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## Pivoting your church to meet needs

by Grace Thornton, posted Monday, March 30, 2020 (28 days ago)

NEW YORK -- For the past seven years, Raleigh Sadler's mission has been to help churches see and help the vulnerable people around them, whether that be the homeless, the jobless or victims of human trafficking.

But one thing has shifted in his ministry in the past few weeks: with the spread of COVID-19, every person and church is suddenly vulnerable, and very aware of it. That changes the way those churches do ministry, said Sadler, executive director of Let My People Go.

"Pastors are scrambling right now, and we want to help them think through what they can do in this season," he said. "Everyone's asking the question of how to make church virtual, but they're also struggling because we know there are people who have practical, physical needs we need to meet."

Because of that, he's offering something to any pastor who's interested -- free coaching to help them identify the most vulnerable populations in their area and ways to help them.

"Many pastors don't have networks who can help them with this kind of thing, and at times like this, they may be struggling just to keep the lights on and make sure everyone in their congregation is OK," Sadler said.

"Looking outside their own church has complexities that they may not have room for on their plate at the moment. We're equipped to help them expand their plate effectively right where they are."

Sadler started Let My People Go in 2013 as a movement to fight human trafficking and expanded it into a New York-based nonprofit organization three years later. Along the way, the ministry pivoted -- they began trying to prevent human trafficking before it started by protecting the vulnerable populations often targeted by traffickers.

And now they're pivoting again to help churches minister to the growing number of vulnerable people around them -- people who may be facing unemployment for the first time, or domestic violence or food insecurity.

Sadler said in a climate like the one created by COVID-19, the people who were already vulnerable will only become more vulnerable, and more people will join them as the economy struggles.

"Children will become even more at risk as parents lose jobs and domestic violence rises. And as people stay home, children will also become more subject to exploitation," he said. "Human trafficking survivors will also face triggering as they are more and more isolated."

Friends of church members will begin to face financial difficulties, too, as the effects of the virus get closer and closer to home. The struggle will become more personal, Sadler said, and that will help churches relate better to the discomfort of the world around them.

He suggested empathy is something that can be leveraged in ministry. Let My People Go has an assessment in place to help a pastor know the needs in his community and connect him with resources to meet those needs.

"When you deal with vulnerabilities, you're suddenly relevant to everyone," Sadler said. "At the end of the day, we want to help pastors ask how their vulnerable church can help vulnerable people."

For more information or to ask for coaching, email Sadler at [info@lmpgnetwork.org](mailto:info@lmpgnetwork.org).



Raleigh Sadler, speaking here to a group of church leaders in Jacksonville, Fla., has begun coaching church leaders online on how best to reach the vulnerable communities around them.

Submitted photo

