

Renewal

Connect leaders guide - June 2020

The 'How to' of leading a group

Leading a group is easier than you think. As with the disciples, we might initially lack experience and certain competencies. But with a heart to become more like Jesus and a teachable hungry spirit, we are all able to grow and step into all that God has created us to be – a people of love, compassion and influence.

This process should not be seen as complicated at all. Just a willingness to gather, connect and direct:

1. Gather a group

- Invite people into a welcoming environment, be it online or physical. Again, this will be dependant firstly on government guidelines and secondly if your home or chosen location permits.
- Gather your group at the very least fortnightly (or weekly) at a consistent time.
- Provide a space and atmosphere where people will feel safe to share, discuss and grow according to their needs and the needs of the group.

2. Connect a Group

- Connect with your group on an ongoing basis and choose a method to stay in contact with them. Discuss what would work best for them. As mentioned, this could be either through Whatsapp, Messenger, text, email or phone.
- Connect the group with all of Renewal's online content and encourage them to engage and share on FB, Instagram, Youtube and the webpage www.renewalcc.com
- Connect the parents to Youth and Faithbuilders

3. Direct a Group

- Direct those with care needs to the pastoral team at care@renewalcc.com

The importance of Churchsuite

Churchsuite is the database we use at church to keep data for the purpose of management, reporting, planning and connecting with our people. The database is GDPR compliant and no information is shared or disclosed other than for the purpose of use in church in various departments. Not being able to physically meet has highlighted even more the importance of having up to date information as for some this turned out to be the only way to get hold of you to check whether you are supported.

- Churchsuite has an app that can be downloaded on all smart phones or laptops for easy access and use.
- If you require training – please let us know and this can be arranged.
- All connect leaders please check that those in your group have up to date information on Churchsuite and have their settings chosen that staff, at the very least, can email or phone them.
- Connect leaders please fill in the attendance or connection that they have made fortnightly. This enables us once again to see whether our people are ok and their needs met. If this is filled in diligently – we are able to report on who we need to contact should e.g. we are not able to meet.

The technical stuff

We have uploaded some resources for using Zoom and facilitating group meetings online with Zoom.

1. Zoom help centre:

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/categories/200101697>

2. Zoom quick start for new users:

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/360034967471-Quick-start-guide-for-new-users>

3. How to facilitate engaging online groups with zoom:

<https://renewalcc.com/hub/pastoralcare/>

Go to the connect group leader section to download the guide.

Our basic approach

1. **Be Wise.** If and when you do decide to gather in person, and only when the government permits, please make sure:
 - No one present has symptoms or has any reason to think they have been exposed to the virus.
 - Shared surfaces are disinfected before and after the gathering.
 - Everyone washes their hands upon arrival.
 - Refrain from hugs and handshakes.
 - Maintain social distancing by having gaps in the seating arrangements.
2. **Be Welcoming.** Provide a space where people feel welcomed with a sense of belonging. A space where they can feel, safe, seen and secure.
3. **Be Encouraging.** Build people up and always lead conversation in a direction that inspires hope.
4. **Be Prayerful.** Lead group members to pray together and invite God into every situation they are facing.

Be mindful of the language we use

A Person's words can be life giving water; words of true wisdom are as refreshing as a bubbling brook (Proverbs 18:4). The way we communicate shapes the choices others make and their approach to decision-making.

1. Words we must avoid saying:

"Everything will be just fine"

- We do not want to discount people's feelings or thoughts. People have had different levels of distress and different experiences of these events.
- We do, however, want to help people through their distress and remind them of the truth that God will be present in whatever difficulty they encounter.

"I think you are overreacting" especially to anxious people.

- People often react to rumours and news in rather unhelpful ways.
- Regardless of reactions, we should never accuse someone of overreacting as it is often not helpful.
- We should help to instil confidence and hope by encouraging others to put their trust in God.

2. Words that speak hope:

"We're changing our behaviour out of love and respect for our community and it is our civic duty"

- Altering the way that we are gathering for the time being is not about self protection or acting on fear. The change is needed because of those vulnerable amongst us. Those of any age with compromised immune systems and those that are over 70 years old remain at higher risk.
- We respect the wisdom of our authorities and therefore limiting large gatherings until it is safe for ALL to meet again.
- We choose to prepare for the anticipated needs of our Renewal community and our wider community in order to eliminate stress, and manage the uncertainty whilst being in a position to serve others when the time comes.

"Don't be afraid"

- We do not need to be afraid of anything
- *"So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand."* Isaiah 41:10 NIV

"Remain positive"

- If a conversation takes a negative or destructive turn, guide it gently back to a healthy place.
- If someone needs to talk about a sensitive or complex issue, you can follow up with them after the group or contact pastoral care to help you respond well at care@renewalcc.com

Suggested times for meet ups

The duration of a group is entirely up to the group leader and the needs of the group. It is however important to stick to the agreed time of start and finish to show respect and allow everyone to plan their schedules in order to commit for the future. Here are some suggestions that can be followed or adapted:

1. Online Meeting:

If using Zoom, be sure to send out the link ahead of the scheduled meeting.

If everyone does not have access to Zoom, also consider Whatsapp Group Chat which can host up to 8 participants. FaceTime has a function to host 32 callers on the video chat, provided that all users have Apple devices.

10 min – Welcome and Icebreaker as group is connecting

05 min – Opening Prayer

30 min – Chosen Content and Discussion Time

10 min – Prayers

2. Meet up in person:

Remember at all times to adhere to the guidelines set out in 'Our Basic Approach'.

15 min – Mingle/Beverages

05 min – Icebreaker

05 min – Welcome and Prayer

40 min – Chosen Content and Discussion Time

10 min – Closing Prayers

3. Occasional meet up

Should a group continue to meet online, they might want to consider getting together occasionally in person - either in a park for a picnic, a barbeque or some kind of outdoor activity. Meeting outdoors is deemed safer by the government and an ideal choice seeing that summer is still ahead of us.

Ice-breakers

Opening up with an ice-breaker is a good way to get everyone relaxed, enjoying a laugh and even getting to know each other better. It also buys a little time for those who might be a little late in joining and thus ensuring that they do not miss out on important content

Suggested Icebreaker Questions

- If you could pick up a new skill what would it be?
- What was your first ever job?
- What was the best thing that happened to you this week?
- What's your hidden talent?
- Which office machine is your favourite?
- What is the weirdest food you've ever eaten?
- What sport did you try as a child and failed at?
- If you had to wear a hat every day for the rest of your life, what type of hat would it be?
- What was your first record, tape or CD you ever owned?
- What do you cook better than anyone else?
- Would you rather be able to fly or be able to breathe underwater?
- As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up?
- You have an unlimited supply of one thing for the rest of your life, what is it?

Content suggestions for a group meeting

Unless you are group with a specific interest and purpose e.g. Business Connect, you are free to choose the content of your discussions according to the needs of the group.

If however you would like some guidelines on the material, here are some suggestions:

- If you are able to gather together, you could choose to worship and watch the online services together.
- You might wish to discuss and deliberate more on the content of any of the online services.
- You can choose a plan off the Bible App and follow that together as a group.
- You might only wish to check in, discuss the wellbeing of the group and any immediate concerns and pray together.
- At any given time, even during an online meeting, a group can consider taking communion together.

Pastoral Care

All pastoral care needs will be facilitated by our team of pastors and all needs or concerns need to be emailed to care@renewalcc.com.

Resources to help leaders

Our vision for small group leader support is to build an online library of resources that our leaders are able to access anytime for them to equip themselves for the purpose of developing as a leader and for specialist guidance.

This pandemic led us to concentrate on a few resources that would equip all group leaders with immediate challenges that they might encounter within their groups:

1. Supporting Wellbeing in Social Distancing
2. Effective Listening in times of Crisis Part 1 & 2
3. Loss and Bereavement Part 1 & 2
4. Dealing with Domestic Violence During Lockdown

All of these guides can be found on the Renewal Pastoral Care Hub:

<https://renewalcc.com/hub/pastoralcare>

Giving

Gifts, tithes and offerings can be given online at renewalcc.com/give. This is for our regular attendees. Connect leaders will be provided with a digital image and easy links to send to their group on ways to give.