

NAVIGATING THIS TIME TOGETHER

*Northern Ireland guidelines for
youth and children's activities*

(22nd December 2020 update)

01| INTRODUCTION- ALL WE CAN

Updated information for youth and children's activities

To say this year has not been easy, is probably an understatement. Yet in the midst of the difficult, we have seen kindness, generosity, creativity and community spirit rise up. We have continued to be the church, in our homes, with our neighbours, on Zoom, constantly adapting to the ever-changing situation around us. Youth and Children's work and ministry has adapted too, we have done what we can and been creative to find solutions with what we can't. We have reimagined and laid down some of what we always did, to find new ways of walking with and serving young people and children.

With continued uncertainty please see below an update to the guidelines to help you think through how to safely continue to work with the young people and children you serve. Together it is our responsibility to make churches safe places for all who gather and in all our decision making we will take all necessary action to minimize risk to our volunteers, children and young people.

As we consider what we could do for and with young people and children over the coming weeks, let us focus on what we can do, not what we can't. The pandemic has been difficult for us all, but it has presented unique challenges for the young. As we step into 2021, consider a whole church approach to youth and children's ministry, to discern what is necessary to allow the discipleship journey and mission to and with young people and children to continue and develop.

The below guidelines will be reviewed in the first week of January.

26th – 2nd January

All planned youth and children's activities must move online.

From 2nd January

We are encouraging you to consider continuing your youth and children's activities online during this new lockdown period.

We do however want to acknowledge the extra stress and pressure young people and children will be under in January due to exams and therefore if you feel online activities are not adequate to support young people and children, there is provision for groups of 15 to meet indoors and outdoors (including leaders).

Please do so with all the appropriate health and safety mitigations in place, having completed a risk assessment and checklist.

02 | ONLINE RESOURCES

We have heard great reports of Sunday School, Youth Fellowships, GB groups, Scout groups etc moving activities online. However, we know that 'Zoom fatigue' has been growing for us all, so it is important to think through activities that build relationship and create fun as we consider how to disciple young people and children in this difficult season. Below are a few great resources we have spotted for online activities.

Youthscape: Headstrong Youth Group Programme: This free resource can be used online and is to help young people better understanding anxiety, exploring what Jesus really said about fear and learning how to manage anxiety and respond well, so we can fear less in times when it feels the world around us is in chaos ([click here](#)).

Youthscape: Operation Isolation: A Youth group session exploring how we can do life well under limitation, lockdown and isolation. Can we find potential even in pandemic times? And where is God in it all? ([click here](#)).

Walk With Me: The Walk with me mentoring app is a great tool for these times. This app contain various journeys to enable adults to walk with young people through various stages of their faith journey – there is also a new specific session called 'Confronting Covid-19.' If you wish to resume or start the 'Walk with me' mentoring programme online, use the 'pod' option where you gather two leaders with up to 3 young people online rather than one to one ([click here](#)).

Games to play on Zoom: Great list of games to play on zoom from our friends in the British Methodist Church ([click here](#)).

Creative ideas for children and families: A series of videos by friends of IMYC, Play it by ear and Family worker Emma-Jayne Speers, to help us creatively engage with children ([click here](#)).

Processing and Grieving: Have you seen/used some of the ideas in the resource written by Leanne Hill our Training and Development Officer? These are designed to help children and young people process what has/is happening in this season, as their world has been turned upside down ([click here](#)).

Kitchen Table: Useful ideas and resources for families and children's leaders ([click here](#)).

Messy Church: Resources for messy church at home ([click here](#)).

03| OTHER INFORMATION

Uniformed Organisations

Each uniformed organisation has its own protocols, so it's important you check with your headquarters organisation, most are sending out regular updates by email and on social media. Please bear in mind that you must also work within the Methodist Church in Ireland's guidelines.

Mentoring

Walk with me is a great tool for these times. (see link in resources section). If you wish to resume the 'Walk with me' mentoring programme you have two options: Online – you must avoid one to one meetings online. If you wish to do it online, you could have two leaders and two young people meet together.

In person - meet the young person in a public space (after 2nd of January), where social distancing is possible and other people are around. It is important to keep in mind the safeguarding guidance on mentoring, such as making sure a parent and the mentoring coordinator knows where and when you are meeting or as above you could meet with two leaders and two young people indoors.

Home visits

Due to restrictions on having others in our homes, home visits should not happen at this time unless it is an emergency situation. You could still do a doorstep/garden visit after 2nd of January. Consider contacting in advance to see if it is appropriate to visit.

If you feel it is necessary to meet indoors with young people over this time, it is crucial to follow the guidelines already produced by the Methodist Church in Ireland, alongside the government's advice and any updated advice that comes from the office of the Secretary of Conference, for building health and safety, social distancing measures, contact logging and risk assessment. Please fill in the checklist, provided on the Irish Methodist website, before resuming an indoor activity. Below is a summary of the guidelines but it would be important that you read through all the material to fully understand what you need to do. You can find the guidance material here: <https://www.irishmethodist.org/covid-19>

04| SUMMARY OF METHODIST CHURCH IN IRELAND GUIDELINES

- 1.The Methodist Church in Ireland has adopted a 2-metre social distancing policy across all its activities, remembering that those from the same household can sit together.
- 2.Where activities are led from the front a 4-metre distance should be maintained between those leading and the participants.
- 3.Shared items and resources are a particular risk. Items such as bibles, books, toys, craft materials, resources for games should not be shared or put away.
- 4.Face coverings are now mandatory on church premises, including while people arrive and leave. Current health and safety guidance from the NI Executive states that children under 13 are not required to wear them. Please be aware that there are others who are also exempt. <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/coronavirus-covid-19-face-coverings>. Those leading from the front are not required to wear a face covering while speaking or leading worship. Two metre social distancing must be maintained at all times. If not wearing a face covering, then those leading worship must maintain four metres social distancing from the front row of the congregation/group.
- 5.Singing: Those who are wearing face coverings may sing quietly i.e. at the level of quiet spoken voice. We should sing softly and less than we normally would.
6. Toilets: Church toilets can be open. Keeping them well ventilated. Paper towels must be used and no hand dryers. You could make wipes available so that hard surfaces can be wiped down after use. Hand sanitiser and soap should be made available.
- 7.Contact tracing: A record should be kept of those who attend activities, and ideally of where people were seated.
8. Cleaning: In addition to 'normal' cleaning, you may wish to wipe down surfaces with disinfectant spray after their use, remember this includes pews, chairs, lecterns, pulpit, sound desk, banisters and grab rails, door handles, microphones. The virus lives on hard surfaces for about 72 hours so if there is a gap between use of the building of more than three days cleaning with disinfectant is not necessary. However, if the building is to be used within 72 hours this additional cleaning is required. Those who are cleaning should wear disposable gloves, use disposable cloths, and wash their hands thoroughly when finished.

If in any doubt of the best course of action, please consult your minister or contact IMYC by emailing Gillian Gilmore at gillian.gilmore@irishmethodist.org