



Episode 44

Announcer 0:04

Welcome to the post COVID church podcast with your host, Stuart Kellogg.

Stuart Kellogg 0:12

Hello and welcome to the Post COVID Church Podcast. Today we're looking at how a small church with a part time pastor struggled to stay alive in the middle of the pandemic, but is now using technology to make and strengthen disciples.

Roy Lampkin II is Pastor of Berean Baptist Church in Mobile, Alabama. He's been ministering for more than 20 years, but never as a full time pastor. Retired from the Coast Guard, married for 33 years with three children and 10 grandchildren, his full time job is with Mobile County. He's been involved in many church ministries for years, and it all led with some unexpected turns to God's calling him to lead Berean.

Roy Lampkin:

That's a really interesting story.

Stuart

Roy was a member of a larger church in Mobile pastored by a longtime friend. And he agreed to be a missionary to Berean Baptists, but his pastor friend had another idea.

Roy 1:20

Unbeknownst to me, we met the then pastor, his name was Don Bonds, and they had a conversation about revitalizing the church and reaching the community. And, you know, they, they were just dying. And I mean, literally, they were dying out. And, you know, he made the introductions, you know, to the folks who were there. And you know, we had Sunday service, and he didn't say a word.

About two, two weeks later, he approached me, he says, "You remember that church we went to?" I said, Yeah, he says, I need to send you there as a missionary. Like, okay, you know, he explained the situation, and he says that, I really think that you would be the perfect candidate, to be able to bridge between the church and the community.

Stuart:

Soon, he wasn't just a missionary, but working part time for this small struggling church.

Roy 2:11

And when I left that day, I, I called out to God. I said, Okay, God, if this is what you want me to do, when I go talk to pastor Jones, if he's in agreement with it, and I know that's what you want me to do, and I'll go. And God does have a sense of humor, I tell you. So I went there. And I talked to him, and I told him what's going on. And the first thing that pastor Jones said was, Well, wait a minute, I thought you were going there as on a mission? And I'm thinking to myself, I don't have to go. And then he stopped. And he put his chin in his hand, and he looked to the heaven, and I knew right then in there that okay, God is dealing with him. And so I wound up accepting it, accepting the the position,

Stuart 2:57

Not long after the lead pastor left, Roy was named interim pastor, then permanent. Remember, he was a part time pastor and doing that for about three years. When COVID hit.

Roy 3:09

I don't know, I really can't say why or what happened. But little by little, our attendance started dropping off, dropping off, dropping off, and then I found myself there on many Sundays by myself. Other times, it would be my wife and I and maybe someone else who would pop in and every now and then, and here's the great thing about it every now and then, we would get somebody walking by who would just come in.

Stuart 3:39

At first he resisted going online. But as he called out to God, seeing the church attendance dwindle to almost nothing. his eyes were opened,

Roy 3:51

I basically cried out to God, I said, Okay, God, you got me here. What do you want me to do? What am I supposed to do? And I didn't get an answer for a long time. It was just week after week after week after week, and we're about halfway into this thing. Now. We're six months, seven months in, and a really close friend of mine. Another pastor said to me, Hey, you need to do this Facebook. And I was like, No, you know, facebook, facebook, for me was not. It was not a place that I necessarily wanted to be. Because because it had changed so much. It really become a place of a lot of negativity, and I just just didn't want to do it.

And so I went probably another three weeks or so. And he and I were visiting again. And he looked me in the eye and he says, "Man, you need to do this Facebook." And there was a certain urgency in his voice that I recognized that it just wasn't him as a friend telling me that That he was in that role in that prophetic role, saying, Listen, God is telling you, you need to do this, you got to do this. And so I made up my mind to do it.

And I, you know, I went to Facebook, I figured out what I needed to do and, and I an announcement on my Facebook page that I was going to start our Sunday services on Facebook. And I was amazed at the response. That first service that I did on Facebook, I looked up and I had probably 50 people who had viewed it. During the service, I had maybe 25 people who were actively engaging and actively, you know, given feedback. And the amazing part about it was I kind of expected to reach people in the local area, who knew me, co workers and you know, my friends and stuff. But I looked up and I had people that I had served with years ago, in the in the, in the Coast Guard that were tuning in, I looked up I had people that I had graduated from high school with I had college classmates that were, you know, that were logging on and continue to do so today. Um, and, of course, you know, COVID is winding

down now. And of course offerings drop. God made provisions for us to always have what we needed to continue,

Stuart 6:44

The impact was immediate,

Roy 6:47

Why not do it on Wednesday, on the Wednesday night Bible study. And I got to tell you the truth, I am more of a proponent of Sunday school and Wednesday night Bible study than I am Sunday morning service. For me, if people needed to make a choice of whether they were going to come to church, or whether they want to come to Sunday school, or whether they're going to come the Wednesday night Bible study, I would rather they come to Sunday school or Bible study. Because that's when you get an opportunity to engage with me to ask questions, to you know, to bring your comments to bring your point of view to gain an understanding that you need to gain about God's word.

Stuart:

Right then realized he needed to use the technology to bring his Wednesday night Bible study online. And the audience broadened, it got younger,

Roy 7:39

The Wednesday night Bible study is once again, you know, I've reached an audience that I that I ordinarily wouldn't have reached. You know, there's, there's nothing like the Holy Spirit moving in amongst believers gathered together. But let's be honest, you know, times are changing, and people, people are a little reluctant now to come out of their homes and, and come into a setting and you know, and just be there, you know, for an hour, two hours or however long it is. And so I've seen that there is indeed a hunger for God's word out here in this world. And if this is the way to reach them, if this is the new way for discipleship, then by all means,

Stuart 8:22

Will you be using different forms of technology to expand the church's reach?

Roy 8:28

There are so many other platforms out there other than Facebook, other than Zoom, you know, initially, I'm going to tell you initially I started using one of the other formats. There's a form another format that Google has, I think it's Go To Meeting that they have. But the problem with that was, it's just like the Zoom, you have to send out invitations to individuals, okay. And while it worked for, you know, for the initial Bible study that we were doing it, it just kept the Bible study in inside the core group, the Facebook, the Instagrams, but the there are so many of them out there. They are, they are the, the platform of choice for the younger generation.

And so I recognize that, that in order to reach them, because that's the future of the church. The church is not old fogies like me that you know, the future of the church are those millennials and those generation Xers and Ys and all the other ones that they're saying, they're the ones who, who are really looking for some truth, they're looking for some relevance in their life. And I think that this COVID has caused them to view life from a different lens now because they've now they found themselves really isolated in the little bit of, you know, interpersonal transactions that they were doing were cut off. I think initially You have to grab their attention

on the technology. And once you get their attention, and you, and you bring something to them, that they that they see that that's useful for them, that I think they'll start to calm.

Stuart 10:11

So you see, using technology more to touch younger people,

Roy 10:16

I actually have, especially in my family. And that's what I really found amazing. You know, on when I and when I say younger on talking 12 to, to the, you know, early 20s or late 20s. That have have, I can, I can think of a couple people who have never set foot in a church, but they have tuned in. And they're tuning in on a regular basis. It's that personal relationship that I've had with them, that they've seen Christ at work in my life, they seen, some of them have seen the changes that that God has brought me through. And they recognize that what I'm telling them is actually genuine. And they're, and they're excited about, it seems they're excited about engaging, they see that, you know, things can change on a dime, and they needed something more concrete to hold on to than just the world telling them, you need things.

Stuart 11:21

So you've really seen it make a difference?

Roy:

And absolutely, absolutely.

Stuart:

You may not have touched them a year ago, before COVID.

Roy 11:30

You know, and I'm gonna tell you a story. I think that God set me up for this, right in the beginning of the ministry, because there were a lot of things that God had charged me to do in this church that we just did not have the membership to do. You know, it was funny, because we kind of got the attention of the Baptist Association in the local area, because they're looking at, well, how are you guys doing women's ministry? And how are you guys doing a food bank? And how are you guys doing this, and how you doing that. And I told them, I said, What's happened is, there are people in the neighborhood, who have decided that they don't necessarily want to join Berean. But they're willing to come alongside Berean to better their own neighborhood.

I don't have to have credit, I don't need credit. You know, it doesn't have to be a Berean Baptist Church thing, it doesn't have to be all of that. It just has to be a God thing. It just has to be a Jesus thing. And, and, and it doesn't matter. And when I sit back, and I watch God bring all of these people together, and of course, you know, the tradition of the church was, you know, we're not supposed to do these things with with, you know, outside outsiders, it's got to be people in the like, like, they're gonna cause a problem.

One of the things that God is showing me through all of this, is that. And I think it's common, I think that I think that we're going to find that the notion of denominations, is going to wither away. You know, right now, when we look at what's going on in the church, and I think that the statistics bear it out that, that there is a substantial decline in church membership, and church participation in the United States. And it's this division that we have amongst ourselves among the Christian community, that's such a big turnoff to the world. And until we start getting our

act together until they start seeing us do what Christ says that is common unity, without the divisions of, of denominations without the divisions of, of race, and, and class and all the things that we allow to divide us will never reach them the way God intends us to reach down, that God is using his right now.

You know, this COVID you know, the world calls it a pandemic, I call it a plague. I liken it to the plagues that God brought back in that in the biblical days. And the plagues weren't necessarily for the unbelievers. But the plague was for the believers to bring them back in line. And I believe I'm a firm believer that that this COVID was, was sent to us to the body of Christ, to try to get our attention. And I pray with all that I have in me that we hear we Harken and we listen, and we, you know, we put down those idols of the nominee of the nominations and race and classism and economic status and all the things that we that we have picked up along the way and get back to pure worship. That's my hope.

Stuart:

Thank you right for ending our conversation on the note of hope.

Roy:

Amen. My pleasure. It may God bless you and keep me keep you my friend.

Stuart 15:01

And thank you for listening. And hey, I'd love it. If you'd sign up as a member, go to Face Book Group, The Post COVID Church, or the website, www.thepostcovidchurch.com. If you sign up, I'll send you a free ebook, Multi Site Reimagined, a terrific guide for the reopening church. Thanks to co author Greg Ligon, for making this available. If you have questions or comments, I'd love to hear from you: Stuart at the post COVID church.org. And oh, that's s t u a r t at the post COVID church.org thanks to listener and friend Kurt Fonger, who sent me a note noting the different spellings of Stuart so great point. Thank you for that. He also had other great ideas. I've had a lot of them from a lot of folks, so please continue to send them in fact, I'll do a show, just talking about the ideas I've gotten to give proper credit. Bob Grip another friend, thank you for comments and ideas on how to make the podcast better.

So do let me know Stuart@thepostcovidchurch.org. Also an easy way to go back and find the information from the most recent podcasts transcripts. They're now available on the website. thepostcovidchurch.com, just find the show you want. It's part of the post. Also on the site, all the archive material from the last year stories, surveys, commentaries things that I know will help your church. Our mission: helping the church share more of the good news in the face of persecution, hostility and disinterest." I'm Stuart Kellogg. Thank you so much for listening.

Announced 16:51

Thank you for listening to the post COVID church podcast. You can find much more at the post COVID church group on Facebook or on the website, the post COVID church.com

Transcribed by <https://otter.ai>