

# MINISTRY IDEAS FROM QB CHURCHES AS COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS ROLL BACK

What are QB Pastors doing as restrictions ease? Who has great ideas? To find that out I've connected with 7 pastors in different areas and different kinds and sizes of churches. We can learn from each other and adapt or modify one or more of these ideas. Each pastor I spoke with was happy to connect with other pastors who might want more information about a specific idea. My prayer is that seeing what others are doing, or not doing, will spark creativity, stimulate reflection, and be a source of encouragement. I've looked at four key areas as restrictions ease: worship services, groups, online engagement and non-local followers. Below is a summary for each of those areas. I think we've identified some helpful ideas.

God bless,  
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Director of Church Health Services

## IDEAS FOR QB CHURCHES AS COVID ROLLBACK BEGINS

### SERVICES

1. **Create a house church network.** Consider organising your gatherings into house churches of 20 people. The house church leader can host, facilitate communion, prayer, and discussion, as well as provide pastoral care. Each house church could watch the pre-recorded worship and sermon together. This approach is suitable for stages 1-4
2. **Small Group Watch Parties:** Have one or two groups (20 people max) meet in homes to watch the online service and share together. This approach is most suitable for stages 1-2.
3. **Create small physical gatherings for your most isolated and vulnerable.** Who is the least connected online and most vulnerable in social isolation? Consider gathering those people together in groups of 20 for stage 1-2. In stage 3 these gatherings could turn into a worship service.
4. **Use Planning Centre Online Check-Ins** (or similar features in Elvanto etc) for checking in kids and adults to your services (stage 3). Have a laptop for new people (easy to capture information) and iPads for regulars, tick the box to sign people in.
5. **Just do you!** Make decisions based on your culture, values, and vision not what is easy/pragmatic or what the squeaky wheels want. Don't do everything, do what makes sense for who you are.
6. **Leave time to clean.** Make sure you leave time for cleaning if you are doing multiple services on Sundays (in stage 3). Establish a cleaning team.
7. **Put seats in clusters:** Consider setting your seating in clusters rather than rows to allow more natural community and discussion during worship service.
8. **Adopt a continuous improvement approach to your services.** Make small tweaks to your recording, editing, gear, presentation, and promoting. Do not settle but seek to get better bit by bit.
9. **Establish a clear people flow.** Entrance with sign-in and exit with sign out.
10. **Leave room for visitors in stage 3.** I would suggest 20%.

11. **Talk with other churches about their re-opening plans.**
12. **Decide when to have in person worship service.** Some churches are not planning in person worship services until restrictions ease further (more than 100 people, and less than 4sqm per person). Decide when it is best for you to meet, it might not be as soon as possible. Just because you can meet in person doesn't mean you have to meet in person.
13. **Update your technology.** Buy that live streaming set-up (camera, video capture, audio processor, PC, sound desk etc.). Think about what your lighting and PC needs. Churches with multiple part-time staff (on job keeper) and steady giving may have significant funds to invest in ministry in this season.
14. **Update your seating.** Replace benches with single stackable seats. This enables you to set up your auditorium for optimal layout for your expected attendance and increase your capacity long term by about 20%.

## GROUPS

1. **Offer both in person and online small groups.** Some groups will want to stay online (zoom) others will move back to in person groups.
2. **Consider hybrid small groups.** Some groups will be online some weeks and in person on other weeks. Give groups the choice of what works best for them.
3. **Keep at least one regular prayer meeting online.** No travel time, no child minding, just prayer.
4. **Consider doing courses as online groups.** Alpha, Marriage Course, and CAP Money could work as online groups or in person. As Carey Nieuwhof keeps telling us, the people you want to reach are already online.
5. **In stage 2 smaller ministry groups could meet in person or online.** Play groups, youth groups, KYB groups, and similar could meet online or in person, or both. If church space is limited consider prioritizing and sequencing your ministries based on need and missional opportunity.
6. **Larger ministry groups could be split into smaller groups for in person gatherings,** e.g. Junior youth Thursday, senior youth Friday.
7. **Young Adults want to gather in person.** Young adults are "zoomed out" and generally missing in action during online church services. Start young adult's gatherings as soon as you can. Encourage them to bring a friend. Think through how to make it easy for young adults to return to gathering together.

## ONLINE PRESENCE

1. **Create targeted video content.** If you have a YouTube channel, consider creating targeted content on your channel. You might like to record short talks or sermons on, "who is Jesus," "overcoming anxiety", "finding purpose", "relationship goals", "decision making", "how can I know I'm going to heaven." You might not be able to produce great video content every week, but you can still put your most impacting and targeted content online. Make sure you include a 1-3 minute "about us" video.
2. **Keep your website current.** Ensure your website is up to date. Make it easy for people to know where and when to find you and how to connect, both in person and online.

3. **Establish and online engagement pathway.** Most churches have thought through and in person engagement pathway (welcome, connect card, follow up call, newcomers connect, members course etc). But do you have an online engagement pathway? Steps could include watch online, subscribe and like, invitation to join the Facebook group, online connect card, follow up direct message from a pastor or host, zoom new people connect, online next steps course etc.
4. **Send a direct message every person who engages with your online service on social media.** A simple “Thanks for joining us in the service today...I’d love to connect with you...your next step is...invitation to connect further...these are our ministries....you can find our more here...” etc.
5. **Consolidate YouTube channel, Facebook pages, and Instagram.** Time some time to clean up your own life presence. Consolidate what you have learned over the past for months. Your plan might not to do more but do what you have been doing better. Decide what you are keeping.
6. **Continue online devotions.** If you have had success with video devotions, consider continuing with those.
7. **Look at getting an app.** Subslash and Sharefaith provide church apps when you can centralise your online communication, Bible reading plans, video devotions, podcasts, prayer points, and many other things.
8. **Create online care groups.** You might consider starting zoom groups or Facebook groups for pastoral care. Care groups touch base weekly and are especially helpful for those who aren’t in small groups. The motto is “be friends look, after each other”
9. **Podcast your sermons.** If streaming or videoing is a stretch or simple not right for you, consider podcasting your sermon audio as you head back to physical gatherings.
10. **Consider hybrid online services.** The best part of zoom is sharing together, seeing people’s faces, praying together, telling stories of God’s work amongst us. The hard part is worship and preaching. A hybrid online model utilizes pre-recorded sermon and worship (or streamed from youtube) but live communion, prayer, discussions, testimony, and hosting. The host can screen share the video content and do the rest live on zoom. It’s the best of both online platforms.

## NON-LOCAL ADHERENTS

Many churches that have streamed services and other input have picked up online followers that are not local and are unable to attend their church services or other community activities. As we emerge from COVID, some churches will stop streaming altogether, and others, while continuing to offer online ministries for outreach or discipling, will not attempt to provide all the purposes of church (see John’s article) for non-locals. So decisions will need to be made as to what to do with regular, non-local, online followers post-COVID . Here are some options:

1. **Unfriend them.** Decide that you can’t support them anymore and stop intentionally ministering to them. Hope that they find another online church to follow (and there are many). This sounds harsh but I suspect it is what will happen if churches don’t intentionally decide to take action.
2. **Hold on to them.** This may be the best option if they have established strong relationships or are exploring Christian faith. Maybe you can continue to disciple them and help them grow spiritually so that they will be strong enough to move to another church in time. But this takes effort and resources. You have to be willing and able to work hard at it.

3. **Transfer them to a healthy online church.** Recommend another church that they could become part of online. The QB Movement will probably have a number of churches that will continue to operate full online churches. We'll let you know which churches are doing this. Make sure you let these churches know so they can look out for your people online.
4. **Transfer them to a local church with an online presence.** Find out where your followers are located and recommend a church in their area with an online presence (streaming services or building community or discipling online). The reason I suggest a church with an online presence is that people who are used to online church will find it far easier to get involved online before they attend in person. If they are within Queensland, the Regional Ministers or QB Services staff would be able to help you find a local church for them.
5. **Suggest that they get involved in a local church.** This is the easiest and probably least productive option. You could just ask them to try out some local churches until they find one that is helpful for them. This is asking a lot and will probably only be taken up by the most interested, extraverted seekers, but it's better than not doing anything.

## WHAT SOME CHURCHES ARE DOING

### 1. New Heart Baptist (Paul Butler)

#### Services:

- 100 people rule means with four locations meeting we can meet in stage 3.
- We're reducing our service to 1 hour and including a 20-minute message and interactive group discussions:
- Service outline Balmoral Campus
  - Live Worship
  - Celebrate what God is doing – tell stories
  - Announcements / welcome etc
  - 20-minute message
  - Break up into groups to discuss
  - Prayer
  - Worship
  - Sharing time.
- We're prepared to lose people, some people won't come on the journey, but we're committed to creating the culture we want, based on our values.
- I think government will ease social distancing (the 4sqm rule)

#### New Heart Groups

- We plan to take the things that are working into our future.
- We plan to stream or zooming live services with church host
- Prayer meetings both zoom and in personal, people zoom in to prayer meetings
- Youth and kids return to physical gatherings as able
- Online removes travel time, so it is just the session. Especially for prayer meetings. "Any gathering of where people are meeting in the name of Jesus is a good thing" "anything that increase prayer is a good thing"
- We don't want to back to 40-minute sermon, we want to keep it at 20-minutes and have discussion.
- We want to continue our mandate, "everyone in a life group." That's easy online
- We'll have a mix of online and physical and mixed groups – we don't want to lose that. That is life in 2020!

#### New Heart Online

- Website: New website – still need to integrate our online church and zoom feeds onto website. Online content.
- New website front page – for people who aren't Christians, targeted for interested non-Christians.
- We've working hard at creating a get connect section – including online pathways.

### 2. Taringa Baptist (Steve Goleby)

#### Taringa Services:

- Staged approach
  - Mid June: Groups based model. Meet in houses (5-20), watch messages, kids zoom, pre-recorded sermon and worship, host to lead communion and announcements, and sharing time.
  - Worship is really hard online. Small group is intimate.
  - Mid June – online only groups for vulnerable or those who won't, can't come to someone's house

- Mid July – physical services at the church building split over two congregations.
  - Choose one service to attend, morning or evening
  - Leave a margin for walk-ins and guests
  - Modified communion and Morning Tea, welcome, offering
- Two-fold philosophy
  - Worship – really want to worship together and to it well
  - Communication vision and culture is hard via zoom, we want to gather.

#### Taringa Groups:

- Option of physical or online.
- Mid-June small groups encourage to meet again. Some will choose not to meet again, don't feel comfortable.
- Smaller ministry groups like youth and playgroup will state with 20 in person.
- All groups re-start mid July (stage 3).
- Online option for the next few months

### 3. Mackay Baptist (Scott Jones)

#### Mackay Services:

- We've been live streaming (on Facebook) for 12 months – but going to buy better gear and do a better job.
- We can fit 60 people in our 308 seat auditorium with social distancing. Not looking at reopening with 4sqm limit, looking for more relaxations.

#### Mackay Groups:

- We've given small groups the choice to meet in person (in homes or at the church) or online.
- Families small groups are meeting in two homes (2-3 families per home) and rotating house each week to mix up people.
- Large small groups may choose to split into smaller groups
- Some groups not meeting at all (KYBs etc)
- None of our groups are going to say online (longer term) only – people are zoomed out!

#### Mackay Online:

- Update website, with next steps for discipleship such as would you like to.....
- Consolidating YouTube, Facebook pages, upgrading gear for live streaming.

### 4. CrossLife Baptist (Matt Hunt)

#### Crosslife Services

- Worked out how many we can have at each venue, looks like 90, 90, 107
- We can't all fit on site, and cleaning and overlap as people come and go will be challenging.
- We're also considering having people attend fortnightly. We will work out right mix of people with kids etc. We're leaning toward fortnightly.
- Continue online broadcasts
  - Normal church services
  - Outreach focused online
    - Use alpha films or similar
    - Mix of live and pre-recorded interaction (pastors panel)
- We're putting together an online team
- Hybrid service, some pre-recorded and live
  - 5-minute kids talk – pre-recorded
  - Sermon pre-recorded – 15 min
  - 1-2 songs
  - Stream yard to YouTube

#### August services

- Live worship in gatherings, less worship online.

- Will continue some Q and A and discussion
- Align times and share resources between campuses
- No morning tea with mean lack of community connections and fellowship, how will we manage that?
- Cluster seating in groups rather than rows, family can sit together etc, facilitates discussion better than rows.

#### Crosslife Online

- We're going to continue devotions online each day/ weekdays
- We've using a church app for video devotions. The app is through subsplash.
- We're continuing with our care groups of 20 put alongside life groups. Care groups touch base with people weekly. Engaged people not in life groups. Some meet on zoom, some will be face to face.
- Allocating a care coordinator to help groups of 20 care for each other, the moto is, "Be friends look after each other"
- Care groups work well with marginal and disabled people in our community (local community)

### **5. Tenthill - Dale Buchanan**

#### Tenthill Services:

- We have been using Facebook live and will keep using it until mid-July when restrictions ease to allow 100 people to gather (Stage 3).
- Our elderly folk have struggled to access the internet.

#### Tenthill Groups:

- We have a history of people not engaging well with small groups, that has continued through COVID.
- Youth group, playgroup, line dancing group are all on hold
- Our weekly prayer meeting on zoom might continue.

#### Tenthill Online:

- We plan to keep livestreaming of services on Facebook – far greater reach than in person gathering. We'll also put the sermon on youtube

### **6. Enoggera (Matt Maloney and Mike Westhuyzen)**

#### Enoggera Services:

- We'll keep using church online platform and pre-recording worship and sermons in stage 2.
- Looking at morning service and afternoon service in stage 3, we can fit 50 inside the auditorium, and kids upstairs
- Use planning centre check-in for kids and families at two entry points, one for kids and one for families.

#### Enoggera Groups:

- Encouraging small groups resume in personal gatherings, let small group decide when to meet
- Some groups mix of online and in person (especially for families)
- We're not sure about Alpha online. It loses the incidental connection and conversations points with online alpha that naturally happen before and after the event.

#### Enoggera Online:

- We plan to keep recording message audio podcast (as we did before COVID but not livestreaming the whole service).
- We are working out what to do on YouTube with limited resources. Thinking about targeted content.

## **7. River Life Baptist (John Robertson)**

### River life Services and Groups

- No worship gatherings in Stage 1 or 2
- In Stage 2 we're encouraging small groups to meet and watch online services
- We are gathering YAs into smaller gatherings, watching together and having community in person
- Stage 3 (100)
  - Some groups that meet onsite are normally greater than 100, so we can't have normal ministry meetings as usual.
  - We'll have to prioritise meetings or look at splitting groups into age groups types (such as Junior youth one on night, Senior youth on another night)
- We're not having worship services until gathering sizes get larger.
- We are working through people flow through the building with clear sign-in and sign-out points. We're also closing gathering points such as the foyer.
- We are prioritising ministries that will benefit most from face to face gathering

## **8. North East Baptist (Peter Cossgrove)**

### Northeast Services:

- Auditorium only fits 82 people with the 4sqm rule
  - The worship and production team is 10, and allowing 10 seats for guests, only leaves 62 seats,
  - We're exploring email registration for attending services
  - We're thinking we will have two morning services and restarting night service
- We are encouraging our church to invite others to come to church online, building that culture so we are ready for in person services.
- We are limiting our services to an hour and allowing time for cleaning.
- We will have kids in the hall and adults in the auditorium (giving us the full 100). Kids will be registered at the door.
- We are exploring a Tuesday morning service for seniors who will not come out at night and normally meet on Tuesday anyway. This service will cater for over 60s, traditional service, to reach those in the community who used to come to church years ago. It has an outreach emphasis.
- We are not livestreaming when we go back. Streaming is part of our DNA and culture, we will record the sermon as an audio podcast.

### North East Groups:

- We're allowing our small groups to decide whether stay online or meet in person
- We plan to start two online groups for people who can't meet face to face (oldies) or people new to church
- We are planning Alpha and Compass (crown financial) as online courses in term 4.
- We're planning in person weekly prayer meetings.

### North East Online:

- We will continue to have the sermon audio podcast online
- We've updated our website and have lots of connection points (as online forms)
- Our church Family Facebook page/group will continue
- Our "Good morning NEB" video devotion will continue on the Facebook page.