

Recommendations and Resources for Growth Groups

North Coast Update: March 17, 2020

With a desire to love our neighbors as ourselves and an abundance of caution for the members of our church and community amidst a global pandemic that is affecting our nation, as of Sunday, March 22, all North Coast gatherings will be suspended and our preaching series will be broadcast online until further notice. More information about what this means and why we have made this decision is available at northcoastchurch.org.au.

So, what does this mean for various groups in our church who are used to gathering together in person on a regular basis? We have many different types and sizes of groups across our church family, and this document applies to all of those types and sizes – basically, to any group of church members who normally gather together to care for one another, grow as disciples, or make disciples. The following includes recommendations as well as resources for such groups and their leaders. We will continually update this document with new information as the situation surrounding the coronavirus (COVID-19) develops.

WHAT IS NORTH COAST RECOMMENDING FOR GROUPS AT THIS TIME?

Our over-arching recommendation for groups is to work hard to keep the members of your group as biblically (see Romans 12:9-13) and closely connected to one another as is wisely possible. The obvious question this statement raises is, “What is wise?” We have already stated that we do not believe it is wise for the hundreds of members of our church to gather for worship as we normally do because of the risks involved with potentially exposing many people to this different and distinct virus.

As a growth group leader or Titus 2 leader, you are best equipped to know the people in your groups and are best placed to know if a similar potential to exposure might exist. And so, we suggest you apply your wisdom accordingly if you should meet or not.

In addition, we recommend that you go out of your way to cultivate personal contact with each other. Make phone calls to members of your group, text frequently (either individually or in group texts), email encouragement, or use other social media channels like WhatsApp or Facebook (both of which have functionality for groups) to stay connected.

RECOMMENDED PRECAUTIONS FOR GROWTH GROUP/TITUS 2 MEETINGS

We strongly recommend the following precautions for the good not only of the people who are gathering, but of all the people you will interact with after your gathering.

- Do not attend if you are sick, experiencing any symptoms of the coronavirus (COVID-19), or if you have been exposed to someone with the coronavirus (COVID-19).
- Fully disinfect all surfaces before and after your gathering.

- Wash your hands with soap and water (for at least 20 seconds) upon arrival at the gathering and upon returning to your home.
- Either wash hands or make use of hand sanitizer as appropriate during the gathering.
- Avoid hand-shaking and hugging, opting instead for gestures like elbow bumping that avoid skin-to-skin contact.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Cover any cough or sneeze.
- Serve any food or drink individually.
- Maintain appropriate distance between members of different households and their belongings.

It is possible that some members of a group may feel comfortable gathering in person while other members of a group may not feel comfortable gathering in person. We encourage group leaders to be understanding and supportive of each person's conscience, and to find appropriate or helpful ways to include members of a group who are not present physically (online, by phone, or through other means).

WHAT RESOURCES WOULD YOU RECOMMEND FOR GROUPS TO USE DURING THIS TIME?

Sermon Series: Each week you will be able to watch or listen to the talks online and we are working towards live streaming the service for you. Click [here](#) to access the same.

Growth Group Studies: We will continue to provide growth group studies that complement the preaching. We encourage you to also each week watch a recorded version of the talk which can also fuel discussion among group members during the week. Click [here](#) to access the same.

Daily Bible Meditations: Each meditation is exactly 500 words to help you discover the diamond in the text. Click [here](#) to access the same.

WHAT SHOULD GROUP LEADERS DO FIRST?

We encourage group leaders to start by putting together a plan (even if that plan is only for the next week, and will be updated for following weeks) for how your group will stay closely connected with each other. Then, share that plan with your entire group, and create a clear avenue of communication with you and with each other. This might be over a group email, a group text, WhatsApp or another platform. Try to include in your communication any specific details you have about when and how your group will next meet together. Direct your people to watch or listen to the talks online each week. God's word will continue to be a comfort to us during these times.