

Kia ora youth ministry whanau

From 28 April 2020, we as a nation will be at alert level 3.

At alert level 3, nothing much will change for us as youth leaders. Our churches will not gather, we can't gather as youth groups or as small groups, we are not allowed face-to-face interactions. Primarily, we are still asked to stay home.

Isolation can be a very challenging experience for any of us and this is especially true for young people. We recommend you work out ways to stay connected with young people every day of the week now that we are in a lock down situation. Don't underestimate the power of a quick phone call with a young person to touch base, hear about how things are, and offer prayer and encouragement.

Tips for running your youth ministry online

We recommend running youth ministry online

- Zoom, Skype, Google Meet or Messenger

Hospitality is always important when we gather. In an online environment we need to think carefully about this, communicating by social media beforehand with participants; ensuring youth leaders are greeting young people as they join; engaging in conversation; telling jokes; or having an icebreaker conversation. These are all important tools to avoid awkward silent times.

Preparation. The chair of the meeting needs to be well prepared. It is advisable to test your audio beforehand and to start on time. Because participants can't have side conversations, the gathering needs to be engaging the whole time. Such meetings can be more intense and more tiring. We recommend you do meetings no longer than one hour. Hosts also need to know participants can be more open and more vulnerable in online conversations.

Quality discussion. If you are doing your meeting using online software, we recommend all participants use their webcam and are in a quiet environment. Online conversations are always better when participants have a good internet connection. Plugging in directly to a modem with an ethernet cable is best. Using mobile data or public wifi will provide the worst connectivity, and home wifi will be somewhere in the middle for most homes.

Fun Activities. Our young people need pastoral care and each other now more than curriculum and games. However, many classic games can be done via online meetings: Mafia, charades, home scavenger hunts etc.

Safety. For safety we advise that you don't interact with a young person one-on-one over online video services. Get another leader to join you. Please refer to our helpful [online communications policy to keep you and young people safe online.](#)

Helping young people to navigate through a pandemic

News of the pandemics sweep across the globe, the deaths of thousands, the lock down of thousands more, and the anticipated global recession are filling many of us with anxiety and concern about what lies ahead. Our young people are also engaging with the often-troubling news regarding the pandemic. Research tells us that our young people already experience higher levels of isolation

and anxiety than previous generations and the pandemic is likely to heighten this. Because of the high level of online social connectivity, young people can feel more connected to the troubling global events going on around us and less connected to the immediate community around them.

1. As a church community we have a great opportunity to model positive ways to cope with the challenges of this pandemic and give opportunities for our whole church community, including young people, to respond in positive ways.
2. Create a safe space for young people to express their concerns, to ask clarifying questions. Here are some helpful points <https://www.health.harvard.edu/blog/how-to-talk-to-teens-about-the-new-coronavirus-2020031419192>.
3. It may be helpful to explore the theme of “Where is God” in human suffering. Here is an article that might help you as a leader think through some of the theological concepts <https://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2020/march-web-only/coronavirus-evil-covid-19-disease-theology.html> There are many good teaching resources that wrestle with this question , One example is a 3 part video series “Is God Good?” in the free [NUA](#) resource.
4. Invite your whole church community, including young people, to be praying regularly and specifically around global and local issues arising in relation to the pandemic. Here are two links to some prayer suggestions to get you started [24-7 Prayer](#), [chvnradio](#), [World Vision](#)
 - a. Consider using some Psalms of lament to help provide a pathway for healthy grieving for young people. Psalms 10, 46, 57, 86 or 61 could be helpful places to start.
 - b. Consider practical ways your church can support people who are especially affected by the pandemic both globally and locally.
 - c. Consider starting a fundraising campaign to support communities particularly affected overseas.
 - d. Collect food and or funds to help those who have lost their jobs locally or have someone who has contracted the virus.
 - e. Reach out to those in isolation who are not part of your church community.
5. Look out for signs and symptoms in our most vulnerable young people

For some people, tragic events like this can trigger a very negative spiral of thinking which can lead to greater levels of depression, anxiety and even suicidality. The best thing we can do here is to create a space for young people to express how they are feeling and to be straight up with them if we have any concerns for their safety. Zeal has produced an excellent and simple resource to help guide you and parents through a conversation if there is any concern about a young person’s mental health following this time. <https://zeal.nz/blog/supporting-each-other-through-13-reasons-why-a-youth-workers-perspective>

For more information please see the [Ministry of Health Website and PCANZ communication to our churches](#)