
How to Make a Pandemic-Proof Church Calendar for 2021

After the year we've had, it's reasonable to want to approach 2021 with caution.

How can we make a plan for the church in 2021 when we couldn't plan for 2020?

Isn't it silly to have a ministry plan now that we see how quickly it can be uprooted?

Although planning might seem futile, it's more important than ever.

And the best way to make plans real and set them into motion is to get them on the calendar.

The church calendar is one of the most vital but underutilized tools. It helps ideas become reality and turns the things we should do into the things we're doing.

We couldn't plan for the way this year turned out. But next year's ministry plans don't have to be dampened by this year's chaos.

There are many meaningful things that should be represented on the church calendar that matter in every season and should happen no matter what. They

can be done whether services and events are in-person or virtual. They're things that 2020 made us realize how significant they are.

#1 – Make a big deal about digital, recurring giving.

When most church doors closed and the offering plate couldn't be passed on Sundays, it became clear that offering digital giving options is crucial.

Even in 2017, 62% of churchgoers preferred giving electronically, according to a study by Vanco Payment Solutions. And in 2018, churches that started accepting donations online saw a [32% increase](#) in overall donations.

And donors who give digitally often set up recurring gifts and those recurring givers donate [42% more](#) than one-time donors.

With so many positive trends with online donations and recurring gifts, it needs a place on the church calendar.

Whenever you plan to preach about money throughout the year, set specific dates to emphasize online, recurring giving. Tell people why it matters and how it helps the church make plans wisely.

Whether it's a one-weekend message push or an email campaign that spans throughout a month, have a plan on the calendar to talk about giving (not just money) and highlight ways to give online.

Mark which Sundays will include a plug for online, recurring giving. Set aside special days during specific months to send emails to donors. Plan a strategic, unique message for your most active donors and establish which day those text messages or emails will go out.

If talking about money in church makes you nervous, check out [The Senior Pastor's Guide to Stewardship](#). It's a free ebook that helps you create a strategy for encouraging people to give, thanking existing donors, and guiding your church to a financial breakthrough.

#2 – Plan content *beyond preaching topics*.

Having a preaching plan is great, but creating a content plan has an even greater impact.

While you're planning sermons and other teaching topics, plan to pull content from that to share in emails and on social media. If print-outs are your thing, plan to put a devotional booklet together or mail sermon notes to church members who can't attend in-person.

If there's still virtual teaching happening, give it more reach by using short video or audio clips for social media posts. You can even have guest preachers send in their sermon videos along with a short introduction clip to share the week before their assigned Sunday. (Bobby Williams, our Community Director, filmed sermon videos for a few Church Fuel members during the pandemic to give the pastors a break.)

No matter how you decide to use the content, assigning real dates on the calendar helps to make sure it happens.

Plan ahead for not just the topics you'll preach on, but for when you'll put out content that will help people.

- How many times per week can you share clips from the sermon to encourage people on social media and which days will you post them?
- Are there topics on the preaching calendar that would make a great Q&A session or webinar to dig deeper into it and connect with people?
- Can you create content especially for a certain time of year, such as an advent calendar, a back-to-school prayer guide, or a summer devotional for vacationing families?

None of these ideas have to be given out in person, but all of them can be powerful resources for people in your church—as long as they're on the calendar.

If you're a Church Fuel member, look for the Preaching Calendar in the Resource Library. It's a template that helps you plan sermons for the year and additional details for each service.

#3 – Give important small events the calendar space they deserve.

The months go by so fast that before we know it, the volunteer appreciation event we “should have” becomes the volunteer appreciation event we “should have had.”

Maybe it became more clear to you in 2020 that the small things, such as volunteer recruitment breakfasts and digital strategy team meetings, are a big deal even though they're not big days.

While Easter and Christmas are incredibly momentous dates on the church calendar, don't just plan for the big days. Those small, everyday things make a substantial difference in the church culture and impact people in their daily lives.

Choose people over projects and set aside dates for the small but mighty events that push ministry forward, encourage people, and serve the community.

For example, is it a part of your mission to get more involved with local organizations this year? Add a special Sunday to the calendar that's dedicated to highlighting the cause or calling for volunteers. Set a deadline for making decisions (“We'll select an organization to partner with by -this date- and we'll share about it on social media during -this week-”).

Choose a week for a staff or volunteer retreat to recharge with and show appreciation for your team. If you've thought, “It'd be nice to have a parents night out event where we watch children at the church so parents can have a date night...” put that date on the calendar and start planning for it.

More important than the big, in-person events that churches may or may not be able to have in 2021 are the small, culture-shaping events that matter more than we know.

Take the Next Step

Without a clear strategy, everything seems like an opportunity or an obligation and it's easy to lose sight of what matters. To truly reach your community and see sustainable growth in your church, you need a simple but effective plan.

In the **Building Your Ministry Plan** course, we walk you through each step and help you clarify what matters. The result will be a strategic plan that everyone can support.