

Thom Rainer Five Responses to the Second Covid Spike

1. **Taking extra caution.** The number one response is a commonsensical response. The church leaders see the COVID numbers on the rise, so they adjust with additional cautions. Several churches strongly encouraged the members to resume wearing masks. A number of churches decided to move their small groups to digital only, even though they began meeting in person just a few weeks earlier.
2. **Making no changes.** For the most part, the churches in this second most frequent category felt like their current level of cautions were sufficient. Even with greater numbers of COVID cases, they saw no need to make changes. A few leaders in this category told us that the number of cases in their areas had not increased.
3. **Offering more options.** The third most frequent response was making changes by offering more options. The most common option was additional worship services. “We had moved back to our pre-COVID number of services of two,” a Pennsylvania pastor told us. “But we are seeing an increase in COVID cases, so we are going back to three services to allow for even more social distancing.”
4. **Deciding to close again.** This response was a distant fourth. Some leaders thought the numbers of cases warranted their closing again. Many of them actually dreaded the second closing more than the first. They thought a number of church members would give up on attending. The leaders nevertheless decided to close again as an abundance of caution.
5. **Keeping the status quo of not opening.** A few of the church leaders told us they had not opened at all since the pandemic began. This second spike in COVID cases meant that most of them would not open until some time in 2021. One pastor shared that his church will not open before April 2021. To be clear, very few churches are in this category.

These are the top five responses we received to our inquiry about responses to the second COVID spike. Let us hear from you. How is your church responding?