

[Home](#) / [Cover Stories](#) /

June 27, 2020 12:00 AM

Post-Pandemic Touchless Design

by Keith Loria, Church.Design



The coronavirus pandemic will forever change the way people work, gather, and meet, including those in the worship community. And architects and designers need to start considering how this “new normal” will affect interior design in both new spaces and renovations moving forward.

**“Churches,
similarly to any
space made to**

“COVID-19 has dramatically changed the thinking process, particularly in dense urban environments such as New York City,” says Isaac-Daniel Astrachan, principal at New York City-based Stephen B Jacobs Group.

congregate, will want to implement as many touchless features as possible.” —

**Daniel Astrachan,
Principal, Stephen B
Jacobs Group, New
York, NY**

“Designing in NYC has always been about maximizing every square inch. COVID-19 and required physical distancing goes against what used to be ‘normal.’ But the question is whether physical distancing is the new norm, or whether it will only last until we have a vaccine.”

As churches begin reopening around the country, many are advertising a “touchless experience.”

To reinforce this new touch-free experience, architects and designers are focusing on design and

specification of products with touchless applications.

Many worship facilities have already implemented touchless hand sanitizer stations in their gathering areas, which allows people to simply wave their hands underneath and get the sanitizer they need. This innovative technology is just the beginning, however.

As people return to churches or really any physical building, designers need to consider how to introduce interfaces that are not only touchless, but also frictionless, to ease occupants' concerns about the coronavirus.

“I believe that as much as can go touchless, will become touchless,” Astrachan says. “Plumbing fixtures, electrical switches, elevators —just about anything that is inside a building will someday have a way to go touchless.”

For example, people will soon be able to call an elevator from their smartphone through an app. Although that’s more the future for big commercial buildings, some churches may see the need to install a measure like this if they have several floors on their campus.

Motion sensor Round 2

Motion sensor lighting is one of those touchless options that has been around for years, but it's expected to take on a renewed importance, post-pandemic, to limit the number of people touching light switches.

"This technology has been around but the decision making on cost would send people in a different direction," Astrachan says.

"Before the pandemic, there wasn't the incentive to use that technology as much. But that's something we should expect more of."

Other touchless options that all architects and building designers are going to need to keep an eye on for their projects include hands free card-swipe access to buildings, voice-based AI building interfaces and motion sensing information boards.

"For any projects that are starting or looking to be complete in the near future, I would think clients are going to want to implement these things more than ever," Astrachan says. "As we get back to whatever the new 'normal' will be, I think for now, people are going to ask for these things."

Also, let's not forget virtual assistants and the things that Siri, Google and Alexa, are able to do, allowing for touchless experiences with texting, looking things up on the internet, playing music and announcement and more. A church that incorporates one of these inside its facility can use them to control light fixtures, doorbells and more components of their physical environment.

As a church grows and invests more into other technology, the virtual assistant will also add to its capabilities to accomplish advanced functions such as checking multiple people's calendars for available times, complex ordering, and someday even calling for autonomous cars to pick someone up.

In 2020, there's a lot that smartphones can accomplish, but apps aren't the only ways to improve things. Often, you need to complement those actions with interactions still rooted in the built environment—especially regarding sanitization. That's why

things such as automatic soap dispensers and touchless trashcans have been popping up in bathroom facilities for years. And now they should become a normal thing in any future design.

Some buildings are starting to put in automatic doors to bathrooms and other rooms as well, so no one has to touch a door knob and spread germs.

Installing touchless options like this will make people feel safer and be a good step in keeping coronavirus worries at bay.

“Churches, similarly to any space made to congregate, will want to implement as many touchless features as possible,” Astrachan says. “But perhaps more importantly, occupancies need to be drastically reduced to try to ensure proper physical distancing. Also, signage and communication is important, to remind people to keep their distance, wear masks, and wash their hands frequently.”

[architecture](#)[thought leaders report](#)[church design](#)[education](#)[COVID-19](#)[July 2020](#)[furniture, fixtures & equipment \(FF&E\)](#)

Keith Loria

Keith Loria is a full-time freelance writer focusing on business and design issues. He can be reached at freelancekeith@gmail.com.

Read more by Keith Loria

Church.Design

Read more by Church.Design

June 27, 2020 12:00 AM

[RSS](#)[Print](#)

Related



Image: Central Christian Church, Weatherford, Texas, courtesy of Visioneering Studios

Church at 6 Feet Apart

Jun 30, 2020



Critical Safety Moves for Church Film Teams

Jun 26, 2020



Renewable Energy and the Future

Jun 27, 2020



Image courtesy of Hope Community Church, Raleigh, NC

How Churches Are Emerging From the Pandemic

Jun 28, 2020



Image: Norbert Kun drak from Pexels

Life on Earth, But Not as We Know It

Mar 25, 2020



Image by Saketh Garuda for Unsplash

What Will Church Design Look Like in a Post-Pandemic World?

Jun 1, 2020



Church Design Post COVID-19, a Discussion

May 18, 2020



pexels.com

The Building + Human Health Connection

Aug 3, 2020

Comments

Type subject here...

[About us](#)

[Who we are](#)

[Contact us](#)

[Advertise](#)

[Submit your project](#)

[Popular on our page](#)

[Projects](#)

[Design](#)

[Education](#)

[Perspectives](#)

[Privacy Policy](#)



[Follow us](#)

[Newsletters](#)

[Visit our
archive](#)

Built with Metro Publisher™