



Youth Ministry

A RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Introduction

Over the next few weeks and months, the Church will adjust to supporting young people in their discipleship in a new way. There is a lot of uncertainty and so this resource provides a platform for you to be confident in how you can continue to serve young people and care for them in a time which will be difficult. We have always been creative as youth leaders and so it is exciting to see how this will be demonstrated as we continue to support young people across Ireland.

Rachel Gardner helpfully shared her approach on the Youthscape Podcast, available here: <https://www.youthscape.co.uk/podcast>

Contact – first set up how you will be able to contact young people over the next days, weeks and months. If you need to gain permission for new methods of contact, do this! Try to establish good ways of keeping in touch which are age appropriate and in line with Safeguarding Trust.

Content – once you have methods of communication open, decide what you would like to communicate with your young people. What content do they need? What would you like for them to be reminded of?

Community – the Church has a role to play. Consider your role as part of your church in serving the community and how to do this wisely without making it unsafe for others.

We will continue to update this document and share on social media with additional resources.

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contact / content / community

Online

Meeting online is a great way to continue to provide a relational space for your group. This might be for your whole youth group or as small groups.

tools to connect online



A few apps to consider:

Zoom: this is an app or a website which provides video conferencing. This is one of the best apps used frequently by youth workers and professionals across the world. There is a free version which is best used from a computer – at the moment so many people are using it, so there may be some restrictions. On the free version, you can only chat for 40 minutes, but you can restart the chat straight away. Alternatively, you as a church/youth leader can pay a monthly fee to be a 'host' then all the participants i.e. your youth group can still join in chats for free. If you think you might use this once a week over the next while, it is probably worth paying in. Each individual can sign up to Zoom and download it to their device using the free option. As a leader, you schedule meetings and then can invite participants via a link which can be shared by text / email etc.

Google Hangouts is another way to have video groups. You can use email addresses or share a link to invite young people to join. You can message and chat while someone is speaking, so you could use this to ask questions while a leader is speaking.



Google Hangouts

Online

Marco Polo is another fun app which can be used to share video messages. With this it doesn't require everyone to be online at the same time. You can record your video message and share it with the group, then anyone else can come along and add a video message to the group too. The app saves all the messages so you can go back and listen to conversations.



Slack is designed for business but could be used really well for a youth group context. This would be particularly helpful if you are working on a project together or want to allow the young people to share ideas and files together



FaceTime is another way to have a group video chat, however this relies upon all your members having access to an Apple Device. It allows you to chat with 32 people at once.



Social Media

Social Media is a really easy and positive way for youth leaders to keep in touch online. Facebook is used less by young people but can still be a positive way to share content, especially if you let young people know what you will be doing. The Facebook Live feature allows you as youth leaders to share videos with your young people. In doing this, you can change how people can message/comment on the video as you share it and create a poll for people to engage with too.

IGTV & Stories are key!

Instagram is one of the apps most used by young people and a great way to keep in touch. You can share content through posts, stories and IGTV. Posts are best for information, sharing resources and reminding them about things you've done in your group previously. Stories are good for on the go, short videos. You can encourage interaction through stories very easily with polls or music. This is ideal for silly ideas or games. IGTV works well for longer videos, anything between 1 – 15 minutes long. This is ideal for any teaching content or devotional encouragement.

Why bother with Livestreaming or sharing videos? 82% of people would prefer live video from a brand than a social post. 80% of people would rather watch live video from a brand than read a blog. (Stats from: <https://livestream.com/blog/live-video-statistics-livestream>)

If you are new to recording video, Vineyard Churches have produced a resource on this: <https://www.vineyardchurches.org.uk/resources/getting-started-with-filming/>



What do we do online?

1. Encourage your leaders to share videos of themselves online! Your leaders could share a devotional idea or pray for your group through a video. You could ask your leaders to share how God has worked in their lives over the last year or explain a passage of the Bible they have been reading recently. Be sure to communicate well to your leaders about where the videos will be used! It might also be appropriate to include other members of your parish in this who don't normally help out with your youth group – ask them for an encouraging message to share with the young people.

Your young people will connect with videos from your leaders

2. Meet as a group using a video conferencing platform. Routine and rhythms will be important over the next few weeks. You might want to meet at the same time you normally do, a Sunday morning or weeknight. Discuss what is happening, pray together, share some thoughts from your Bible reading and even play games together.

3. Make a YouTube or Spotify playlist and ask for recommendations. You could do a worship playlist with all your favourite Christian music and ask the young people to share why they like it. This could then be shared on your social media for others to listen to. You could also create a list of funny (and appropriate!) videos on YouTube which are your youth group's favourite!

Playlists!

What do we do online?

4. Encourage your young people to share content with friends. If you are doing online content, especially videos, it is super easy for young people to share this with their friends! This could be a really great way to allow your youth group to grow without even meeting.

We pray your content will bless young people beyond your regular group!

5. Choose a livestream to join together! You might not have the capabilities to put something on, but you can definitely join in on someone else's. Then ask for feedback from your young people about what they liked.

6. Questions are always present for young people but especially in such a time as this. Why not allow your young people to submit questions on a live Instagram video? Or take in questions on your social media and do a video to respond to them?



What do we do online?

7. Online Show and Tell / Treasure Hunt: Why not gather your young people on a video chat and do a home scavenger hunt. You could come up with a list of 10 things and call out one at a time, the first young person to bring it back and shown on the camera gets a point!
You could even give a £5/€5 book voucher to the winner. Alternatively, you could ask them to meet online together and share one thing from their home which is important to them and tell everyone about it for 1 minute.

8. Youth Alpha Online: You might have been in the middle of running Youth Alpha or have been thinking it might be good for your young people, so why not consider running it online. There are lots of tips here: <https://alpha.org.uk/alpha-online>

Safeguarding

Please continue to ensure any contact with young people is in line with the Safeguarding Trust Policy held by the Church of Ireland. This covers social media and texting.

In regard to online measures which may be more common as a result, for all video calls / conferencing under 18's will need parental consent to participate. This would need to be written permission, an email or text from a parent/guardian. At least two adult leaders, who have undergone police checks should be part of any online group.

All line managers / clergy / safeguarding panels should be made aware of new methods of contacting young people and kept up to date with any issues.

Youth Group Ideas

There is something special about the groups we meet in so why not consider some ideas to do with your youth group!

Handwritten letters to young people – this can be a great tool generally and makes young people feel special. You could encourage them by writing about who they are and what you see in their character. You could share a devotional with them or remind them of a funny story from youth group. Why not share out the names from your group across your leadership team?

Alternatively, you could set up pen pals between older members and younger members of your parish! This could be a great opportunity for you to ask your young people to encourage your older members who are more likely to be self-isolating.

Personal letters continue connection

Challenges: Why not set daily challenges where young people can get streaks if they prove they have accomplished a challenge a day for a week, for a month. Alternatively, you could do a daily leader challenge, where your young people challenge you as leaders, but the leaders only broadcast it in the morning as a way to encourage young people to get up. By engaging with young people in this way you can also partner with parents to help with routines!

Synchronized film nights: Watch a film together – at the same time and have a group chat. Check out if all your young people have access to the same streaming service and choose one from there. You could use Netflix Party to facilitate this.

Youth Group Ideas

Start a blog with different young people updating it each day. Ask them to write about something they are passionate about and write 200-300 words. You could ask them to watch a Bible Project video and write a summary of it. An easy to use website for creating a blog is www.WordPress.com

Group challenges at home could be great way for young people to stay active and have something to share together. You could choose one a week to do with your group! These have been developed by Katherine-Alice Grasham (Children, Young People and Families Team Member at the Diocese of Leeds):
<https://www.youthworkresource.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Group-Challenges-for-Youth-Groups-in-Self-Isolation.pdf>

Research and evaluate your youth ministry – make a survey for your young people to fill out! Make this an opportunity to gather the opinions of your young people about what they like about your group and what they'd like to see happen when you start meeting together again. Survey Monkey is really good for this and we've designed an example here:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/G3HCFNB>

Prayer

24-7 Prayer have 3 resources available here:

<https://www.24-7prayer.com/coronavirusprayer>

The Virtual Prayer Room – why not consider booking your church or youth group in to cover an hour? You need to create a log in for this and sign up if you want to book your group in.

The 60 minute Prayer Guide – for some young people you might want to break this down into stages, doing it over a week. There is a real mix of things to pray for guidance in what to pray which will be comforting to many young people.

A Prayer for Coronavirus – 24-7 have written a short prayer. Why not share this around your groups and use it on your social media?

Prayer is a real and tangible way for young people to deal with the difficulty they experience & to understand the difference their faith makes in their lives

Personal

You can encourage young people to establish things in their own lives which will make a difference in their discipleship over this time.

Reading! If they have some time on their own it might be a good opportunity for them to read a Christian book. You could offer to buy a few copies and rotate them or buy e-book copies. You could also recommend audio books for young people who struggle to read. A couple of book recommendations are:

The Man You're Made to Be by Martin Saunders

The Girl Deconstruction Project by Rachel Gardner

This Changes Everything by Jacqueline Crowe

Could you agree to read a book of the Bible together too?

Journaling – why not encourage your young people to start journaling, write down a few thoughts each day. This is a great way to express their feelings and process what they are thinking.

Encouraging healthy coping mechanisms – it might be helpful to recommend some healthy coping mechanisms especially if young people are feeling anxious about things which are happening in the world. Discuss and share healthy coping mechanisms which can be used regularly to stay healthy.

Personal

Illustrated Ministry – create resources for colouring and creative young people. They are giving away resources due to the current context and available here: <https://www.illustratedministry.com/>

Experiencing God – often our young people can surprise us in how capable they are in their own faith development.

So why not take this opportunity to encourage and challenge them to experience God for themselves. It might be young people praying when they feel overwhelmed about everything that is happening. It might be through spending time in silence or solitude which they don't normally have time for. Ask your young people about this!

Have you been experiencing God over the last week?

Community

As is described in 1 Corinthians 12, the gifts are given for the 'common good' and at such a time, we can encourage our young people to shine and model this in their community.

Supporting neighbours – why not come up with a few ideas for how the young people in your youth group can care for their neighbours? It might be through painting signs to put in your windows or offering to walk their dog.

NHS and those continuing to serve our communities – as a youth group, take time to pray for those who are serving and helping to care for those hurting in our community. You might want to do something practical like writing an encouraging email or getting food delivered to them. Why not ask and see what might be helpful and get your young people to put this together?

For each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good... For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ.

1 Corinthians 12v7, 12

Families

For some of our young people, it won't be appropriate for us to primarily resource discipleship through their parents / carers, and therefore will be helpful to use the guidance above for personal support. However, for others, it will be beneficial to recommend resources to their parents/carers to continue discipling them within the family.

Daily Prayer – why not encourage your families with young people to follow the pattern of Daily Prayer? You could share out roles and integrate creative prayer or worship into your time. The resources for this can be found here: <https://www.ireland.anglican.org/prayer-worship/lectionary/daily-prayer>

Worship for Everyone on social media at @W4E1 are doing online family worship times.

Family Time is a resource developed by Down and Dromore with family devotionals and prayers.

Family Discipleship Guide: This is a resource would be great for families who haven't established rhythms in their family before now and guides them through starting this. It is available here and if you want to use it in your church you can complete the license to gain permission for this: <https://www.tvcreources.net/resource-library/guides/family-discipleship-guide>

Topics

There will be lots of topical issues for you and your group and we have included a few suggestions below. If you would like specific devotional or youth resources on these topics, please contact your Diocesan Youth Officer or CIYD.

Death: in the midst of a Pandemic, life feels more vulnerable than ever. Our young people will be thinking about their own mortality and of those they love. It is appropriate therefore for us to be a safe presence in the midst of thinking about this. We can discuss what it means to think about death as a follower of Jesus.

Uncertainty: many things are uncertain in our response to these issues and a lot of our plans will need to be changed. This uncertainty can greatly affect young people and allowing them to identify and notice this in their lives is important. We can celebrate together the God who is sovereign and discussing how practically we live in light of this.

Open and Vulnerable: across the world, leaders are sharing about the impact this will have and it is appropriate for us in the church to do the same. Young people respond when they feel others are being open and vulnerable. We want to do this appropriately, not placing any burden on our young people, but sharing the reality together.

Good news to share: perhaps most importantly, we show the value of our faith in these times. It matters that we are Christians. We have a God who brings good news in the midst of difficulty, confusion and pain. Our young people will see what it means to live as a Christian in the next weeks and months. We want to encourage our young people to share the hope that they have with friends.



If you have any suggestions for other resources to be added here, please contact Christina Baillie on christinabaillie@connordiocese.org