

# Ministry in Economic Volatility



## First Steps in Preparing for a Recession

Where could you begin preparing for a recession? What conversations do you need to have? What are big questions to be asking?

Preparing for a recession involves uncertainty. While economists have strong consensus about the likelihood of a recession, there is no certainty about when it will begin or how intense it will be. Today we want to offer some places to begin, invitations you can offer, and initial steps that will equip you and your leadership as you begin this journey. We do so believing that even challenging seasons offer opportunities for transformation.

In the days ahead, we will offer other resources for your use and as we learn more, we will share more. By asking the right questions internally and externally, we can be prepared for a faithful response that will allow our congregations to offer a unique and compelling witness to Christ, thereby joining God's transformation of the world. So here are some first steps to consider:

### Invite Essential Conversations and Collaborations

- Invite your church leadership to hold intentional conversations and engage members of your congregation who have important expertise or relationships that could help you navigate a recession. Use a biblical framework like the one we have provided to frame the conversations faithfully and theologically and consider steps like those below.
- Invite community leaders to deepen your understanding of how your community might be impacted by a recession. If you don't already have relationships with community entities like the chamber of commerce, the economic development commission or other similar entities, seek introductory conversations. Work with your congregation's leadership to identify the most valuable resources in your community to help you discern the most likely challenges and opportunities that might exist.
- Invite leaders of partner ministries or nonprofit organizations in your community to conversations as well. Are they already preparing for the possibility of a recession? What existing challenges do they have that might become more intense? What new challenges may emerge? As you have these conversations together, anticipate that the demand for basic needs will increase and proactively seek out partnerships with your local community-based nonprofits who provide basic needs services such as food, shelter, school supplies and emergency funds. These partnerships can strengthen your church's response to increased demands for basic needs services during a recession.

- Invite your financial leadership to begin to analyze your operating budget for line items that could be adjusted with minimal impact to missions and ministry should there be a need to do so. This allows you to be proactive and thus be prepared should the time come to lower your budget. Being proactive in this manner also helps in leading your church financially with a non-anxious presence as it gives a clear sense that there is a ready, executable plan for how your church will navigate the days ahead.

## Recognize How You are Equipped for Ministry in this Season

- Work with your congregation's leaders to identify where you are already powerfully equipped to face a recession season. What influential gifts and valuable assets does your congregation have? How could they be used in new ways to address economic needs in your community or challenges being faced by nonprofit organizations and partner ministries? For example, do you have space that could be made available for use by those organizations at a much lower rate than they are currently paying? Do you have other resources you could leverage to help essential community ministries navigate a recession? Consider all the "capitals" your congregation has (social, cultural, financial, political, human, built and natural) and imagine how they might be more completely unleashed. Ever since the Day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit has always given the church more than enough gifts to do what is most essential. What gifts do you have that could be offered in abundance?
- Consider how you will meet the pastoral care and mental health needs of your congregation. How might a recession impact different age groups in your congregation? Will it make it more difficult for young professionals to find work? How will it impact those preparing for retirement? Are there ways now to invest in more pastoral care and mental health training to strengthen the community of your congregation before challenging times come?
- Also, from a pastoral care perspective, begin making a list of church members who are business owners or who hold management positions. Stay in touch with them by phone, text or visits so they will know of your prayers for them and support of them.
- Consider having your congregation work through the *CBF Congregational Financial Health Assessment*. This resource provides analysis of your church finances in four keys areas—operating budget, capital needs, legacy gifts/endowments and stewardship. This analysis will focus on strengths, challenges and opportunities as well as practical next steps for your church, and it will equip you with a high level of clarity about your financial condition in the present. To learn more, visit [www.cbf.net/download/35329/](http://www.cbf.net/download/35329/)

## Seeking Transformation of our Congregations and Communities

We believe that the Holy Spirit is inviting us and equipping us not merely to find a path toward survival during a recession. We know that the Holy Spirit is instead pushing us toward transformation of our congregations and communities. If we accept the Spirit's invitation and recognize the ways we are being equipped, our congregations can be more prepared to be instruments of healing, care and transformation in the days ahead. Should a recession come, the need for the unique ministries our congregations are called to provide will be more than ever. So bring a posture of hope, seek opportunities for transformation and recognize the ways God will work in you, around you and through you.



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