



ARCHDIOCESE OF BRISBANE
Evangelisation Brisbane

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INITIATIVES FOR PARISHES & COMMUNITIES DURING COVID-19

As the COVID-19 pandemic unfolds, it is clear that this will be a Lent like no other. A Lent where the faithful cannot meet together and cannot receive Christ's body and blood, soul and divinity in the Eucharist. It's a Lent where our emphasis on 'real presence' is being challenged as we discover how to transition temporarily from 'physical presence' to 'digital presence.' It is essential at this time to recognise that though our buildings are closed, the Church is not! The Church of course is not a building. As such, it is not a time to shut down, it's a time to reconfigure. The mission of Christ to make disciples of all nations remains our focus, but our strategies for achieving this mission must change! Now is the time for the Church to break new ground in reaching out to parishioners and beyond to ensure that those in our communities continue to encounter Jesus, feel loved, connected, cared for, and listened to in a time of social distancing and isolation. In the first instance, you might invite your parishioners to sign on for the Archdiocesan weekly email. [They can do that here.](#)

At a local level, here are five strategies that parishes and communities can do during isolation.

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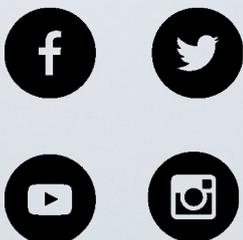
CALL YOUR PARISHIONERS



One of the biggest challenges of our situation is isolation. People we'd usually meet and greet in the normal course of our week are no longer part of our lives. This means we have to be intentional about communication. This is the perfect moment for staff members to get on the phone and call every person in your community. Ask them how they're going, what their challenges are, if there's anything you can pray for, and just let them talk. The power of deep listening is immense and personal. Simply by listening, you are caring.

2

DEVELOP ONLINE PRESENCE



If you don't already, it's essential that your parish or community has an online presence. This means at least a website and a social media presence – a Facebook page ([facebook.com](https://www.facebook.com)) and perhaps and Instagram page ([instagram.com](https://www.instagram.com)) depending on your demographic. If you don't know how to do this, there are likely people in your parish who can help, or Evangelisation Brisbane can work with you on setting these up in collaboration with our various Archdiocesan directorates.

2



3

LIVE STREAM MASS AND THE LIKE

Once social media platforms are set up, it's quite simple to live stream masses from your smart phone. All you need is a smart phone, a tripod and someone to hit record. This means that those in your community can join you from home and still feel that sense of belonging and connection by joining with their local priest who is in their local church.

4

SET UP ZOOM FOR TEAM & SMALL GROUP MEETINGS



A challenge with group meetings is that a telco can feel quite impersonal. Zoom (zoom.us) is a free App that can be downloaded on a smartphone and enables free video conferencing for up to 40 minutes. It's a great resource for Pastoral and Finance Council meetings and also small group meetings of any sort. Some parishes are using Zoom for the continuation of the Lenten Program, Alpha, and other discipleship initiatives.

(Please note: all Zoom meetings and webinars should use PIN access (attendees are required to enter a PIN to enter the meeting) and no private/personally identifying material should be shared/uploaded on the platform – as Zoom's systems are homed outside of Australia)

5

ENCOURAGE THE KIND OF ENCOUNTER WITH GOD THAT PARISHIONERS CAN ENGAGE WITH FROM HOME



In a moment when the faithful cannot receive the Eucharist, it's an important to encourage parishioners to continue to experience Christ's presence in other forms. Encourage them to pray, show them where they can find the prayer of the Church and the readings of the day (send them to universalis.com). You might also send them to the Evangelisation Brisbane daily reflection resource which can be found via the [Evangelisation Brisbane website](#). Give them tools to engage in their faith and perhaps develop an online prayer page whereby parishioners can post their prayer requests, but also pray for the requests of others.

Other initiatives that parishes are already doing include:

- Daily email to all parishioners with a thought for the day (through [Flocknote](#) or [Mailchimp](#)).
- Online Zoom 'lounge' hosted twice a week whereby people can just connect in a talk and share with others how they are going.
- Small groups developed within parishes whereby groups of people are connected via Zoom and can check in on each other and pray together once a week.
- Developing care packages that can be dropped to those in crisis
- Promotion of online giving by posting account details on website.

Should you wish to enact any of these strategies in your parish but need support or further information, please don't hesitate to make contact with Evangelisation Brisbane at eb@bne.catholic.net.au.