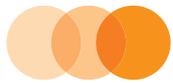


# Servant leadership in the context of Coronavirus

Many medical staff have described their experience of this pandemic as like a tsunami. There is an unstoppable wave of pastoral and practical challenges facing church leaders. While in a few places the worst may be over, some countries are in the eye of the storm. For many others - the storm is gathering.



## Serving the Mission of God

Jesus sends his church to participate in God's mission - this is what the church is for.

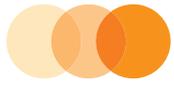
Leaders equip their churches to live out this 'sending', including making Christ known, communicating the gospel of God's grace, making disciples, compassionate care for the poor and vulnerable, and pursuing justice and peace.

What follows are some key themes to help you focus, together with some practical application for the whole of your church.

### Serving in practice: combine care for the church with care for those outside

At times of great pressure it's tempting to turn inwards and focus on ourselves. Some inside the church e.g. the vulnerable or dying will need special support. But God's call to the church is to serve and love those outside – as God first loved us.

- Ensure that critical resources, particularly people's time and money, are used to serve both inside and outside the church
- Be wise stewards by avoiding wasteful duplication of effort. For example, rather than setting up another online church service, access the resources that are already online. Then use your resources to meet needs in your community
- Collaborate with others for maximum impact – including other churches, community organisations or government



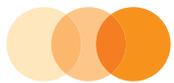
## The Gift of Prayer and Peace

In times of anxiety we are to pray (Philippians 4:6-7) – for leaders who have to make difficult decisions (1 Timothy 2:1-2), for God to act, for each other, and especially for those who are vulnerable and suffering and for those who do not yet know God's peace (Jeremiah 29:7). At a time full of fear and anxiety Jesus, the Prince of Peace gives us His peace (John 14:27).

People in our neighbourhoods are looking for peace and will most likely discover it through Christians who display it. We are best able to serve others, when we bring to them a peaceful presence.

### Serving in practice:

- Talk and pray with someone you trust about your own fears. Seek God for His peace, so that you can bring this into the lives of others who are anxious
- Offer prayer for people in your community; ask how you can pray for them (use social media, posters etc.)
- Mobilise the church to pray for people around them (using social media, video calls, etc.)

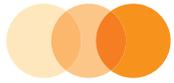


## Loving our neighbours

Love is the defining characteristic of God and those who know God. Our love for our neighbour is a demonstration of our love for God (Matthew 22:39), and the apostle Paul describes loving our neighbour as summing up the entire law (Galatians 5:6b,13-14).

### Leading in practice:

- Check regularly that people around you have what they need. Where needs are identified e.g. food or human connection, meet these needs by sharing your own resources
- Help children to meet the needs of others e.g. making a card for someone living alone
- Regularly remind your church that taking all possible action to reduce the spread of the virus is the loving thing to do
- Support medical workers and others in key 'front line' roles



## Care for the poor and vulnerable

The people of God are called to care for the poor and vulnerable (Deuteronomy 10:18, Psalm 82:3-4, Isaiah 58:10, James 1:27, 2:5-8). In times of crisis it is the poor and vulnerable who suffer the most. The church should prioritise them.

### Serving in practice

- Identify who is particularly vulnerable and what they need. Even as people are in 'lock-down', you can do this via phone, letter or online
- Organise volunteers in apartment blocks/neighbourhoods to meet these needs e.g. cooking meals, delivering food or medicine
- Create community: use Telegram/WhatsApp groups for neighbours to help them stay in contact
- Mobilise the whole church to care in this way for the vulnerable people around them

In our practice of love and kindness, we must do everything we can to minimize the risk of transmission of Covid-19 by abiding by the appropriate guidelines. Practically this includes, not handing over deliveries but leaving them on the doorstep, remembering to keep two metres away from people and ensuring frequent hand washing.

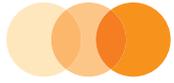


## Resurrection and Hope

Jesus' resurrection defeated sin and death. The presence and power of the resurrected Jesus is at work in us, empowering sacrificial and joyful service (Acts 1:8). Our hope in resurrection gives us the courage to serve and suffer (2 Corinthians 4).

### Serving in practice

- Support people who are facing death - including those who are separated from dying relatives or friends
- Prepare to help those who are grieving. Much of the usual ways of grieving will not be possible in these times. Find new ways of 'weeping with those who weep'
- Equip your church to support grieving neighbours or co-workers



# Courage and Creativity

The Mission of God has not changed but our context has. To serve effectively in this new context we must adapt how we communicate and demonstrate the good news about Jesus (1 Corinthians 9). Leaders need courage to experiment, to sacrifice, to change and to resist the voices of those who want no change. The Church is just as much the church, even though it is more scattered. *What opportunities does this bring for God's mission?*

## Leading in practice:

- Equip individuals, households and small groups to be the primary expression of church
- Use social media to connect small groups for encouragement, prayer and vision
- Share stories of people who are serving creatively in this new season

These are times when people need the hope and peace that only God can bring. The God who has freely given us all things (Romans 8:32) calls us to live generously to those around us (1 Timothy 6:18-19). Imagine the difference in your town or city if the church - your church - in the power of the Holy Spirit, steps up to bring prayer and peace, to love neighbours, to care for the poor and vulnerable and live out resurrection hope.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit – Romans 15:13.

