

On a recent video call with Barna Group, Simon Barrington, formerly chief executive of Samaritan's Purse UK, and now founder of [Forge Leadership Consultancy](#), shared [three stages of crisis management](#) identified from past large-scale disasters:

- **Response:** fast-moving, high burnout, focus on basic needs. This is primarily the stage the church has been in since Coronavirus came to the U.S. We wrote about the need for churches to move into Phase 2 of the response stage of the COVID-19 crisis in a [previous blog post](#).
- **Recovery:** slower-moving, higher anxiety related to trauma, grief, lack of confidence. Barrington noted, the recovery phase can actually be more stressful than the response stage. A second wave of trauma and grief often hits after the initial phase of responding to a crisis. Proverbs 22:3 captures this dilemma: "*The prudent sees danger and hides himself, but the simple go on and suffer for it*" (Prov. 22:3).
- **Reconstruction:** disaster mitigation (planning to ensure this doesn't happen again), retainage decisions (what we will continue doing after this is over). The church isn't in this phase yet, but a time is coming when we'll need to pivot again to determine how to design and build churches for a post-COVID-19 world.

As the urgency of trying to figure out all the ways to shepherd congregations virtually starts to stabilize, pastors are shifting their attention to new concerns—namely, how can we prepare for the eventual day when we're able to return to our church buildings. How we will start back up? What will change and what will stay the same?

Though no one knows for certain when churches will be able to resume operations in their buildings, churches are on the threshold of moving into Recovery mode. The day is coming soon when churches will be able to gather in their physical ministry spaces. We want churches to be ready.

Reimagining Church

As we think about this crisis shifting into a new phase, it's human to simply long for a return to the regular, familiar patterns of life and connection. Regardless what we think about a "new normal," Coronavirus has been too widespread, literally and figuratively, for life—much less church—to go back to what it was before this terrible disease hit.

It's been said, "Never waste a good crisis." As a team, and in light of the COVID-19 crisis, we are asking ourselves new questions. We know that ministry space—people's perceptions of it, churches' use of it, and the community connections to it—will change. We know proactive church leaders are asking questions too.

Relaunch Church

Asking curious questions is always the best place to start when reimagining a new future. With that in mind, we've created a new downloadable resource—"Key Questions to Prepare for a New Season of Ministry." In the context of what your church has learned about itself and the community you serve during this pandemic, what changes might you need to make to prepare to relaunch church for a new season of ministry?

We've also added a new webpage to our site called [Relaunch Church](#). Here you'll find helpful articles and resources to equip leaders with fresh insights and ideas for harnessing what you're learning in this season of change.

As always, we would be honored to process questions about the future of your church with you. We stand ready to serve by providing free, no-pressure consultation as you prepare to relaunch church.

The End of the Beginning

One of the things I admire about Winston Churchill, prime minister of Great Britain during WW2, is the way his soaring rhetoric brought reality and hope to a people beleaguered by the relentless onslaught of a ruthless enemy. From the time bombs first fell on Great Britain until victory was declared in Europe, five years had elapsed. And it was pretty bleak those first couple years, with little more than their resolve with which to fight the battle.

One of the first signs of hope came in a decisive battle in the deserts of North Africa, two years in. Although final victory was anything but certain, Hitler's seemingly unstoppable army had been turned back at El Alamein. Spirits soared, perhaps none more than Churchill's. Yet he knew it was too early to declare victory and take the rest they needed and longed for. In words oft-repeated, he reflected, "*Now this is not the end. It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning.*"

We are not in a world war—thankfully!—but we are a world at war nonetheless. And we, the Church, need to prepare to turn a corner—to recover and rebuild from the effects of this war.

When you relaunch your church after COVID-19 has subsided, what form will it take? Will it be ministry as usual, or will you use this opportunity to reset as a Body and seek God's wisdom in how you might better reach people with the Gospel and saving power of Jesus Christ?

As you prepare to relaunch your church, we join you in waiting on the strength of the Lord, believing with the psalmist:

*"I believe that I shall look upon the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living!
Wait for the LORD; be strong, and let your heart take courage; wait for the LORD!"
(Psalm 27:13-14).*

<https://www.aspengroup.com/blog/preparing-leaders-to-relaunch-church>