

WHAT NOW?

A creative tool to help congregations
make decisions in the age of Covid-19



In the stormy seas of 2020 where do you find yourself?

Take two minutes to consider where you find yourself at the moment. Then, take another two minutes to think of someone in your congregation or local community who is having a different experience to you. Where do they find themselves?





INTRODUCTION

As congregations, we are in the midst of an uncertain and unsettling season. Our local communities are affected in many different ways and there are challenges everywhere we look. Making decisions as leaders has never been harder. However, our mission and purpose as congregations has not changed. Indeed, the need is all the greater. This tool will help you identify how you can creatively respond to the challenges of Covid-19 and make important decisions in faithful and creative response to the needs in your congregation and local community.

HOW TO USE THIS TOOL

This tool is designed for leadership teams within a congregational context. This may be the volunteer board, a staff team, a specific ministry team within the church, or any other set of leaders that would benefit from this process. This PDF can be printed and written on or filled in by typing in the spaces.

This tool considers all the activities of congregational life. If you only want to focus on the question of how to meet together for services, please download our tool, [How Will We Gather?](#)

SECTIONS

Mission & Purpose

Needs

Constraints

Activities

Resources

Brining it all together

Action Plan



Group and solo activities

This tool was designed with the idea that some of these questions need to be answered by each individual on the team and other activities are designed to be done collectively as a group. The individual activities are divergent (coming up with lists and ideas) and the group activities are convergent (choosing what matters the most). Where the activity is for the individual there will be a clear icon to watch for!



Timing

In our experience, a key ingredient for creative conversations is vitality – a combination of energy and direction. Additionally, time constraints can actually help push for consensus and agreement. To keep things moving, every activity has a time-limit icon like the one here. Appoint a member of the team to act as time-keeper, helping to usher the conversation to the outcomes required. Some people love this role. Others do not! (Hint: you might need to share the responsibility).



If you get stuck or need to move on...

Make use the parking lot (on p.6). It is easy in groups to run down rabbit trails... but use the parking lot to park those important conversations to come back to and stick to the time constraints and process of this tool to get all the benefits of it!



Preparing to run the workshop

This workshop requires a few different roles.

Facilitator – someone who guides the overall process and encourages engagement from all participants.

Timekeeper – keeping track of progress on each page.

Scribe – someone who fills in the PDF – either the printed or online version.

These roles can be filled by one person but it is better to share the responsibilities. **The facilitator will need to spend some time preparing – see the next page for a guide on running the workshop.**



THREE WAYS TO “PLAY”

In person

×1 3.5HR SESSION

Work through the whole process in person alternating between individual work and group discussion. Take a break halfway through at a good stopping point (perhaps after the Activities section).

Online or by phone

×2 2HR SESSIONS AFTER INDIVIDUAL PRE-WORK IS DONE

Send each team member this tool by email or in the mail. Ask them to complete all of the individual pages in advance of the first meeting.

When you gather by video conference or phone, work through the group exercises from the beginning through the Activities section (page 19) in the first session. In your second session work through the Resources (page 20) section through the end of the process.

If one of your team can share a view of their computer screen online, have them type group responses on a master copy of the fillable PDF. Individuals team members can also follow along keeping notes on their own copy. When holding discussion online or over the phone take extra care to invite all participants to share and provide feedback.

Online alternate option using shared online documents

×2, 1.5HR SESSIONS

Follow the same directions for the online/phone use except in addition to sending team members the PDF also send them this [Google form](#) to collect their input. Click on the link, create a copy of the Google Form in your own Google account, and then share the form with the members of your team. Ask them to enter their pre-work answers in the form as they complete the individual activities.

When you meet together by video conference work through the group sections of the process in the same way but as you go the convener can share the written responses that individuals entered in the Google form. Pull up the response tab of the form and then share your screen with the group This approach has the benefit of allowing all voices to be heard and visible and collects all individual responses in one place. It will also save time in the sharing process as each person will not need to verbally report out their thoughts/ answers.

The same convener or another member of the team can keep a master document of the tool and individuals can still follow along with their own copies.

There is a google form if you choose to use it for your group discussions. On clicking this link, click the button to choose to make your own copy of the form.

<https://bit.ly/WhatNowGoogleForm>



GOING DEEPER

Check out the Going Deeper Bonus PDF for more tools for your team to use.

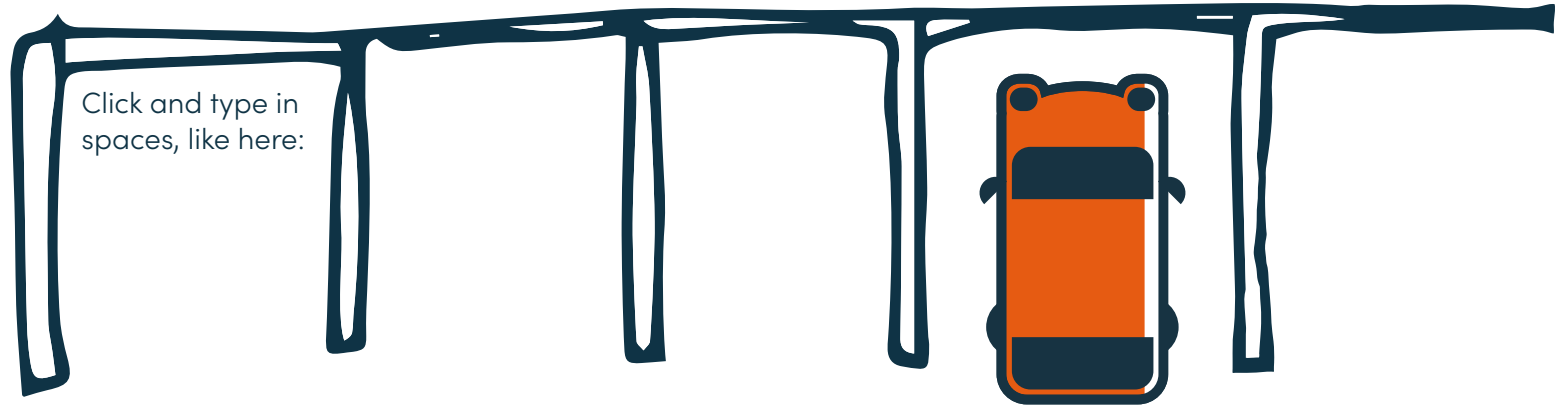


Feel free to adapt the tool further for your context. Some ideas you may consider:

- If your team wants to spend more time or go a little slower break the process into three or four 2 hour sessions.
- You may want to return to one or more parts of the process again in a couple of months as circumstances evolve.
- Consider using additional online collaboration tools such as those built into Zoom, the online whiteboard Miro, Google Docs, etc.

PARKING LOT

Finding yourself heading down a rabbit trail or struggling to find consensus? Maybe someone has had a great idea but it is not for now. Or you get stuck as you need information that you don't have to hand. Park these conversations in the parking lot. This helps you acknowledge that they are important while being able to move on. (Though make sure to come back to them at a later date).



Click and type in spaces, like here:



Example: "What does our insurance provider recommend about liability when gathering while COVID-19 is around?"





MISSION & PURPOSE

The first step to responding creatively to our rapidly changing context is reminding yourselves of your mission and purpose as a congregation. While a lot is changing, your core mission and purpose remains the same. Indeed, there are aspects of your mission and purpose that are needed now more than ever.



Remember some of the following activities are meant for each member to do on their own and others are meant to do together!

ACTIVITY: WHAT WORDS DESCRIBE US AT OUR BEST?



Part One - 3 minutes

As individuals, spend 3 minutes coming up with three words that you think capture aspects of your congregation when you are at your best. For example: generous, welcoming, radical, compassionate.



1

2

3



Part Two - 6 minutes

Then, come together as a group and share the words. Choose the five that most resonate with the group. This can be done by having everyone vote for their favorite word (it might be a word someone else came up with) until you have five.



e.g. Generous



ACTIVITY: POSTCARDS FROM THE FUTURE

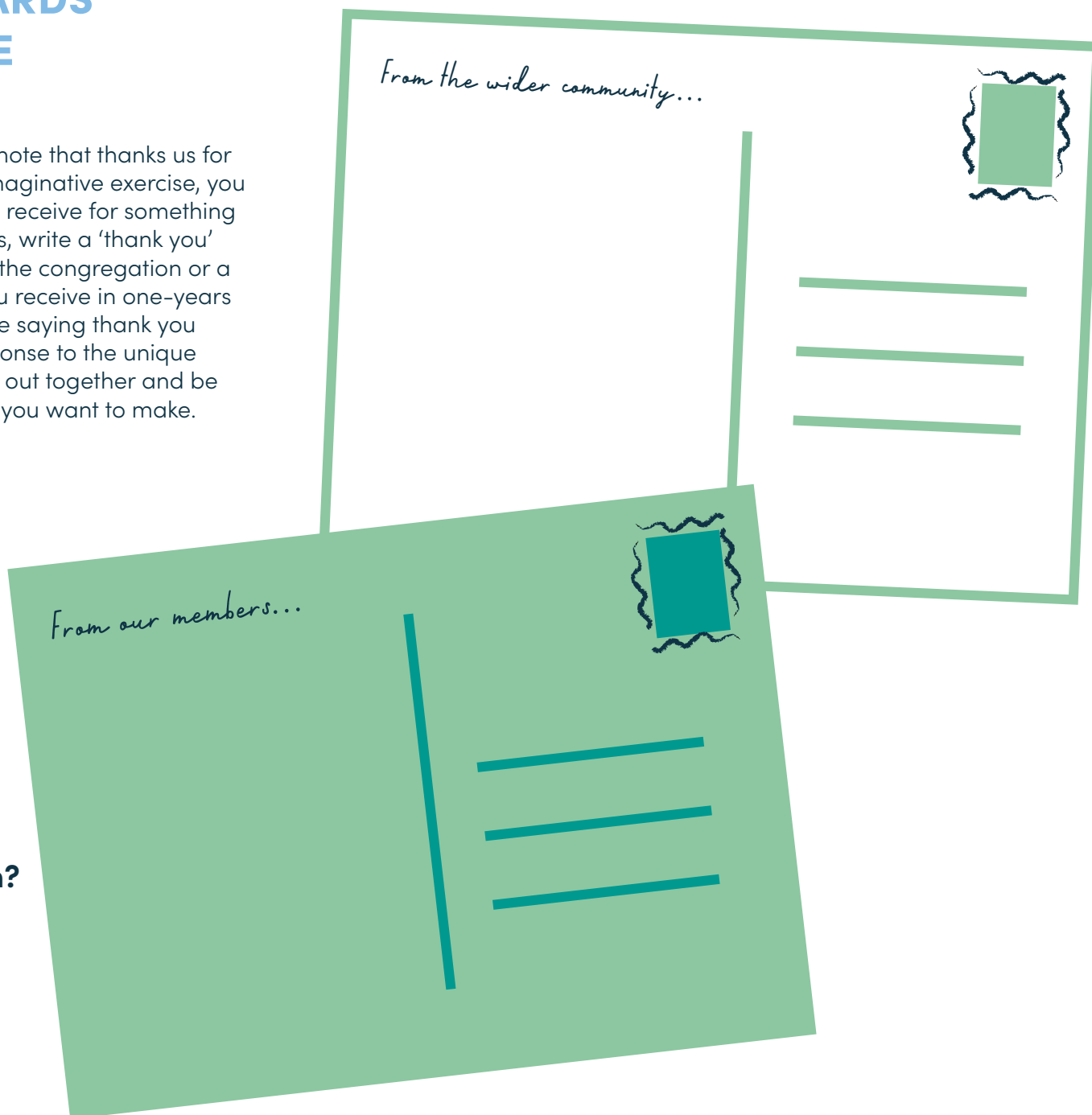


10 minutes



It is always wonderful to receive a note that thanks us for something we have done. In this imaginative exercise, you will write a thank you note that you receive for something you haven't done yet! As individuals, write a 'thank you' postcard from either a member of the congregation or a neighbor in the community that you receive in one-year's time. The postcard is from someone saying thank you to the church for what it did in response to the unique challenges of Covid-19. Read them out together and be encouraged - this is the difference you want to make.

In one year, what do we want our members and community to say about our congregation?





NEEDS OF OUR MEMBERS AND OUR COMMUNITY

You love and care about your members and the people in your neighborhood and community. Together, discern what your members need right now and imagine what they might need over the next three to six months.

Don't worry right now about how to meet these needs – just focus on identifying needs at this stage.

- SPIRITUAL NEEDS**
(connection with God, prayer, hope, etc.)
- PHYSICAL NEEDS**
(health, food, etc.)
- EMOTIONAL NEEDS**
(mental health, stress, etc.)
- RELATIONAL NEEDS**
(connection, touch, conversation, etc.)
- PRACTICAL NEEDS**
(childcare, transportation, etc.)
- OTHER NEEDS**



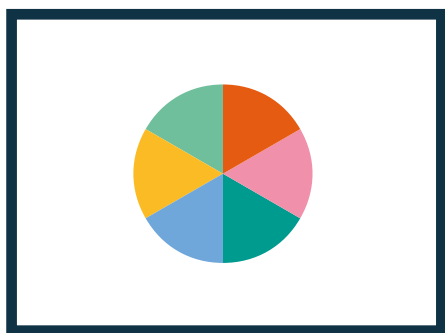
ACTIVITY: MAPPING OUR NEEDS



Part Two – 20 minutes



Take it in turns to share the needs you have identified as individuals. Then, spend 10 minutes discussing these needs, adding any to the list that might emerge through this discussion. Then together decide upon the four most important needs for members of the congregation and the four most important needs for the wider community. Write them down here. Then, add these to the Raw Materials board, on page 27.



For our wider community

Four dotted circles arranged horizontally, each containing a green number:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4

For our members

Four dotted circles arranged horizontally, each containing a blue number:

- 1
- 2
- 3
- 4



CONSTRAINTS

COVID-19 has created a lot of constraints on what we can do and made many of our normal activities risky or impossible. These constraints may be layered upon other limits in time, finances, or other resources that your congregation was already facing prior to the pandemic. A key step in developing plans is to name these constraints - not to dwell on them, but to be clear about what you are facing.



CONSTRAINTS AS OPPORTUNITY

Constraints are an opportunity to think differently and even have the potential to become assets. Some of the most amazing innovations in history have come about as a result of facing unexpected limits or constraints and coming up with new ways of doing things. Some of the most resilient companies – from Microsoft to Trader Joe’s – started during a recession. Some of the most significant theological works have been written during a time of crisis: consider Augustine’s *The City of God* during the fall of the Roman Empire and Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s *Life Together* in the midst of Nazi Germany.

There is hope even in the most dire of situations. During WWII bombs created craters in the ground all over London. Shortly thereafter flowers that had been assumed to be extinct for decades popped up from the earth when their seeds were exposed to sun and rain in the soil. New life and hope can emerge anywhere.

Take a moment and think about a scripture passage that has helped you see a new possibility in the past.



ACTIVITY: ACKNOWLEDGING OUR CONSTRAINTS



Part One - 10 minutes



List the primary constraints facing your congregation that prevent you from doing your typical activities or activities that you would like to do. Think of constraints that match the time frame you are planning for. For example, if you are planning for the fall then think about the constraints you will likely face then. You may want to list the “worst case” constraints – it is always easier to pivot back to activities that become possible than to make adjustments for more limits.

Constraints may fall into more than one category, just pick one to put each into. If you get stuck on something that you aren’t sure about, such as what your insurance carrier recommends, write it down and also put it in the parking lot at the end of this tool so you can come back and gather that information at a later time.

HEALTH AND SAFETY CONCERNS

(example: recommendations to avoid singing due to transmission risk)

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GOVERNMENT/LEGAL RESTRICTIONS

(example: state or county restrictions on gathering)

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INSURANCE CONCERNS AND RISK MANAGEMENT

(example: insurance company recommendations)

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FINANCIAL LIMITS

(example: impact of COVID-19 on finances)

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PERSONNEL OR EXPERTISE LIMITS

(example: no one at church can produce video)

--	--	--

OTHER

--	--	--



*We need to move from
“We can’t because...”
to “We can if...”*

- FROM ‘A BEAUTIFUL CONSTRAINT’
BY ADAM MORGAN + MARK BARDEN



Part Two - 10 minutes



When you come back to this section as a group put each of the constraints your individual members have come up with on a list. (Make your lists either in a digital document or on physical paper). Discuss the list of constraints. Add new ones if they come up in conversation. Finish this exercise by listing the top 5 most difficult constraints on this page.



ACTIVITIES

The implications of Covid-19 have had a significant impact on a number of activities that a congregation would typically do. You have probably already found creative ways to adapt – perhaps moving services online, mailing sermons to members, creating an online giving platform. This section will help you identify how you need to respond to other typical activities you are involved in and what needs to change and what needs to be paused. This involves difficult decisions and it is important to grieve the loss when something important has to be stopped, at least for a while.



ACTIVITY: TYPICAL ACTIVITIES

10 minutes

Churches are busy places... In addition to worship services, bible studies, and prayer meetings you might typically be planning or running mission trips or vacation bible school, weekly dinners, a food pantry, literacy training, advocacy projects or sports clubs. You might also have day care or schools that run from your facility. As we mentioned before this tool is best done thinking in in short term chunks.

Consider a time period that is important for your planning, for example, the next three months, and list all of the core activities you would typically do during that time period.

More copies of this page can be found in the Going Deeper Bonus PDF.

ACTIVITY NAME	WHEN DOES IT HAPPEN?	HOW OFTEN DOES IT HAPPEN?
Bible study / Sunday school	Sunday morning	Weekly

ACTIVITY NAME	WHEN DOES IT HAPPEN?	HOW OFTEN DOES IT HAPPEN?
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ACTIVITY NAME	WHEN DOES IT HAPPEN?	HOW OFTEN DOES IT HAPPEN?
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ACTIVITY NAME	WHEN DOES IT HAPPEN?	HOW OFTEN DOES IT HAPPEN?
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ACTIVITY NAME	WHEN DOES IT HAPPEN?	HOW OFTEN DOES IT HAPPEN?
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ACTIVITY NAME	WHEN DOES IT HAPPEN?	HOW OFTEN DOES IT HAPPEN?
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ACTIVITY: STOPPING AND GIVING SPACE FOR GRIEF



10 minutes

Whilst this tool will focus on what congregations can do to creatively respond to the challenges and opportunities of this current moment, it is crucial to create space to acknowledge and name any grief and lament that might be present in this deeply painful time. There are activities that as a congregation you simply can't do in this current context or that just can't be the same. It is important to name these, and create a space for the grief that these changes create. Consider some of your core activities from the prior page given the constraints you have identified. Decide together what will you need to pause? What can continue? And what do you need to adapt for the current conditions?



Pause



Continue



Adapt



Not sure

ACTIVITY NAME:



RESOURCES - OUR ASSETS

It is all too easy to only focus on what you need and forget what you already have. When we do think about what we have, our culture shapes our thinking: we jump straight to counting the money. However, your congregation's assets are much more than just financial. You have all sorts of resources - some of which are obvious and others which might take some uncovering.

Seeing your resources with new eyes can help develop new ideas and unlock new possibilities.

ACTIVITY: MAPPING OUR RESOURCES



Part One – 10 minutes

In the following 2 pages generate a list of resources you have in different categories:



EQUIPMENT

(sporting equipment, cooking equipment, glass jars etc)

PEOPLE

(staffing, young adults, lay leaders, lots of doctors in the congregation – skills, gifts and talents AND free time)

FACILITIES

(family life center, mission houses, worship center, classrooms, parking lot, outdoor field)

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

(who do you know in the community, from outside the congregation that could be helpful?)

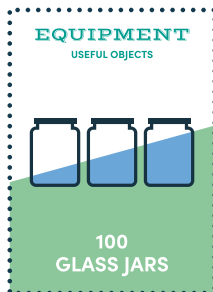
***You may not always
have exactly what you
need but you will have
something you can use
or leverage. Is there a
more creative way you
can use the obvious?***

- ROOTEDGOOD'S MISSION POSSIBLE GAME



Take 5 minutes. In the bubbles provided write down all of the equipment that the church has — everything from sticky notes and hymnals to basketballs and chalkboards. Then, write down all of the people that the church has — staff, volunteers, members, etc. For instance you might have a chef or a group of lawyers in your congregation, you might have a lot of retired folks or young people looking for work experience. Don't evaluate just list everything you can think of.

EQUIPMENT



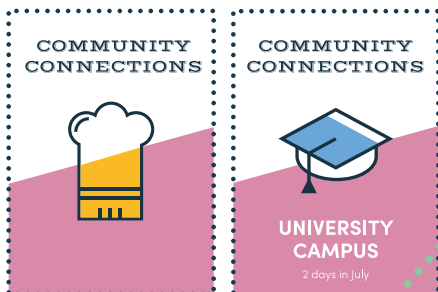
PEOPLE





Set the time for 5 minutes. In the bubbles provided write down all of the facilities that the church has — you might have classrooms or you might have some extra land that you have not built on in addition to your most used spaces. Then, write down all of the community connections that the church has — think about the non-profits you partner with or different organizations that you have or can collaborate with.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



FACILITIES





Part Two - 10 minutes

Give everyone in the group 10 seconds each to name the top 2 resources in each category that they are most excited about. Write these down on this page, then decide together which out of the list are the four resources for each category you want to choose. Jump ahead and write these four on the Raw Materials board, on page 27.

A large dotted green circle on the left, connected by a dotted line to a solid green circle on the right. Inside the solid green circle are four horizontal lines for writing.

INSPIRATION

We all have a tendency to want to go back to the way things were. However, this is a moment filled with opportunity. Remember God is with you, making all things new (Isaiah 43:18-19). Here are just a few ways people are re-imagining their spiritual practices.

Reimagining land use and serving neighbors

New ways of celebrating weddings

Reimagining bible study and VBS

Image: Reuters video screenshot by Leslie Katz/CNET

Reimagining memorials

When your Church is closed due to the CoronaVirus but you got people to baptize



Reimagining ritual

Image: J.L. Frew



Reimagining worship

Image: Grove Church, Marysville, WA



BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER

ACTIVITY: RESOURCES GAME



Part One: Raw Materials Board 3 minutes



In order to play the resource activity game, take all the work you have done from the previous sections and populate this page - the needs, resources and constraints. This will give you what you need to get creative!

Bring over the needs from page 12; the constraints from page 16; and the resources from page 24.

Our needs (from p12):

MEMBERS

1
2
3
4

WIDER COMMUNITY

1
2
3
4

Our resources (from p24):

EQUIPMENT

PEOPLE

FACILITIES

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS



Our constraints (from p16) :

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Part Two: Generating example ideas 5-15 minutes

On the following page take one of your needs and some of your resources and come up with new ideas for how you would use those resources to meet the needs of your members and wider community. This could be a brand new idea or an adaption of something you are currently doing. There is an additional copy in the Going Deeper Bonus PDF for you to use. Here is an example!

The need

Connection and
community

Our resources

Extra land

Extra capacity

Cars

Our resources

Extra capacity

lots of cars

phones

IDEA 1



Create a
community vegetable
garden - and food
delivery boxes

IDEA 2

Adopt a neighbor

Deliver soups or make
weekly phone calls

(Check out Coop Soups
<https://www.instagram.com/coopssoupstoshare>)



Checked against our constraints:

Lots of vulnerable/
elderly/at risk members

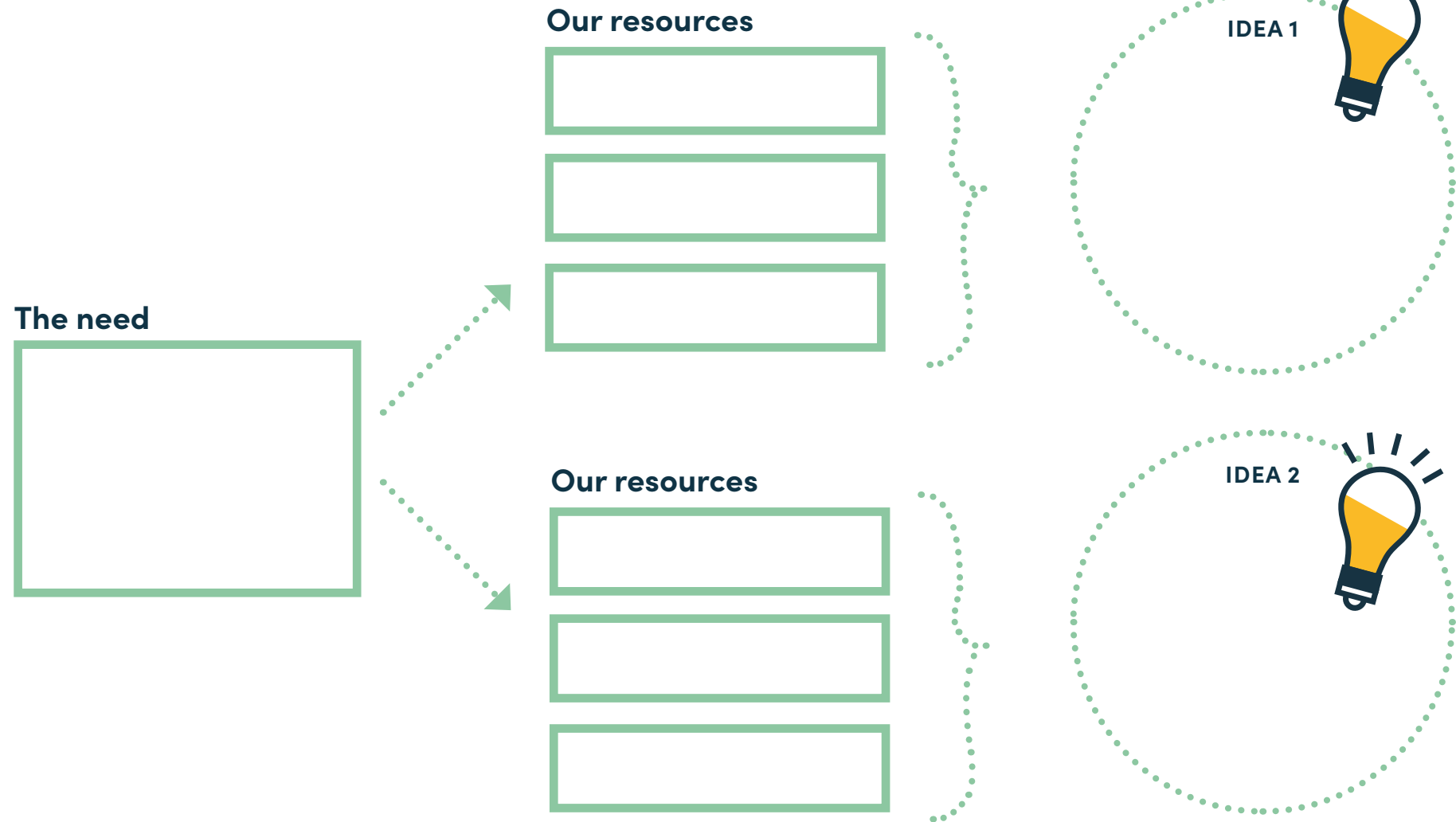
Social Distancing
still advised

Indoor activities
riskier than outdoor

Small staff

Budget is tight

Our Ideas



Checked against our constraints:

ACTION PLAN

Use this page to create an action plan for how you will implement the ideas you have developed.

ACTIVITY NAME (TYPICAL AND NEW)	ARE YOU STARTING OR ADAPTING? (CIRCLE ONE ICON)	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?	WHEN WILL WE START THIS?	IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE WE NEED TO DO THIS WELL?
	 			
	 			
	 			
	 			

Thank you for using this free tool. If you would like to make a donation to RootedGood in order to support our work, we would be grateful.

rootedgood.org/donate

We are passionate about making a difference. Please give feedback on your use of this tool and how it has helped [here](#).

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