

Guidelines for Small Group Gatherings during COVID 19

UPDATE October 20th, 2020

Not meeting as small groups in homes is one of many sacrifices we have made as a church to love our neighbors over the last few months. The SARS-CoV-2 infection protection ordinance of Berlin is updated regularly, depending on the current state of the pandemic in our city. One important part to fight this virus are private indoor gatherings. Since infection rates increased again in the past weeks and the city government decided upon new restriction, we want to update our Small Group Guidelines as well.

Not everyone may feel the same about these restrictions so please be sensitive to each other and maintain the unity of your group. We provide these guidelines because we want to continue to love our neighbors and group members by keeping them safe.

I. Recommendation for all Small Groups: Please meet online!

Most city districts are currently COVID-19 hotspots with high infection rates. Our city government is especially concerned about private gatherings that seem to spread the virus in the past weeks. Hence, our government recommends to not do any unnecessary physical gatherings. We support this recommendation and ask you, for the time being, to meet online. We know that some of you recently started to meet physically again and this recommendation might be hard for you. But we believe that in the current situation the best way to show love to our neighbors is to be as careful as possible.

If you need any assistance to move your group online, please don't hesitate to contact us. We love to help.

II. Rules for physical Small group meetings

If you decide to meet physically, please observe the following rules.

1. Attendance cap – observe legal restrictions (right now: 1 household + 5 people)

The city government decided on October 20th to limit private indoor gatherings to members of 1 household plus 5 people. These restrictions will be in effect on October 24th and can change on short notice soon. We will inform you if there are any changes. If you would like to be up to date with the situation and guidelines in Berlin, check out www.berlin.de/corona/en. If you have any questions, please contact us.

2. Location – Meet only in places where you can safely distance

Meeting outside is encouraged but since winter is coming, not very comfortable. Hosts should be prepared to clean and disinfect surfaces and objects that are frequently touched both before and after group (Door handles, chairs, restrooms, etc.).

3. Protection – Wear masks and observe hygiene rules

Wearing a mask is especially important when people are arriving and socializing. Once group members are safely distanced, masks may be removed at the discretion of the leader and participants. Please wash your hands when you arrive, especially if you took public transport.

4. Greetings – Greet from a distance

As much as we may want to greet each other with hugs and handshakes, for now the loving thing to do is to avoid physical contact.

5. Snacks – Bring your own snacks

We are big proponents of food at small group gatherings, but during this season we are recommending that groups not eat together. If you do choose to eat, encourage members to bring their own beverage and snack.



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6. No singing – Please worship in different ways

Crowd singing is not permitted at indoor gatherings amid fears that it spreads the virus more easily. Please choose other ways to worship our Lord.

7. Digital Option – Offer a digital option

Not everyone will feel comfortable attending in person at first so consider setting up a computer in your meeting area and using Zoom or some other application so that all group members can participate.

8. Childcare – Be cautious

Due to the challenge of distancing with young children, currently we are recommending that groups not bring children to meetings, unless there is sufficient space, or the group is small enough to manage the actions of children directly.

9. Illness – Stay at home if you are sick

Group members should stay home if they or anyone in their household is sick. If you have a temperature of 99.5 F (37,5 °C), please stay at home regardless of how you feel. If you have been in contact with someone with COVID-19, quarantine yourself for 14 days.

10. High Risk Individuals – Stay home if you are in a high-risk category

Those who are 65+ or who have serious underlying health conditions should join online rather than in-person. Groups comprised largely of high-risk individuals are encouraged to continue meeting virtually.

11. Expect high emotion – These are difficult days

Don't explain away what's going on. Presence and listening skills are of primary importance now--more than solutions. Racial tension, political division, and threats of a resurgence of COVID-19, reminds us that God is in control and we need to always remember that everyone is at a different place in each category.

12. Fellowship – Enjoy making a healthy small group

Regardless of whether you meet virtually or physically, Christ's command is that we build healthy small groups by balancing the five Biblical purposes in our groups and our lives – Fellowship, Discipleship, Serving, Evangelism and Worship. So, stay healthy--physically and spiritually!

13. Pray – Remember that this is a spiritual battle

“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in his mighty power. Put on the full armor of God, so that you can take your stand against the devil's schemes. For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms.”

Ephesian 6:10-12

III. Contact

In case you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact us:

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