

How Christian Worship Services Evolved Due to COVID-19

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The COVID 19 pandemic has impacted Christian worship experiences in congregations forced to adapt to new restrictions. This is especially true for traditional Sunday morning worship services. Masking, distancing and live streaming services have altered worship experiences since the beginning of the pandemic. My research examines what ways the structure, intimacy, style and meaning of worship changed during the pandemic and what have been effective adaptations. In this study, I am using personal experience and qualitative data derived from interviews with staff and volunteering from two congregations: Trinity Evangelical Presbyterian Church (Plymouth, MI) and First Church of God (Alma, MI). I volunteered in tech and/or worship at both congregations before and during the pandemic and observed many changes firsthand. I am interviewing eight staff or volunteers in the two churches by asking them the same six questions with one additional question aimed at their specific role in the church. I interviewed four staff members from each house of worship to observe common themes and potential recommendations for houses of worship seeking to adapt to new guidelines and regulations. After conducting the interviews, I will transcribe them and analyze the transcripts for any similarities, themes and major differences. The pandemic restrictions in religious houses of worship forced changes to be made. I expect to find changes in the way service was structured, how certain rituals and activities were practiced, and what medium worship was practiced in. I believe that observing two different churches in two different areas of the state will show how individual churches took different routes to continue to keep their metaphorical doors open and have a community throughout the pandemic. I hope to use the results to offer suggestions for other congregations adapting to pandemic restrictions.