

Using the weekly Adult and All-age session online

Online safety

Consider how you safeguard leaders and those participating. Set up a password to enter the meeting in video conference platforms like Zoom. If you have two leaders, get online at least five minutes before the advertised start time, meaning when the first people sign in, you are ready. If you lead sessions alone parents/carers must be present with their children. Let parents know that they should be in the same room as the child/children, but don't have to be on camera. The youngest children may need a parent with them all the time to help and support. You may find it's really good to have parents/carers and children interacting together – encourage it if it works well! Email information to the parents/carers in advance including information about safety.

A note on safeguarding: You will need to follow safeguarding policies relevant to your church or organisation, and any other relevant policies and procedures regarding running sessions for children/young people/adults at risk. The suggestions below are not intended to replace your local ongoing safeguarding policy. Breakout rooms are not suitable for working with groups of children and young people for safeguarding reasons – unless you have the leaders to facilitate safely, i.e. two per group.

Practise and prepare

Before your session, practise signing in and using the different features on your online platform. For example, on Zoom you can share your screen with other participants, a really simple way to show videos and images, and even simple templates that people can copy. Another useful tool is the mute function. It can be easier to keep everyone on mute to avoid background noise, and ask individuals to unmute themselves when you invite them to say something. You might find that some people are shyer online, which means you need to speak

On time

Don't expect the time you spend online to last as long as you are used to in church. Activities may take less time when done separately and people's attention spans are often shorter. Aim for quality over quantity; somewhere in the range of 20-30 minutes probably works best. Keep active and include activities to get everyone up and moving around, finding something to show, or making something, rather than just sitting and listening and watching.

The ready-to-go service outline, general tips and advice

Gather

Hymns and songs

Play recordings of hymns and songs at different churches, as well as recording musicians and vocalists from your own church, or individuals or family groups performing live. Depending on the rhythm of the service, you could encourage members of your congregation to listen prayerfully to some of the music, but do invite them join in some suitable hymns/songs at home (with microphones muted – remind them that no one else can hear them!).

Gathering activity

This need not be long! The intention is to introduce the theme in way that makes people want to engage. More important than the activity itself (usually) is that people feel engaged by them theme. So, in adapting the idea to work in your context, maintain the personal element that begins in people's lives.

First impressions (image and questions)

Use the images and questions on screen as people gather for the online or recorded service to introduce the theme. Or use them as part of your sermon to break up the delivery and introduce something other than people – perhaps one person – talking to camera.

Share the Word

Readings and prayers

Use different voices and open up participation to those who might be nervous to stand up in church but don't mind being recorded, or speaking to a computer screen if your service is live online.

The reading(s)

Unless otherwise stated, the focus reading for the ROOTS resources will be the Gospel passage. So this is the one to use if you are having just one reading.

Drama or mime

Record households or socially distanced groups, or feature them in live services in real time.

Sermon, talk, thought for the week

Suggestions for sermons/talks are provided in this week's In touch, published on Thursday morning.

Explore and respond

Activities

Distribute templates and instructions in advance (e.g. via your Church website or FB page, or by text/email), so that people can participate in activities at home. And do this well in advance so that they can gather paper, pens and other materials together as may be required.

Group activities and discussions

Use households or breakout rooms to facilitate group discussions. Group practical and craft activities can often be done by households without any distancing issues. Activities and crafts can also be introduced and set up one week, to be done – e.g. by the household – during the week, with the results revealed, recorded (photos or video clips) or live, the following week.

Prayers

Encourage participation from people at home by using responses within the prayers (whether the prayers are said live or recorded). Remember to make it clear what the response is at the beginning of the prayers. Many online platforms allow you to add text to the screen whether your service is live or recorded.

Go with God

Consider...

Similar to the gathering activity, this activity is designed to give people an opportunity to think back over the time of worship, gather their thoughts and focus on this week's theme and what they have explored impacts upon their daily living as a disciple of Christ. However you adapt the idea for your online context, keep this aim in mind.

ROOTS at home

Use the ROOTS at home resource to encourage your Church community to continue to engage online, on social media, during the week ahead, with the various activities that they have taken part in during the service.

Specific tips for 14-20 March 2021

Gather

A pen and paper exercise; Call to worship; A gathering prayer; First impressions – no adaption necessary.

Share the Word

Old Testament – not easy to do online, but a large household group could perform while others watch.

Gospel – use a whiteboard facility.

Explore and respond

An obstacle course – with some careful preparation, this could be done by two household groups competing against each other.

A simple worship activity – ask people to provide their own bright light source.

A discussion about eternal life – no adaption necessary.

Give thanks – invite people to share using breakout rooms..

Go with God

Consider... – keep the group together, so invite people to share as a group (rather than in pairs).

A sending out prayer – no adaption necessary.