

CREATING COMMUNITY

Virtual Gatherings – USAG Wiesbaden RSO

A widespread virus has caused us to meet using non-traditional spaces and technology. So, while nothing replaces a face-to-face conversation, we hope that this Virtual Gatherings Guide will provide an online option for you and your loved ones to consistently care for each other, even when COVID-19 is preventing services from meeting physically in our footprint.

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We believe it is important to stay connected to each other during this time. Online platforms can be effective short term solutions to serve the participants of our ministries in four key ways:

- Teaching Time
- Small Groups (Thrive Groups, or other small/large groups via Auxiliary Ministries)
- Devotions
- Partnering with families/parents to equip and encourage their faith formation

More than just uploading Religious content, we invite you to create vibrant community. Consider the importance of ministering to the whole person using virtual platforms. Continue to use your creativity and technical skills to reach out to those who are marginalized. Engage, Equip, Empower, Exhort, and Enable others to continue in Spiritual Readiness and faith formation. For some help to bridge the gap, please consider the following:

Facilitating Online Small Groups

1. First, pick a date and time for your services to “air” and for small groups to connect. Even though connection is possible all the time, choosing a start-time helps everyone be accountable to show up. Empower leaders by sending the 5 “W”s to them, the participants and parents of children/youth so they can connect effectively.
2. Invite others to connect, too. Everyone is isolated during this time. Reach out via a phone call, text, email, etc. Tell Invite them specifics about a Thrive Group, Auxiliary, or Wednesday Night Alive group; use live interactive video when possible for maximum connection; and be direct and personal. The blanket approach is good for getting lots of people to watch, but be intentional to invite individuals – especially

CREATING COMMUNITY

Virtual Gatherings – USAG Wiesbaden RSO

other leaders with shared passion and hurting people who could be otherwise overlooked.

3. Before meeting together, recommend that participants and leaders watch teaching videos online: RightNow Media, Facebook recorded videos and articles, etc . . .
4. Then small groups can join a group via video or chat. We recommend that the group members find a way to communicate through chat or video conferencing to facilitate discussion about the video session/life stream sermon/book study/ and to work through any available leader's guide or study guide.
5. There are many different ways to connect online as a group, so find a platform that works best for your group – Facebook messenger, iMessage, GroupMe, Zoom, Google Hangouts, Skype, WhatsApp, Instagram, Snapchat group chat . . . etc.
 - a. **For Google Hangouts:**
 - Go to [Hangouts.Google.com](https://hangouts.google.com)
 - Click "Start a Video Call"
 - Click "Copy Link"
 - Paste the link into group text with participants.
 - Proceed to have a small group conversation.
 - b. **For Zoom:**
 - Go to [Zoom.us](https://zoom.us)
 - Click "Sign up, it's free"
 - Create log in and password
 - Click "Create Meeting"
 - Set the details for the meeting and click "Save"
 - Copy and paste the URL link using the "Copy the Invitation"
 - Paste the link into group text /email with participants.
 - Proceed to host small group or large group conversation.
 - Use support.zoom.us for more help.
6. The goal is for everyone to have a real-time conversation about this week's message or teaching input. We want to create community via virtual real-time gatherings.
7. Let's help each other keep realistic expectations, and remind participants of their group's guidelines at the beginning of the meeting. Meeting in a non-traditional way opens up the possibility of many more distractions to a greater sense of genuine community: technical difficulties, missing facial expressions and body language in

CREATING COMMUNITY

Virtual Gatherings – USAG Wiesbaden RSO

chat-only-groups, dominant talkers and others who stay off camera or off chat, etc. . Still, group members can take steps to minimize distraction by meeting in a quiet room, closing other apps, and muting their own devices when they aren't speaking. It could be great to remind leaders that it may take some time for participants to warm up to this kind of conversation. No matter what happens, meeting together consistently is a win in and of itself! This isolation is creating a hunger for community, and the more we provide connection the more others can begin to grow stronger and more joyful.

8. The Religious Support Office encourages creativity and innovation of these virtual spaces. Keep in mind security issues. We want to maintain all safety and security of the force, so keep in mind who you are inviting into private group settings.

Teaching Inputs

1. **Virtual Religious Services:** Each week the Chaplains will provide virtual Chapel services. Thrive Group questions will be offered for discussion via small group gatherings. Sign up for a Thrive Group for one of the congregations at: <https://www.signupgenius.com/go/805084aaea722aafb6-thrive>
 - a. Religious Support Office: [facebook.com/RSOWiesbaden/](https://www.facebook.com/RSOWiesbaden/)
 - b. Catholic Mass: emailed homily from Chaplain (MAJ) McDermott each week
 - c. Chapel Next: [facebook.com/ChapelNext-Wiesbaden-122737997768323](https://www.facebook.com/ChapelNext-Wiesbaden-122737997768323)
 - d. Gospel Service: [facebook.com/RSOWiesbaden/](https://www.facebook.com/RSOWiesbaden/)
 - e. Traditional Service: [facebook.com/TPCCLAY/](https://www.facebook.com/TPCCLAY/)
 - f. Auxiliary Ministries (Club Beyond, Children's Church (CN, Gospel, Traditional), CRE, CWOC, LDS Seminary, LifeTeen, Mom's Café, PWOC, Mom's Café, LifeTeen, Wednesday Night Alive)
2. **Devotional and Faith material can be found at:** Each week Chaplains and auxiliary ministry leaders will provide devotional materials. In addition, you can find other material using:
 - a. USAG Wiesbaden RightNow Media: <http://www.rightnowmedia.org/Account/Invite/USAGWiesbaden>
 - b. YouVersion Plan: <https://www.bible.com/reading-plans>
3. **Religious Support Office for USAG Wiesbaden:** [facebook.com/RSOWiesbaden/](https://www.facebook.com/RSOWiesbaden/)

CREATING COMMUNITY

Virtual Gatherings – USAG Wiesbaden RSO

- a. Devotional material (Word of the Day, worship guides, Low Density Religious Group material)
- b. Religious Education for children/youth/adult auxiliaries links and material
- c. Auxiliary Religious Content and links (Club Beyond, Children's Church (CN, Gospel, Traditional), CRE, CWOC, LDS Seminary, LifeTeen, Mom's Café, PWOC, Mom's Café, LifeTeen, Wednesday Night Alive)

4. Faith Group Worship and Religious Practices

- a. **Roman Catholic.** Refer to Archbishop Timothy P. Broglio, Archdiocese for the Military Services guidelines letter dated 16 March 2020. Additional resources provided in "Staying Connected in Faith" document from AMS.

The Archdiocese for Military Services (AMS) offers many resources and tools to equip Catholic Families such as www.milarch.org/ams-family-faith-assessment and www.milarch.org/faith-formation. Additional online resources include:

- 1) www.formed.org provides movies, children's programs, ebooks, audio books, etc., from several Catholic organizations to assist individuals and families with faith development.
- 2) www.dynamiccatholic.com provides adult, children and young adult books, CD's, DVD's, etc.
- 3) www.tinysaints.com provides Gospel reflections and coloring pages for children.
- 4) www.osvnews.com and www.osvcatholicbookstore.com offer a variety of topics and resources for all ages.
- 5) www.thatresourcesite.com offers free resources for parents and catechists.
- 6) www.shininlightdolls.com provides downloads of coloring pages and activity sheets.

7) Additional Resources:

- [Http://www.uscb.org/calendar/index.cfm](http://www.uscb.org/calendar/index.cfm) for Mass Readings
- <https://www.milarch.org/ams-app/> resources for spiritual growth
- <http://www.usccb.org/about/communications/usccb-president-reflection-and-prayer-during-coronavirus.cfm> prayer
- Daily Mass streamed on EWTN
- Daily Mass from Word on Fire in Bishop Barron's private chapel
- Chaplain (CPT) McDermott's audio homily and prayer. Contact Michele Puehler to be added to the list:
Michele_puehler@hotmail.com
- www.amsfamilyfaithassessment.com Catholic Religious Ed

CREATING COMMUNITY

Virtual Gatherings – USAG Wiesbaden RSO

- Ebooks for CRE; contact michele_puehler@hotmail.com

- b. General Protestant.** Weekly worship can be live-streamed on social media, recorded and distributed, or sermons emailed to adherents. Other social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram can be used to share devotional thoughts and messages. Directors of Religious Education (RE) can digitally publish RE products and lessons synchronized with weekly lectionary readings or worship themes. Bible Studies could be moved to an online media such as a Facebook group. Provide prayer and counseling using prudent social distancing.
- 1) www.sermons4kids.com provides free coloring pages, puzzles, children's sermons and video lessons.
 - 2) www.bibleappforkids.com is a Christian resource for parents based on the popular Bible App for Kids for iOS, Android and Kindle devices. Bible App for Kids offers parents free resources like activities, curriculum, and videos.
 - 3) www.adventurebible.com is a fun, free website for Christian kids to enjoy interactive games and activities.
 - 4) www.ministry-to-children.com provides children's ministry curriculum and ideas for children's church.
 - 5) www.childrensministry.com/free-sunday-school-lessons offers free bible lessons for children.
 - 6) www.sunday-school-center.com provides Sunday school materials.
 - 7) www.biblestudytools.com/sunday-school-lessons provides lessons, topics and encouraging words from the bible.
 - 8) www.Pureflix.com offers online streaming movies with Christian values.
- c. Liturgical Protestant.** Chapels can live-stream worship services and Bible studies. Services of daily prayer, such as those found in the "Book of Common Worship" (WJKP, 2018), "Glory to God," (WJKP, 2013), "PC (USA) Daily Prayer," or the Episcopal "Book of Common Prayer," can be used in private or family worship. The Vanderbilt University online Revised Common Lectionary or Book of Common Prayer also offer daily worship resources (www.bcponline.org and www.lectionary.library.vanderbilt.edu). Primary resources of private or family worship are the Revised Common Lectionary's assigned reading of a Psalms, Old and New Testament scriptures, and prayers of thanksgiving and intercession. A reading from a devotional book or the watching/hearing of a recorded sermon may be included after the reading of Scripture. For more information and resources consult denominational websites, such as Methodist, Presbyterian, Reformed, Lutheran, Episcopal, American Baptist Churches, United Church of Christ, Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Anglican, Church of the Brethren, etcetera. POC: CH (MAJ) Ray Santillano, IMCOM HQ RSO Comptroller.

CREATING COMMUNITY

Virtual Gatherings – USAG Wiesbaden RSO

Church Next, www.churchnext.tv/p/churchnext, provides engaging and convenient online learning from Episcopal experts on liturgy, evangelism, discipleship, stewardship and other important faith topics.

- d. Protestant LDS.** From the Official Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints announcement regarding worship during COVID-19, dated 12 March 2020: “Beginning immediately, all public gatherings of Church members is temporarily suspended worldwide until further notice. This includes stake conferences, leadership conferences and other large gatherings; all public worship services, including sacrament meetings; and branch, ward and stake activities. Where possible, leaders should conduct any essential leadership meetings via technology. Bishops should counsel with their stake president to determine how to make the sacrament available to members once a month.” URL: <https://newsroom.churchofjesuschrist.org/article/gatherings-worldwide-temporarily-suspended>
- www.churchofjesuschrist.org/children is an online children’s resources that provide games, activities, videos, music and more.
- e. Jewish.** CH (COL) Shmuel Felzenberg provided the following guidance: Public health/safety to include their own health and well-being and that of their family and especially in time of a pandemic trumps, greatly impacts, or even precludes in many cases much of religious observance. Examples include suspension of public services, even for those with specific obligations involved (e.g., recitation of memorial prayers etc.), though in some cases virtual/live on-line alternatives can perhaps be an option. However, medically speaking, this all varies by region (based on local health directives) and thus critical to consult with a local Rabbi. Centralized guidance cannot be completely prescriptive/specific, other than to inform about the importance of safety and well-being and the localized need to consult with a competent religious authority for specific answers, options, and/or stand-down guidance. Please note I state a "competent" religious authority/rabbi, thus a credentialed ordained rabbi in good standing is required, not a DRGL/ Lay-leader nor DRE, nor other, etc. It will be an official who is authorized to give the proper detailed guidance and/or refer (to another and/or higher authoritative religious source) as needed. In sum, practice social distancing, religiously pray/observe/learn privately in your own four walls, give charity online (as a suitable tithing outlet) for as Jewish Tradition states "charity saves from death" - most literally and without exaggeration.
- 1) www.bimbam.com offers an animated series that teaches Jewish traditions, values and lessons.
 - 2) www.torahlive.com offers online games, quizzes, student workbooks and lesson plans.
 - 3) www.bethyeshurun.org and www.wbtla.org/live-stream are just two examples

CREATING COMMUNITY

Virtual Gatherings – USAG Wiesbaden RSO

that provide livestreaming Shabbat services.

- 4) www.insidechassidus.org provides stories and lessons.
- 5) www.TorahCafe.com is a Jewish video site that provides free Torah classes.
- 6) www.Chabad.org internet site providing a virtual congregation.
- 7) www.sichainsightsree.captivate.fm insights from Rabbi Elie Estrin.
- 8) www.jem.tv provides resources for all ages.
- 9) www.aish.com offers numerous resources, articles and studies.
- 10) www.ou.org Orthodox Union provides various resources.
- 11) www.myjli.com is a Jewish learning center to assist Jews with studying the Torah.

d. Islamic. If Command guidance is for cancellation of all services, Friday service will be cancelled and adherents will observe the regular afternoon prayer individually in lieu of the congregational Friday prayer service. Virtual services will not be provided because the regular afternoon prayer will suffice for reason of necessity. POC: CH (COL) Dawud Agbere, Senior Chaplain, MCoE and Fort Benning.

- 1) www.soundvision.com delivers numerous resources for Muslim families.
- 2) www.muslimkids.tv offers Islamic songs, games, books, coloring pages and worksheets for children 2-12 years.

e. Buddhist. Bishop Kodo Umezu of the Buddhist Churches of America instructs the following on the buddhistchurchesofAmerica.org website: “Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, many temple and church services and events have been cancelled or postponed until further notice. Though you are not able to physically be at your temples and churches, you can listen to the chanting of Juseige, Sanbutsuge and Junirai on our website. When we put our hands together and recite the Nembutsu, we are reminded that we are always within the compassionate heart of Amida Buddha. Shinran Shonin teaches us that we are always with the Buddha no matter where we may be or what condition we are living in. Though we live in this world of uncertainty, the Nembutsu teaching makes us realize that we are constantly grasped by the realm of Oneness. Nothing can destroy our Life. Let us continue to live our lives in accord with the compassionate heart of Amida Buddha.”

- 1) www.dharmasun.org offers advice on how to live a meaningful life of compassionate wisdom in accordance with the Buddha’s views.
- 2) www.buddhanet.net provides online magazine, eLibrary and Buddhist study resources.
- 3) www.vipassana.com/resources includes online teachings, meditations, contemplations, and more.

CREATING COMMUNITY

Virtual Gatherings – USAG Wiesbaden RSO

4) www.buddhist-directory.org offers links to over a 100 Buddhist resources.

f. Religious education resources on Army sites:

- 1) <https://home.army.mil/imcom-europe/index.php/commandinfo/RSO>, IMCOM-Europe RSO.
- 2) [https://army.deps.mil/army/cmds/imcom HQ/Chaplain/SitePages/DRE.aspx](https://army.deps.mil/army/cmds/imcom%20HQ/Chaplain/SitePages/DRE.aspx), IMCOM HQ Chaplains DRE Share Point.
- 3) <https://usachcstraining.army.mil/religious-education>, United States Army Chaplain Center and School Religious Education.

g. A search for “Religious People” on YouTube channels provides resources for various faith groups

For direct access to RightNow Media, use your smart phone’s camera to scan the QR code:



For more information, please contact:

Religious Support Office

USAG Wiesbaden

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