



Staying alive in lockdown

Future Steps?

Changing Seasons?

Some of us have had to lead very directly in this season. The challenge now is to return to a more collaborative and consensual model of leading our churches

For others the challenge of lockdown has been an energising experience, allowing for very focussed, quick decision making. Having clear pressure has provided a sense of urgency that has focussed and united our teams.

Coming out of lockdown we have to slow down and begin to think about **the longer term view.**

Today I want to ask what does it mean to unlock with FAITH? And how do we attend to Mission?



What does it mean to
Unlock in Faith?



3 key ideas for unlocking ministry after lockdown..

1. Think **RELAUNCH**, not reopening
2. Think **MOBILISING**, not just ministering
3. Commit to **BOLDNESS** in Evangelism



What does it mean to
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1, Think **RELAUNCH**, not reopening

To re-launch is different to re-opening: To *re-open* implies picking up where you left off. Organisations, initiatives and expeditions use the term re-launch after a setback or a significant change in their context when they've had to stop, reflect, recalibrate.

Our context has changed. We have new constraints and requirements. We have probably experienced some losses. We also have a new opportunity – with lots of people in our communities wanting to pray, to live differently, needing help or wanting to explore faith.



What does it mean to
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1, Think **RELAUNCH**, not reopening

- What are the 'epiphanies' you/your church has had during lockdown that need to be prioritised?
- How should i/we live differently in this new chapter?
- What limits do we need to accept?
- Who are the new people we should be reaching out to?
- What things is it the right time to 'ditch'?
- How do we use this moment to generate local excitement & engagement?

The following table might help you crystallise your thoughts..



What does it mean to
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LET GO

What have/are we stopping/letting go of as a result of the past four months that can/should be let go of permanently?

RESTART

What have we had to stop/reduce focus on strategically because of the crisis and must now restart?

END

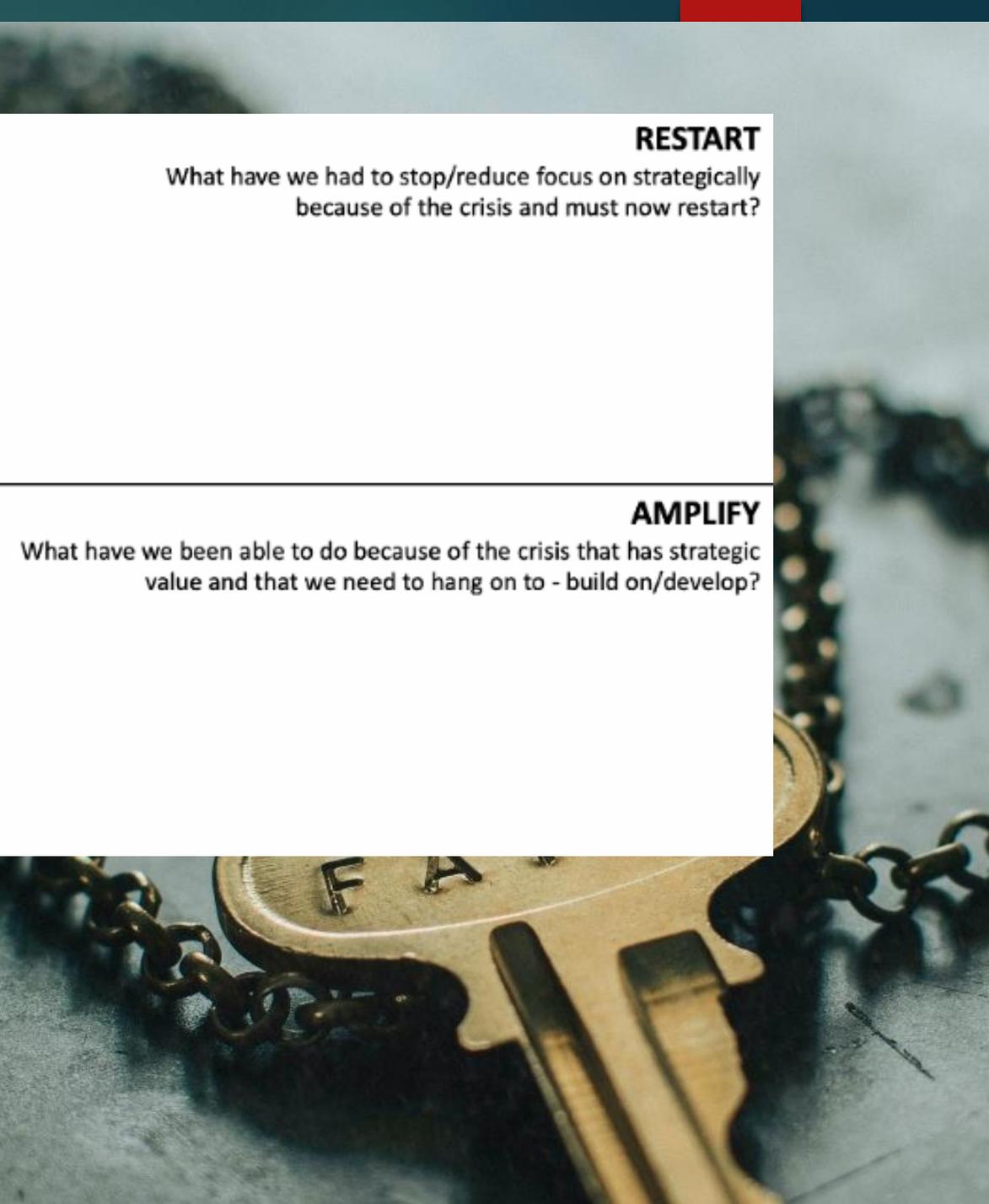
What have we done that was fine for a season and can/should now be lost? i.e. it probably does not have strategic importance

AMPLIFY

What have we been able to do because of the crisis that has strategic value and that we need to hang on to - build on/develop?



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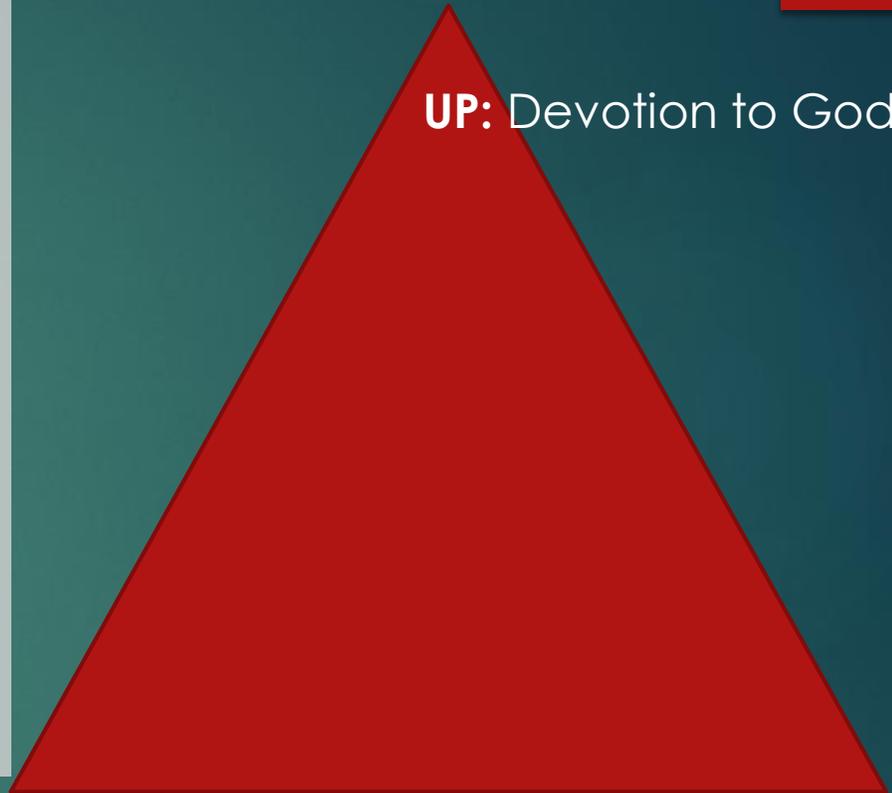


2, Think **MOBILISE**, not just **Ministry** (continued)

Another obvious danger is that, as lockdown lifts, we get swallowed by the demands of restarting Sunday's or, that in restarting it, we fail to invite or make space for the new people who want to engage.

Questions.

- How can I use our programme to ensure we minister in all 3 dimensions?
- What practical steps do I need to take personally to ensure that I attend to all three of these elements of call?
- How can I engage the wider church in participating and shaping all 3 elements?
- How can we invite outsiders in to our life as a church? How might we need to present things differently?



3 tasks for the church?

OUT: 'Go into all the world', demonstrating & declaring, inviting others into the Gospel

IN: Building Christ Shaped Communities

3, BOLDNESS in Evangelism

Back in the 1970's James Engels described the journey to faith that many go on progressing from hostility to indifference to interest to considering to persuasion before (finally) commitment.

The statistics show us that LOADS of people have begun to pray, to think about faith or to join in with online worship during lockdown. Many churches have a larger 'fringe' than before, but irrespective of this, our communities still need us if they are to hear of Jesus.

Question - Using the following pathway, how can we help them continue their journey?



What does it mean to
Unlock in Faith?



community

Conversation &
consideration

Commission

connection

Commitment

Taking part

Evangelism as a **journey?**



3, BOLDNESS in Evangelism

Lots of us feel some nervousness at the prospect of evangelism, yet (as the Apostle Paul puts it) *'How can they believe unless someone tells them?'* As Ministers we have a particular responsibility for & privilege in this, enshrined in the scriptures and our vows of ordination:

'Keep your head in all situations, endure hardship, do the work of an evangelist, discharge all the duties of your ministry' (2 Tim 4:5)

'To serve this royal priesthood, God has given a variety of ministries. Deacons are ordained so that the people of God may be better equipped to make Christ known' (The Ordinal)



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BOLDNESS in Evangelism: The task post lockdown?

1, Mobilise the church

- **Encourage** the church to invite, to share their story, to pray with a neighbour, to host an online Alpha course, etc..
- **Share** what we're learning about the context. Most of our congregations will be amazed to hear about the huge numbers of young people trying prayer, or about the previously secular British people joining online worship.
- Point them to **good resources** (videos, books, events) to share with friends and neighbours (this is all part of our equipping ministry - Eph 4:12)



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BOLDNESS in Evangelism: The task post lockdown?

2, Lead from the front

- **Get out in your dog collar** – be visible, offer to pray, invite people to give their lives afresh to God (if you don't, who will?).
- **Share your weakness.** Most people are nervous about witnessing, hearing that the Vicar is too is actually enormously helpful – and redeems the task of mission from being only something a religious 'professional' could do
- **Tell stories, particularly testimonies** – they stir faith, point to Jesus & capture the imagination in a unique way.



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BOLDNESS in Evangelism: The task post lockdown?

3, Reshape Sundays

- **Given the desire to pray and the shock at the pandemic** that many are expressing, we are hoping that some new people will join us on sundays. For this to happen **we need to invite them**. For it to be fruitful we need to express what we do in ways that makes sense.
- **Signposting, explaining** (key words, how to pray, etc), **welcoming really well**, and **following up** all make a significant difference
- Make it **relevant**. Address grief, eternal hope, meaning, suffering, service and new starts. These are central Christian themes that resonate powerfully with the questions our nation is asking right now



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BOLDNESS in Evangelism: The task post lockdown?

Make a difference by...

- Telling your story
- Asking to Pray
- Planning really good services – Don't spread yourselves too thin. And don't just return to what you'd do normally.
- Identify the 'bus stops' in the calendar
- Door knocking. Visit the neighbourhood.
- Run an Alpha Course; Run the bereavement course (all of which can be done online really easily).
- **Collaborate – as a benefice, as churches together, as a Deanery**



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Concluding thought

As Christ's disciples our faith should make us utterly different:

- **Compassion:** We have been loved & are able to love generously
- **Good News:** Covid is awful, but not the end
- **Promise:** We are not alone. We have God's presence to draw on
- **Purpose:** We have work to do. There are constraints but 'the gospel is not in chains'



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