

Youth Ministry Reopening Strategy

By now some of you are wondering what Price Chapel's youth ministry will look like this fall. I am curious as well. We have a great group of pre-teens and teenagers that love being together and are growing in their faith. We want to be a part of encouraging that spiritual growth while being responsible for the health of those around us.

It has been a blessing to live in Carbon County during this season of pandemic. Our rural location has gifted us freedom from many of the effects this pandemic has ravaged on other parts of our nation.

Our ministry has taken full advantage of some of those freedoms. We've hosted in person small groups, had one-on-one lunches with students, we've even run the most successful sales season of our TNT Fireworks fundraiser.

However, it is imperative that we not be lulled into thinking that our population will be invulnerable. Over the coming weeks we need to be cautious. Cases have spiked exponentially in the places COVID-19 has reached.

To date, most of our students have been hanging out together and none have exhibited symptoms of COVID-19 nor have travelled to any hot spots without due caution. As such, we have relaxed some precautions only slightly when meeting in person (e.g. no masks, but still 6ft. apart). The most risk our youth ministry has incurred was during our TNT Fireworks fundraiser. Students were encouraged to help/hang-out during the sales season. I felt that this risk was low due to the nature of the event being outdoors; the weather being hot and windy; and the physical distance we encouraged staff and customers to maintain through signage and posturing and during busy times students and staff were encouraged to wear masks.

So, this fall the key indicators for how we meet together will be largely contingent upon our local schools and health department recommendations. Over the summer our students have largely spent time in small groups of friends. As school begins their social circles will swell meaning more contact and higher risks of rapid transmission.

With these concerns for safety in mind, the guiding principles for youth ministry this fall will be as follows:

1. Be Home Sick
2. Smaller is Better
3. Outside is Open
4. Masks and Distance Slow Transmission
5. Slower is Calmer

Be Home Sick

This one seems like it's a given, if you are sick, stay home. Sniffly nose? stay home. Tickle in your throat? stay home. We want to err on the side of caution. This one simple principle, more than all of the following will test our resolve to love others by putting each other first.

Smaller is Better

Our youth ministry has operated as a 6-12 grade haven for friends to hang out and hear biblical teaching for the better part of the last decade.

This year, we're moving to a smaller format. We'll be dividing the group by age. 6-9th grade will meet on Tuesdays from 5PM-6:30PM and 10-12th grade will meet from 6:00-7:30PM. Our time will be structured to allow for some overlap between the two groups.

Small groups of people gathering together ensure that we reduce the risk of becoming a COVID-19 transmission hotspot.

Outside is Open

Studies have shown that transmission of COVID-19 are significantly decreased when participating in outdoor activity ([Oxford University Press for the Infectious Diseases Society of America ©2020](#)). It is true, some weather conditions and other factors may influence our ability to meet outdoors, but any activities that we can do outdoors, we will do outdoors.

Masks & Distance Slow Transmission

The above linked study also indicates that the highest rates of transmission of COVID-19 and other viruses occur during an infected individuals *"exhalation, talking, and coughing by microdroplets small enough to remain aloft in air and posing a risk of exposure at distances beyond 1 to 2 m from an infected individual."* The proper use of masks reduces the force of an individual's aspirations thereby reducing the loft of microdroplets.

The uses of masks in combination with the recommended physical distancing of 6 feet should significantly reduce the risk of transmission within our ministry activities.

Slower is Calmer

Taking into consideration the above guiding principles, the studies that outline risk behaviors, and that many people who transmit COVID-19 are asymptomatic, our games and activities will work to reduce the amount of respiration an individual requires to participate. Meaning, games will be slower paced to reduce heavy breathing, worship by song will be in open spaces to reduce aspiration or moved to more liturgical or reflective practices to engage with God in responsible, yet deeply meaningful ways.

Keeping Each Other Safe

To keep one another safe and respect one another's families, if a student or staff member is found to have contracted COVID-19 and come to a youth ministry event we will promptly and prudently address those at risk and will urge them to self quarantine while The Rising youth ministry will suspend in person gathering for the recommended quarantine period.

Over the course of this fall and into the spring semesters we will continue to assess the state of our nation, state and county health. We will make adjustments as we go. Some decisions may vary in severity, but we will try our best to always err on the side of caution because we believe Price Chapel needs to be the safest place we can make it so that we can continue to grow and love as we are given the grace to.

We want to implement these safety principles out of humility, kindness, and a love for our community. I thank you in advance for your graciousness in implementing these guiding principles so that our ministries can thrive even in the midst of discomfort. May God continue to produce abundantly the Fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) in you as you engage with others. More love, more joy, more peace, more patience, more kindness, more goodness, more faithfulness, and more self-control. Against these things there is no law.

Sincerely,

Alex Krum
Associate Pastor
Price Chapel

