

Ideas for Youth Leaders during COVID-19 (How to Serve During the COVID-19 Pandemic / CYN)

This information comes from the Canadian Youth Network forum, *How to serve during the COVID-19 pandemic*, that was held online April 2, 2020 (<https://canadianyouth.net/covid19/>).

First Reality – Job Insecurity for Youth Leaders

Youth leaders are often the first people financially-strapped churches let go. Canadian Youth Network exists to support youth leaders – please connect with them during the pandemic.

For congregations and clergy – what can you do to support them?

First Challenge – Gathering the Sheep

- Use ZOOM for online meetings and activities. For example, a Zoom Game Night.
- Games are great but eventually they will become boring if that is all youth are doing;
- Build on their strengths and interests. For example:
 - o If you have youth who are musical, have them create Christian music videos for sharing with the congregation.
 - o If you have youth who are computer savvy, have them teach others on how to create or edit videos.
- Create a “Challenge of the Day” – focus on physical and spiritual activities (school will focus on intellectual ones). For example:
 - o Physical – run around the yard 100 times.
 - o Spiritual – listen to a specific sermon
 - o Have a “Clash of Clans” game where your youth compete with another youth group.
- Have youth invite a friend to join in the activities
- Involve parents as much as possible – this may be an outreach to parents as well as to youth!

If all you do is play games, youth will become bored. They want more from the youth group than a games time!

Warning re Leading with Care

- You might be tempted to text youth one-on-one. This is a liability nightmare as well as breaking the Church’s *Leading with Care* policy.
- Ways to follow *Leading with Care*, and not text one-on-one, include:
 - o Using Zoom, which allows you to record meetings
 - o Making sure there is a parent in the room with the youth
 - o Having 2 youth leaders in on the call with the youth
 - o Saving transcripts of conversations.

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Second Challenge – Having Youth Serve Others

This is a hard challenge because how do we help others while still maintaining social (physical) distancing?

Make a List

- Make a list of people to target and what their needs are.
- Make a list of non-Christian youth (or parents) and make a point to reach out to them.
 - o Have your youth pray for the people on the “hit list” (if appropriate – see below)
 - o Ask your friend if you can pray for them during this time.
 - o Invite a non-Christian friend to be part of your youth group for Zoom Game night
- Make a list of birthdays – and create “Happy Birthday” video for the people

Reach out to the Lonely & Anxious

- People who live by themselves are particularly vulnerable to the emotional challenge COVID-19 brings.
 - o Phone them
 - o Email them
 - o Video chat with them
 - o Find out what they need – what kind of help they need
 - Pick up online grocery orders or pre-ordered prescriptions and deliver them
 - Provide yard work or outdoor property maintenance of some kind
 - Start a “Go-Fund Me” page for someone in need
 - o Send them a “laugh” a day.
 - o Introduce friends to each other through video chat

Reach out to First Responders

- Make a physical “Thank You” sign – either physical sign and hold it up near the entrance to their workplace (but a safe distance away)
- Make a virtual “Thank You” sign
- Mail or email a “thank you” note from your group saying why you are grateful for their work
- Have flowers sent to their place of work if appropriate

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- Provide gift cards to nearby food delivery places (realize that after long hours, they may not want to cook for themselves).
- Support a local business – e.g., buying food at a specific restaurant to help them get through the pandemic.

Reach out to Those Facing Lay-Offs / Homelessness (Because of their jobs)

- Organize a Fundraising project – a “Go Fund Me” activity and look for sponsorships. For example, an “all-night” something or other. Money raised would be used to buy gift cards for first responders.

Develop an Action Plan

Step 1:

- Conduct a study on Jesus and how he lived his life in service to God and to others.

Step 2:

- Brainstorm a list of people you can help and a list of ways in which you can help them
- Remind youth about the previous study (Step 1) and the importance of serving others
- Refer to the “Service Projects” list available on the CYN COVID-19 Resource Hub

Step 3:

- Create a service project plan
- Troubleshoot your plan – determine potential concerns and/or problem areas that need to be addressed prior to commencing your service project – i.e., how can you do what you want to do without endangering the health of your youth?
- Make a note for parents outlining your service project plan.; Include elements such as how you intend to keep their child safe – as well as time and travel commitments that may be required.

Step 4:

- ACT! Make sure that you have appropriate leadership and/or supervision required for the service project.

Step 5:

- Celebrate and debrief.
- Share stories and experiences together. (Note, some stories will be about the impact the activity had on others while other stories will be about the impact the activity had on the youth themselves).
- Do the debriefing as a group over video chat.