBILIZATION

People desire to be a part of a group that makes a difference. Give direction about how to join the team to make a difference by fulfilling the mission.

6. MOBILIZATION

Once traction with the revised mission and strategy begins to take root, management of a new movement is required.

Below you will find what your church/ministry needs during each phase of crisis.





RETHINK | Remember Your Values

1. Core values help identify what is unique.
2. Core values help with member alignment.
3. Core values communicate what is important.
4. Core values call people to action.
5. Core values enhance leadership credibility.
6. Core values inform direction and vision.
7. Core values are the framework through which decisions are made.
8. Core values are unchanging.
9. Core values are things the church is passionate about.
10. Core values are rooted in the Bible.
11. Core values are foundational beliefs.
12. Core values guide the church.
13. Core values are not a list of everything the church believes. Core values are four to seven essential elements the church is built upon.

Write your core values here and discuss how each one applies to your team in light of the crisis:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____

These statements should inform every decision you will make throughout the crisis.

During a crisis, it may become necessary to modify the mission. If you believe rethinking the mission during the crisis is necessary, use the following questions to help your team think about others God would have you position in the ministry.

QUESTIONS TO ASK

COMMUNITY CHALLENGES

1. What are your community's greatest challenges?
2. What problem is no one addressing in your community?
3. What part of your community is hurting the most?
4. What aspect of the existing crisis is the church best able to meet?

CHURCH PURPOSE WITHIN THE CRISIS

1. What do you believe your church's mission within the crisis needs to be?
2. What is most important to your church as you face the crisis?
3. What resources are in greatest supply within the church?
4. What is your church able to do best?

LEADERSHIP CAPACITY

1. What special skills, talents or abilities does your leadership exhibit?
2. What aspect of ministry are you most passionate about?
3. What can your church scale up to do that could have the greatest impact?

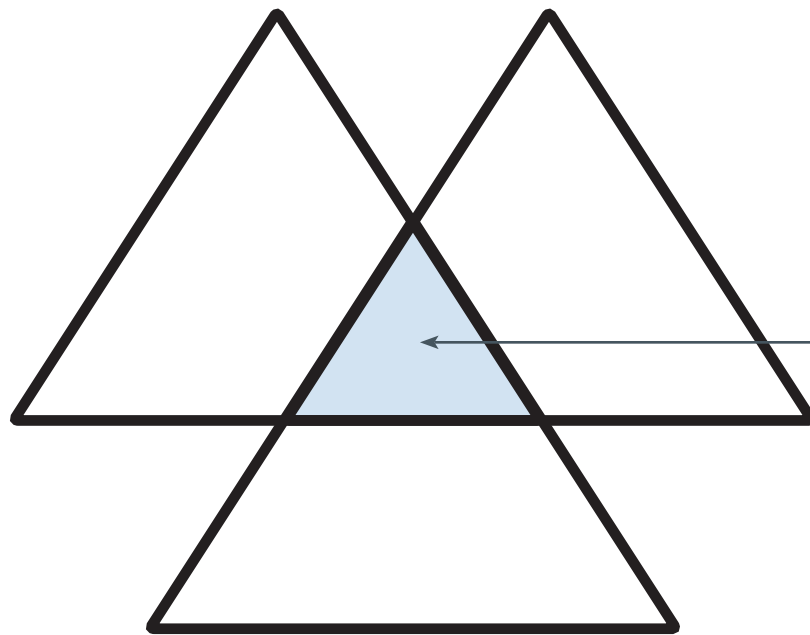
Answer the questions above on the following page.



RETHINK | Where to Position the Ministry

COMMUNITY CHALLENGES

LEADERSHIP CAPACITY



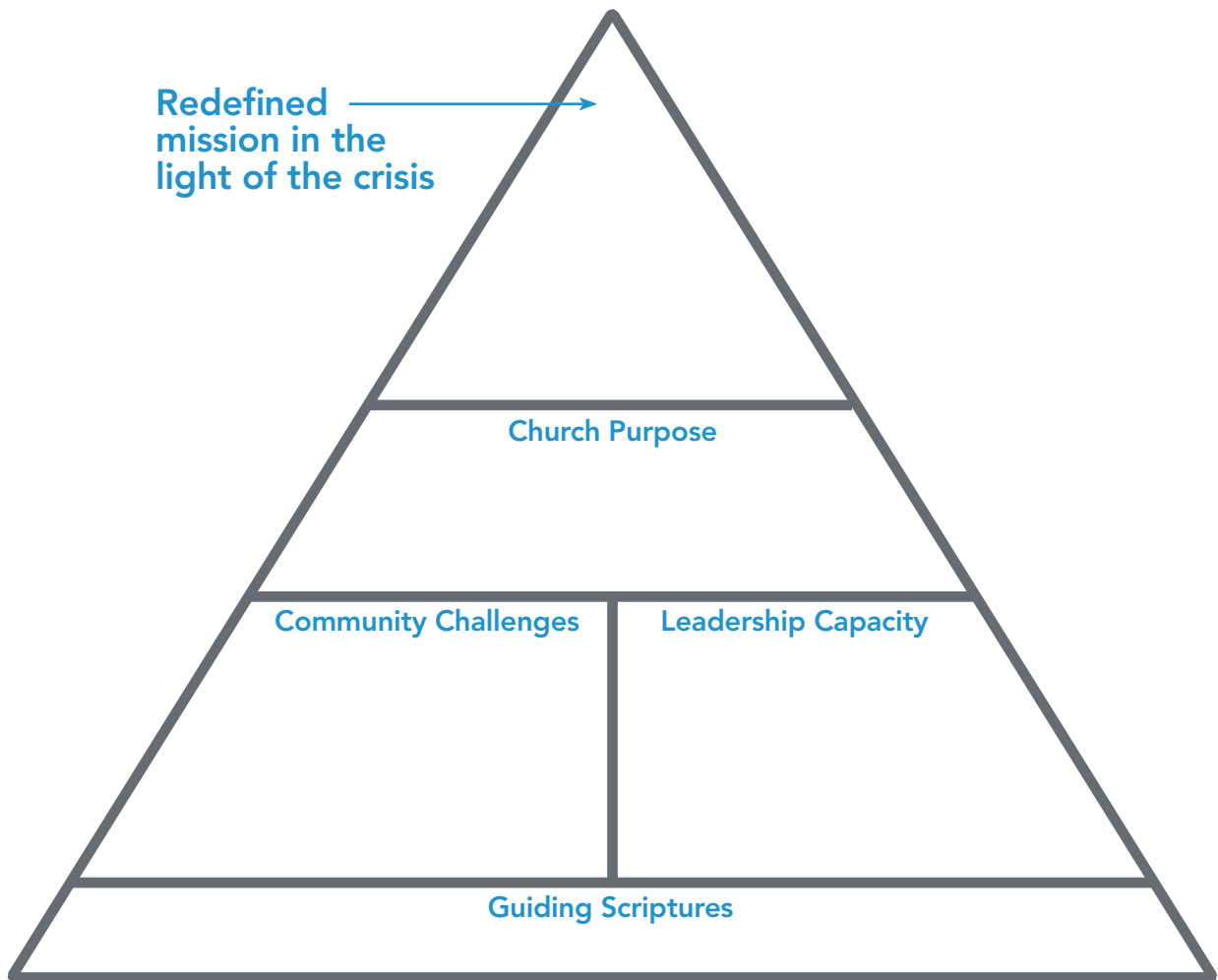
It is at the intersection of these new realities that your mission in the crisis emerges.

CHURCH PURPOSE

RETHINK | Mission & Strategy Modification



Define your church's modified mission based on what you identify as common elements from the "Rethink the Mission" questions.





RETHINK | Mission & Strategy Modification

REDEFINED MISSION IN THE LIGHT OF CRISIS (20 words or less)

In order to test your hypothetical vision statement, you will want to think about what must be accomplished in order to fulfill your mission.

KEY STEPS IN THE CRISIS STRATEGY

Next, brainstorm the necessary elements to accomplish this adjusted mission for the life of the crisis. They should be church-wide building blocks needed to successfully fulfill your mission. These elements will be big, overarching efforts within the church—essential elements to accomplish this mission. List up to 15 potential objectives below:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____
11. _____
12. _____
13. _____
14. _____
15. _____



STEPS IN THE STRATEGY:

Once the Big Strategy is in place, you will need to make sure the details in each step of the strategy are outlined. Use the following worksheet to list the steps in the strategy. Next, list the details of the strategy underneath each step. Include what you need to do and who will be responsible for doing it.

STEP 1. _____

STEP 2. _____

STEP 3. _____

STEP 4. _____

STEP 5. _____

Elaborate upon each individual step and unpack those that need to be more fully developed.

STEP 1 (from above): _____

Details necessary to execute the strategy:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Responsible person: _____

STEP 2): _____

Details:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Responsible person: _____



RETHINK | Mission & Strategy Modification

STEP 3 (from previous page): _____

Details:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Responsible person: _____

STEP 4: _____

Details:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Responsible person: _____

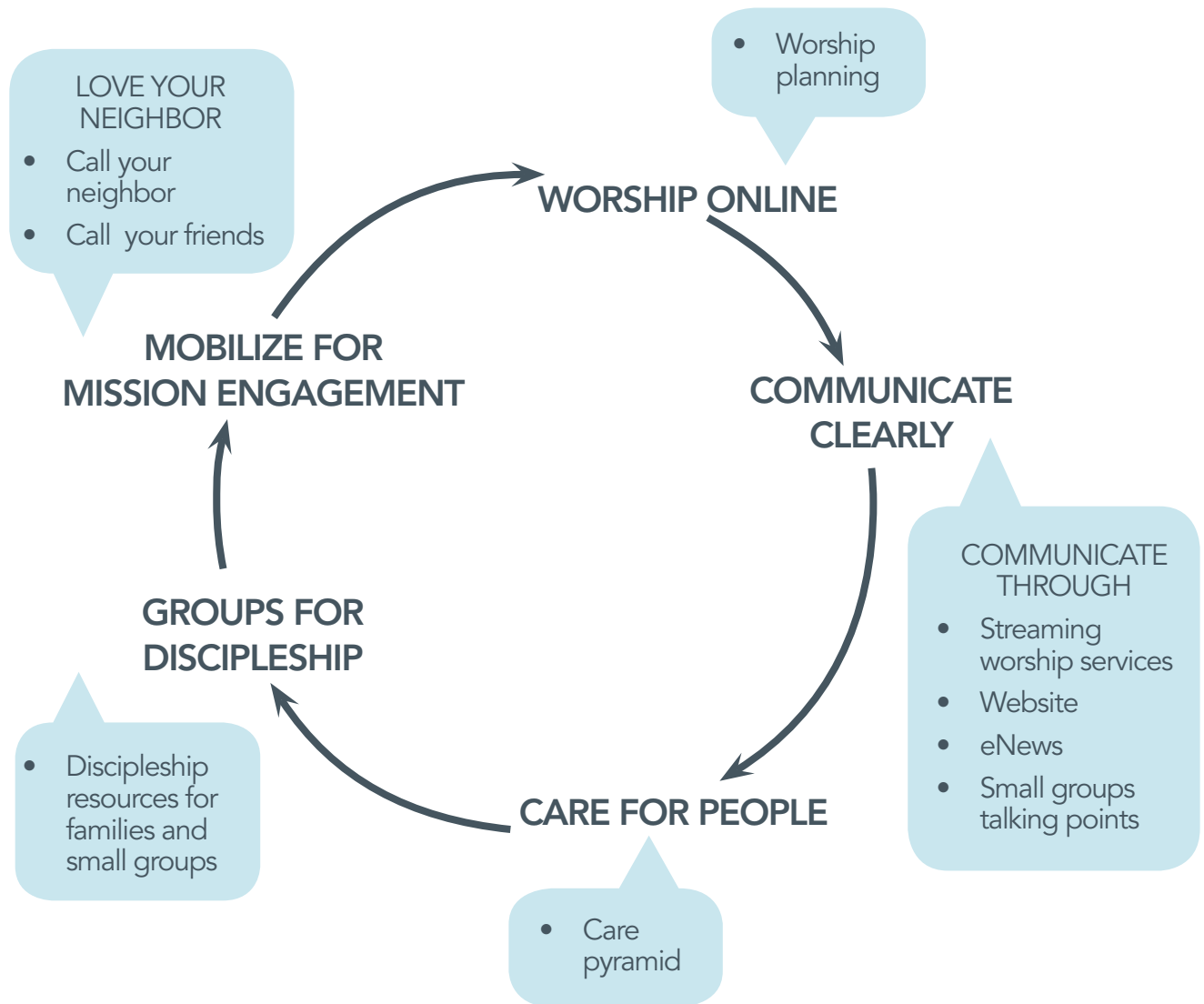
STEP 5: _____

Details:

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Responsible person: _____

Below is an example of a modified strategy. Design your strategy on the following page.





RETHINK | Mission & Strategy Modification

Design your modified crisis strategy.

A large, empty rectangular box with a thick blue border, intended for designing a modified crisis strategy.

RETHINK | Mission & Strategy Modification

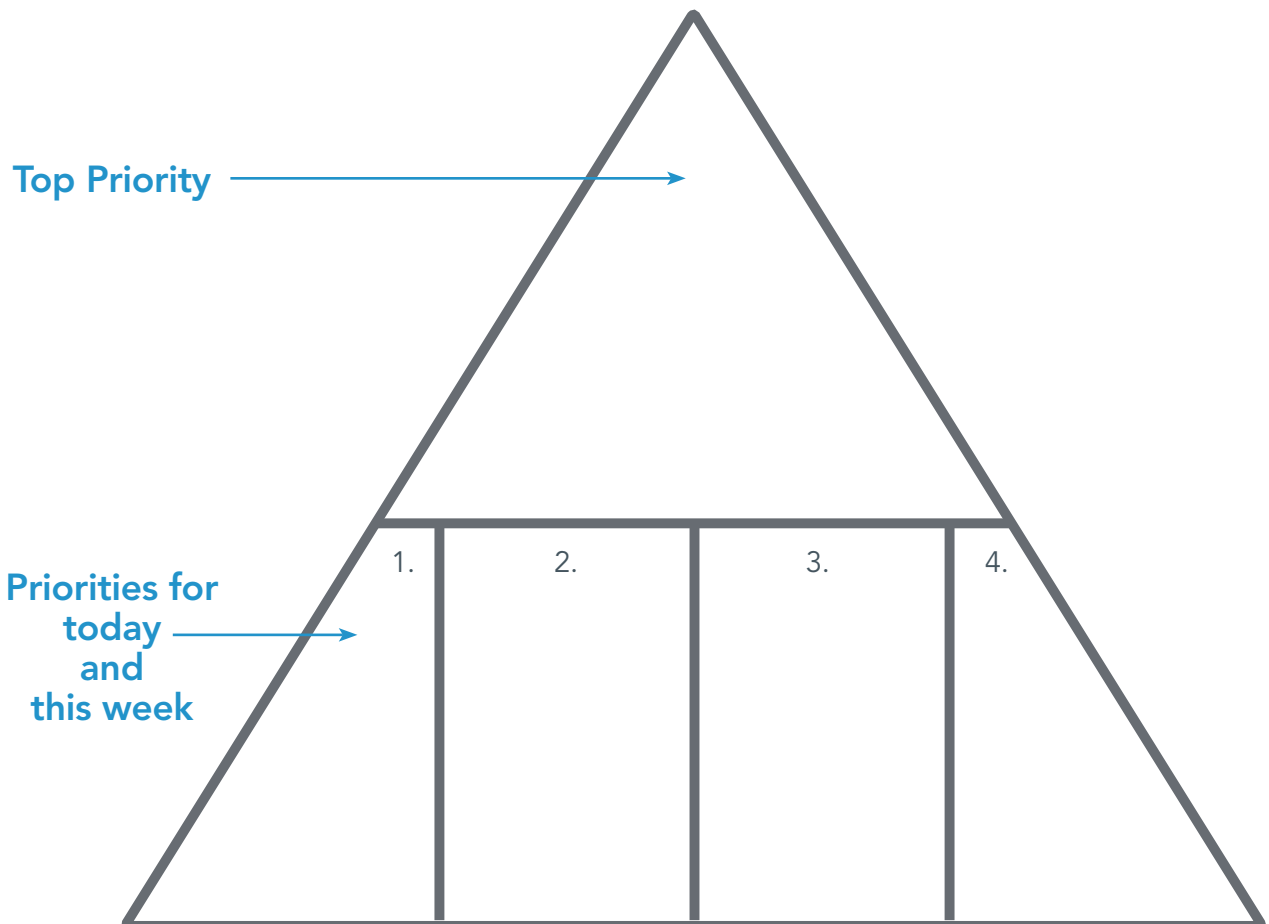


Work through the crisis by utilizing the dynamic pyramid model from Patrick Lencioni's *The Advantage*. Your redefined mission is the top priority, and your essential priorities are those that will help accomplish that mission. During a crisis, this may change from day to day.

THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH IS:

THE MODIFIED SET OF PRIORITIES GUIDING OUR TEAM THROUGH THE CRISIS ARE:

THEREFORE OUR PRIORITIES ARE:





RETHINK | Communicating the Crisis Plan

1. Who needs to participate in the discussion, approval and implementation of this plan?

2. How will our leadership team make sure the mission and objectives are connected to the church?

3. Create a list of talking points to make sure everyone in leadership is saying the same thing.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

FIVE STEPS UP ON THE GIVING LADDER

1. ALIGN TO THE NEED

Giving motivation: Donors desire to help others.

Ministry response: Clearly and widely communicate how the ministry is helping those in crisis and how donors can give.

2. ADJUST THE PRIORITIES

Giving motivation: Donors know the crisis is not the time for business as usual. They want to know how you have adjusted to help people through the crisis.

Ministry response: You may need to do things like adjust the budget, set up a designated fund, or start something new, like a GoFundMe® account.

3. ALLOCATE RESOURCES TO THE CRISIS

Giving motivation: Donors want to know their giving goes toward meeting needs of real people.

Ministry response: Tell stories about how their giving is making a difference.

4. ASK FOR GIFTS FLEXIBILITY

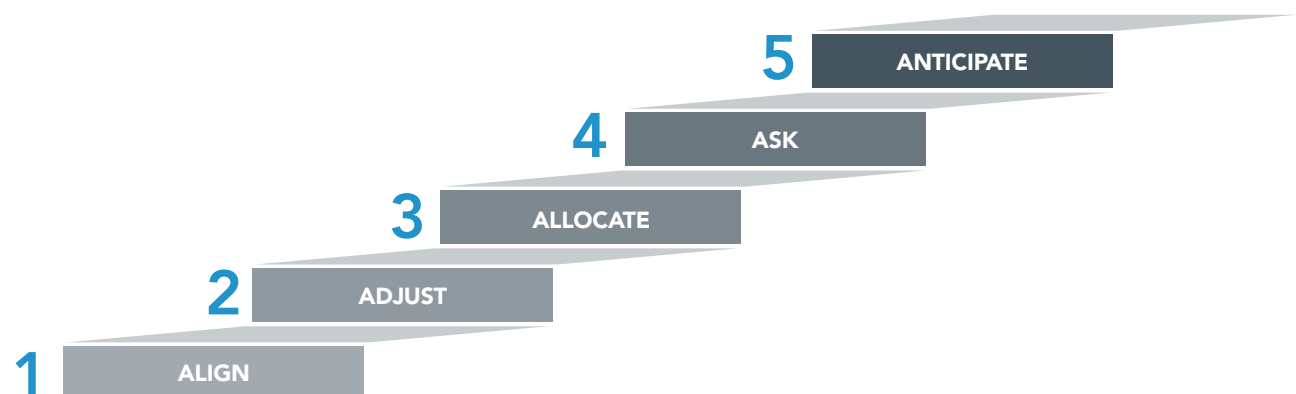
Giving motivation: Donors know the crisis is a fluid situation. They will understand that when the crisis changes, the response will need to change, too.

Ministry response: Ask for gifts to be designated to the general fund so there is flexibility in their use.

5. ANTICIPATE QUESTIONS AND CHANGES

Giving motivation: Donors like to be a part of cutting edge opportunities and creative support.

Ministry response: Stay aware of community dynamics and offer unique giving opportunities like matching gifts and gifts in kind.





CONGREGATIONAL CARE MODEL

An integral part of church ministry during a crisis is caring for the congregation and the community. These pastoral care ministries range from support groups, to staff/lay counseling, to prayer networks, to pastoral visits.

Depending on the size of your congregation and your staff, you will want to cultivate a strategy for caring for one another. You will have to develop a tiered approach to meet the demand of a crisis. You will need to begin a member-to-member level and become more structured, based on the size and dynamics of your church and staff.

Here is an example of what tiers of congregational care ministry might look like:



It is important that people within the congregation, as well as the community, are aware of the different care options your church provides, in order to make it easier for them to access help. This could include things like a dedicated page on your website, support group information in community resources, and/or a short statement in your communication pieces with contact information.

The care ministry of your church should be coordinated by a specific staff person or lay leader, which would serve as a centralized hub for communicating information to the congregation, pastors and other staff, and for providing structure and coordination of the ministry.



MAKING HARD DECISIONS

During a crisis, one of the greatest challenges a leader faces is making difficult decisions. Below is a worksheet that can be utilized to help you make each difficult decision.

What is the biggest challenge you are facing?

What information do you need to gather to make a decision?

Who needs to understand the nature of this issue with you?

How do you intend to go about helping them see and understand the issue?

What decision needs to be made?

What process do you need to follow to execute the decision?

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____



ONLINE WORSHIP SERVICE PLANNING

ONLINE WORSHIP PLANNING & PRODUCTION for Streaming Worship Services	
SERMON	
SCRIPTURE	
SONGS	
COMMUNICATION OF ESSENTIAL INFORMATION	
GIVING INSTRUCTIONS	
CARE PLAN COMMUNICATED	
PRAYER EMPHASIS	
COMMISSION FOR MISSIONED LIVING	

COMMUNICATIONS CHECKLIST

CRISIS COMMUNICATION PHILOSOPHY

Tell the truth to the people who need to hear it.

Be present and visible.

Be a trusted voice in the crisis.

Give detailed attention to the crisis.

Know the facts and monitor the media, including social media.

Understand the critical issues you are dealing with.

Put people first.

Think through the words you choose to use.

Be ready to correct errors quickly and apologetically.

Don't make jokes or minimize the situation.

Don't speculate about the situation, deal with facts.

Don't be self-serving or inwardly focused.

ISSUES YOU NEED TO BE READY TO ADDRESS

Who is on the communication team?

Do you know what your talking points are?

Are you demonstrating compassion?

Is your message gospel-centered?

How will you use social media?

Have you shared the message with your internal team first?

How do people respond back to the communication?

Who is the contact person?

WHAT IS REFOCUS?

REFOCUS is a church renewal training process that provides pastors with tools to assess their church and to restore vibrancy, purpose and health to their ministry.

Participants will assess the current state of the ministry, consider how to position it for maximum impact, develop all of the directional aspects of ministry, create a custom plan for disciple making, tailor a leadership development strategy, and build a custom plan for implementation.



- THE DISCOVERY:** A seven-step assessment designed to synthesize data and discoveries, helping pastors to accurately evaluate the current state of the church.
- THE CONVERGENCE:** A “sweet spot” exercise considering church purpose, leadership passion, and community potential; designed to identify where to position the church’s ministry for maximum impact.
- THE PYRAMID:** An in-depth series of exercises designed to develop all of the directional elements for the church, including mission, strategy, values, vision, annual plan and goals.
- THE PATH:** A process that helps develop a customized plan for evangelism and discipleship.
- THE LADDER:** Creation of a customized, multi-level plan for leadership development, using a four-fold framework (character, competency, chemistry, and concern for the mission).
- THE TOOLKIT:** Practical resources and ideas to help pastors and church leaders launch the new vision and build momentum toward its fulfillment.