



Pod Leaders' Guide

Connect with your Pod in Two Ways:

1. A group text thread (write every few days)

- The group text is a place for checking in, sharing joy, and connecting.
- Write every few days to see how everyone is doing
- Invite people to take part in something fun, like sharing a picture of their favorite snack or something beautiful they saw today.
- Invite your pod to share their **feelings** more than **opinions**, using **“I feel”** statements. For instance, “I’m feeling frustrated by how slowly the government is moving and it’s making me feel anxious,” rather than “We all know that Governor Hogan should really...because...”
- Also, check in to see if anyone has any physical needs (food, meds, transportation). Some congregants might prefer to tell you about these privately. It can be hard or bring up feelings of shame to ask for help.

2. Personal phone calls (call every week or so)

- Leaders, call your pod members on the phone *about* every week. Some might prefer less contact, which is fine.
- This is a space for compassionate, nonjudgmental listening.
- Remember that you are not a therapist, just a listening ear. If you become concerned, contact Emily.
- Some pod members might really want to talk. Others might not want to.

Weekly Pod Leaders Check In

- Pod leaders will have a weekly zoom conversation with Emily, to share how it’s going, support each other, and communicate any problems or concerns.

Compassionate Listening Techniques

- Remember that your job is to create space for someone to feel heard. There's a lot about this situation you can't fix, but you can listen.
- Being "witnessed" is a powerful experience. In fact, it is often more powerful than being "helped"
- Listen to understand and empathize first.
- Then, Aim to ask open and honest questions (questions you don't know the answers to), as Parker Palmer teaches.

Empathetic Responses

- "It sounds like this has really been difficult"
- "I can't imagine what that's like. I'm so sorry this is so hard."
- "That sounds incredibly frustrating."
- "That would make me feel anxious too!"

Non-Empathetic Responses (these are bad!)

- "You should try this new thing I just tried"
- "Well at least you're not older, then this would be harder"
- "I'm sure you'll feel better soon."
- "We just have to be strong and get through this"
- "Why didn't you fix this months ago?"

Open and Honest Questions

- These are questions we don't know the answer to.
- They well up from within us during deep listening.
- They do not come from our own curiosity or desire to fix.
- Examples of open and honest questions:
 - "What's the hardest part about it?"
 - "What would you tell her if she was still here?"
 - "I wonder what healing looks like for you?"

-Drawn from Parker Palmer

Responses to Trauma

- We are in a traumatic situation and everyone will handle stress differently. Expect reactions that may not match up with your expectations.
- Some people may state their needs very clearly, while others may push you away.
- Some may disassociate or feel very disconnected from what's happening emotionally.

- Some may respond very strongly (in an outsized way) to something that “seems small,” or act in ways that don’t “make sense.”
- Remember that this trauma can trigger past traumas or latent mental illness issues. Remember also that some of our congregants do not have stable incomes and are under incredible financial stress.

Caring for yourself

- You are doing intense emotional work in a time of crisis.
- You’re doing this work while *you* are experiencing stress and trauma as a result of this crisis
- Take time before your phone call to find a place to sit, take a few breaths, pray, and remember that you are not God. You cannot fix everything that is wrong.
- After the phone call, plan to have a cup of tea or take a walk to decompress.
- Notice how this work is effecting your own body and soul.

When to Contact Emily

- When a congregant needs physical help that is not easily managed by the group.
- When you feel that a congregant is overwhelmed emotionally or physically, and is having difficulty coping. Ask them if you can share with me that you are having a hard time.
- If a congregant is indicating that they feel like they want to die. Ask them if they have a plan. If they don’t, **call** Emily immediately. If they do, tell them you need to call 911.

Dropping off or Picking UP

- The COVID-19 virus can live on cardboard for 24 hours and plastic and metal for 72 hours. If you or another pod member chooses to drop something off at someone’s house, it needs to sit out for 24 hours after being dropped off.
- Retain 6’ of distance at all times.

Sample Phone Call Script

Hi _____, I was just calling to check in and see how you’re doing!
How today going so far?

[listen empathetically]

I'm so glad we had time to talk this through. It sounds like you're [mirror what you've heard.] This is a really hard time for so many of us, so you're not alone.

I wanted to make sure that you have everything you need in terms of medication or supplies. Is there anything you need help with?

And you know how to access Dreams and Visions' vespers services, online or on the phone?

Well I'm excited to connect with you [at Vespers,] and I'll see you on the text thread or call back next week sometime!

Would you like to close by praying together?

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Emily's Contact Information

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