

Three Launches

In the fall of 2019, church planter Josh Weatherspoon was fully engaged with his core team—gathering around tables, looking at charts, meeting with his SBCV church planting strategist, and dreaming about what God wanted to do in Short Pump, VA. Any successful church planter understands the importance of a plan and a timeline to keep the team on track. For over a year, Weatherspoon and his team planned for **The Way Church** to open its doors to the public.

In the meantime, 8,000 miles away, there was talk of a virus that was spreading. By early January, the first case of COVID-19 hit the United States. Weatherspoon continued planning for a March 1, 2020 launch date at Godwin High School in Henrico. The launch went well, attendance was great, and a new church was now meeting for public worship services.

After three worship services together, Governor Ralph Northam closed Virginia schools. Church plants that were meeting in schools now had nowhere to meet. Immediately, pastors and church leaders all over the world began networking to figure out what to do next.

The Way Church began an online presence almost immediately, broadcasting through Facebook Live and other social media outlets. Weekly community groups went virtual.

As the governor's office began to communicate guidelines to keep people healthy, Weatherspoon began planning a drive-in service that would allow people to come to church by staying in their cars. The message would be transmitted over an FM transmitter and also through speakers on an ordinary sound system. The response was phenomenal, and The Way Church began to see steady growth at its drive-in service.

"Essentially," said Pastor Weatherspoon, "we had three launches in one month: our public launch, our online launch, and our drive-in launch."

Looking back, Weatherspoon acknowledged how COVID-19 opened doors to do ministry that may not have been opened otherwise.

"In the middle of this pandemic, God opened a door for us to provide meals and food for some of our frontline workers. It's been a good season, in the midst of a difficult one. We have reverted back to phone calls, texts, and simple ministry." It works!

Many church leaders are identifying with Paul in 1 Corinthians 16:9, when he said, "...a wide door for effective work has opened to me...."

While many public meeting spaces have had to close, God has opened doors of opportunity around the world. ■

A family attends church from their car

