

Rent Relief Requests

If you are leasing a space the time has come or passed for your first lease payment to be due in the midst of COVID-19. You may have been ok on April 1 since you had 2 or 3 weeks together in March. But now many have been furloughed or their business has seen a drop in income and lease and mortgage payments on May 1 may be a whole other story. So how should you approach your landlord?

Many landlords are working with their tenants. I have heard many landlords that are willing to work with tenants but not every landlord is in the same position. It is also common that many landlords look at church tenants differently than their commercial tenants. I'm not saying that is right, but it is often the case. If you need to seek relief on a lease payment or a mortgage payment prior to May 1 here are a few steps to take.

1. **Approach your Landlord with a specific request** – Ask and you shall receive is what I believe the Bible says in Matthew 7:7. The Bible also says “You ask and do not receive because you ask wrongly, to spend it on your passions”. Ask for help as needed. Be prepared to show an accounting that shows why you need the relief. Let the landlord know specifically what percentage you are down for this month and any other steps you have taken to address the issue.
2. **Communicate what your church is doing to meet the needs of those in need.** Ministry does not stop in fact in many cases the church is stepping up to serve the community.
3. **Be Gracious and Patient.** Some landlords are in a good spot to handle a month of reduced income. For others they are over leveraged, and this may be bringing financial pressures that any tenants request difficult for them. This landlord may be one of your mission fields. Be gracious and patient and be Christlike. This may be the only witness the landlord will encounter in this crisis.
4. **Offer a solution.** Ask the landlord to pass on 2 months of rent now and offer to extend your lease an additional 2-4 months. This way the landlord gets the lease income back at the end of the lease and you get relief today when you need it.
5. **Have a Plan.** The landlord may question if you are going to be able to pay in the future. Communicate to the landlord that when we can gather again you have a plan to engage your members and the new members that will visit and possibly join. Let them know that you understand that the new normal will bring opportunity and that you have a plan in place.

On the last point, please recognize this. Today more people are watching your services online than normally come through your doors. When this is over and we gather again, every church will need a specific plan to engage the people that will walk through the doors after this crisis. That plan or strategy cannot look like it did in the past. These people fund you in a time of crisis and they found you as you intentionally connected with them online. When we gather again, we must have a plan to intentionally connect with people in new ways. It may take several months before online worshippers become in the building worshippers. Start planning now and stick to the plan.