



Galena UMC

Recovery & ReTurn Report

March 24, 2021 Week #40

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Weekly Update ... *from Dale*

As the world slowly re-opens on the other side of COVID, here is a question for you to ponder..... Are churches behaving like malls in the age of Amazon, just hoping for people to shop again?

The mall and retail industry, which, pre-COVID, already had its share of challenges and decline, is not in denial that whatever normal emerges from this post-pandemic world, it will not be kind to retailers. Sometimes it feels like mid-pandemic churches are behaving like pre-pandemic retailers, banking everything on people returning once things are normal again. It is surprising the comments and messages assuring us that once people are gathering again, everything will be fine.

Well, yes. But not so fast. And not so absolute.

First, of course people are anxious to gather in person again. And yes, actual in-person gatherings and human connection are critical to

human flourishing and the mission of the church.

If we limit our future ministry to in-person gatherings, or over-focus on in-person gatherings, we will overinvest in a method and miss the bigger mission.

Crisis is an accelerator, it reveals and amplifies the weaknesses that were already there, and also accelerates trends that were emerging anyway.

When we consider what's been set into motion during the pandemic: from working from home, the rush to digital, a damaged economy, massive unemployment, the re-emergence of regional governance, deeply restricted travel, the instability of entire industries, and, of course, the virus itself, to think that life is going to simply go back to the way it was is not a wise bet.

Which brings us back to the question: Are churches behaving like malls in the age of Amazon, just hoping for people to shop again?

So what does the future look like?

Here's a guess..... churches that are thriving five years from now will have powerful in-person expressions **and** meaningful, helpful and robust digital ministry.

Churches, don't make the physical ministry v. digital ministry discussion binary. It will **not** likely be **one or the other!**

A pastor shares this story..... "After a worship service at First Baptist Church in Newcastle, Kentucky, a mother with a fidgety seven-year-old boy told me how she finally got her son to sit still and be quiet. About half-way through the sermon, she leaned over and whispered, 'If you don't sit still and be quiet, Pastor is going to lose his place and will have to start his sermon all over again!'"

Remember: Do No Harm ... Do Good ... Stay in Love with God!

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Romans 15:13

Medical Tip of the Week ...from Dennis

Why do I have to wear a mask, socially distance, wash my hands for 20 seconds, etc. if I have been fully vaccinated?

"It ain't over till it's over", so said the late great philosopher, Yogi Berra, a pretty smart guy. We should heed his warning. It is not yet time to throw caution to the winds even if you have been fully vaccinated. As good as these vaccines are, we don't know if fully vaccinated people can get infected and if they can be a risk to others. We don't know how well the current vaccines protect against the variants already discovered and others certain to arise. Early indications are that the vaccines offer protection against the known variants. But we do not really know...yet. Until that pandemic is over, it is wise to continue reasonable precautions to protect yourself and those around you. If influenza can be used as a marker, the world avoided the annual flu season this year. Influenza is transmitted the same way as coronavirus. Vaccination, masking, hand washing, and social distancing prevented the flu this year. **These safety measures work!**

One more Yogi-ism for the road: "When you get to the fork in the road, take it." It looks like we are at the fork in the road. Best to take the right one and stay cautious. Follow the CDC guidance at <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/vaccines/fully-vaccinated-guidance.html>.

Notes ...from Charlene ...

If any of you have ideas around our future sanctuary worship, do let us know. In conversations with our members, most still would be uncomfortable attending services in our building at this time. "Staying in touch" through phone calls, notes or emails, bless both the giver and the receiver especially in this time of pandemic. The more we can hold our church family close, the better it feels. We really are all in this together.

Update from the County ...from Jay

Everyone can get a vaccine effective April 12

As the state continues to utilize every available dose of vaccine, the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) today announced new essential workers that will be eligible to receive the COVID-19 vaccine in the coming days, ahead of the universal eligibility on April 12. This comes as the state reaches 100,000 COVID-19 vaccinations each day with weekly shipments of vaccine projected to surpass one million doses in April.

Beginning Monday, March 22, higher education staff, government workers, and media are eligible for vaccination at the more than 900 location in the state's provider network. Beginning Monday, March 29, food and beverage workers, construction trade workers, and religious leaders will be eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine. Since its first day in office, the Biden Administration has nearly doubled weekly vaccine distribution to states from 8.6 million to over 16 million this week. The first delivery to Illinois in December was about 109,000 doses, a figure that has grown to more than 800,000 the week of March 15 and is projected to surpass one million doses per week in April.

For more information on COVID-19 vaccine eligibility, go to <https://coronavirus.illinois.gov/s/vaccination-plan-overview>. To find a COVID-19 vaccine provider near you, visit the coronavirus.illinois.gov website for vaccination locations. Individuals who do not have access to online services or need assistance navigating online services to make an appointment can call the Vaccine Appointment Call Center at 833-621-1284.

Blessings ... from Pastor Catiana~~~~~

As we move into Holy Week, the culminating moment of our worship series invites us to consider a commission of Christ to his disciples: to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and cast out demons. These are very things his disciples have seen him do and that we have sought to witness for our own lives in this Lenten season of recovery. What will we do with this commission? What passion has been piqued in our church that we can offer to our community beyond this moment as we continue to participate in the revival of the spirit of humanity? How will we address ongoing pain, ourselves "healed and yet still healing?"

Questions for us, as we take that fork in the road.