



**GUIDELINES FOR
BLESS A COMMUNITY**

**LOCAL CHURCH
ENGAGEMENT**

WHY IMPACT Now?

Our Mission

As we stepped into 2020, we were challenged as a church to turn our focus outwards; to reach out and bless the nations represented here in Malaysia and beyond. With the launch of IMPACT 2020 and the tagline, 'You, Me, The Nations,' the call to GO was clear. The road maps were drawn up, opportunities lined up, travel plans underway and many geared up to go. Then, came the unexpected. The pandemic drove us to rethink how we can make an IMPACT in this new landscape.

The lockdown brought about unforeseen hardships to many individuals, families, and communities. The sense of safety from staying indoors were overshadowed by fear and uncertainty of the future, financial difficulties, mental and emotional stress, and for some, unsure about their next meal. Amidst these gloomy times, it was heartwarming to hear of many kind, selfless and courageous individuals reaching out in different ways to support those in dire need. Some delivered food packs to the needy, others bought groceries for their elderly neighbours, while many donated sacrificially to support those struggling financially; testament that everyone of us can make an impact, right where we are.

Motivated by His love for us, we want to continue to be a church who loves God and serves people in every season. We see wide fields of opportunities before us, where we, as a church can make a meaningful and lasting impact here in our beloved nation. IMPACT Now is a timely strategy to grow us as an outward-looking church who loves God, serves people, and makes disciples. The three-pronged strategy is this:

SERVE THE NEEDY | BLESS A COMMUNITY | FUND AN INITIATIVE

These projects are designed to meet the urgent needs of the communities around us in this time of difficulty. You are encouraged to take part together as a Cell Group (CG) in as few or as many projects as you like. A team of Project Leaders will be the key liaison personnel.

The Holy Spirit will empower you to be prayerful, be prophetic in your ministry and be creatively practical as you serve. Depend on Him and look out for how God will work in your own heart and those you reach out to!

The time to make an IMPACT is Now! Let us not lose sight - our mission to bless the nations remains though our methods may change. There is no pause in missions. God's work continues, and people need Jesus more than ever. We, His people are here for such a time as this. Embrace His heart for the broken, the lost and the least. Will you obey His call?

Our Values

In all your interactions, whether virtually or in-person, let us **represent CHRIST well** and **be led by His Spirit** as we **honour one another**.

*And whatever you do or say, do it as a representative of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks through him to God the Father. **Colossians 3:17***

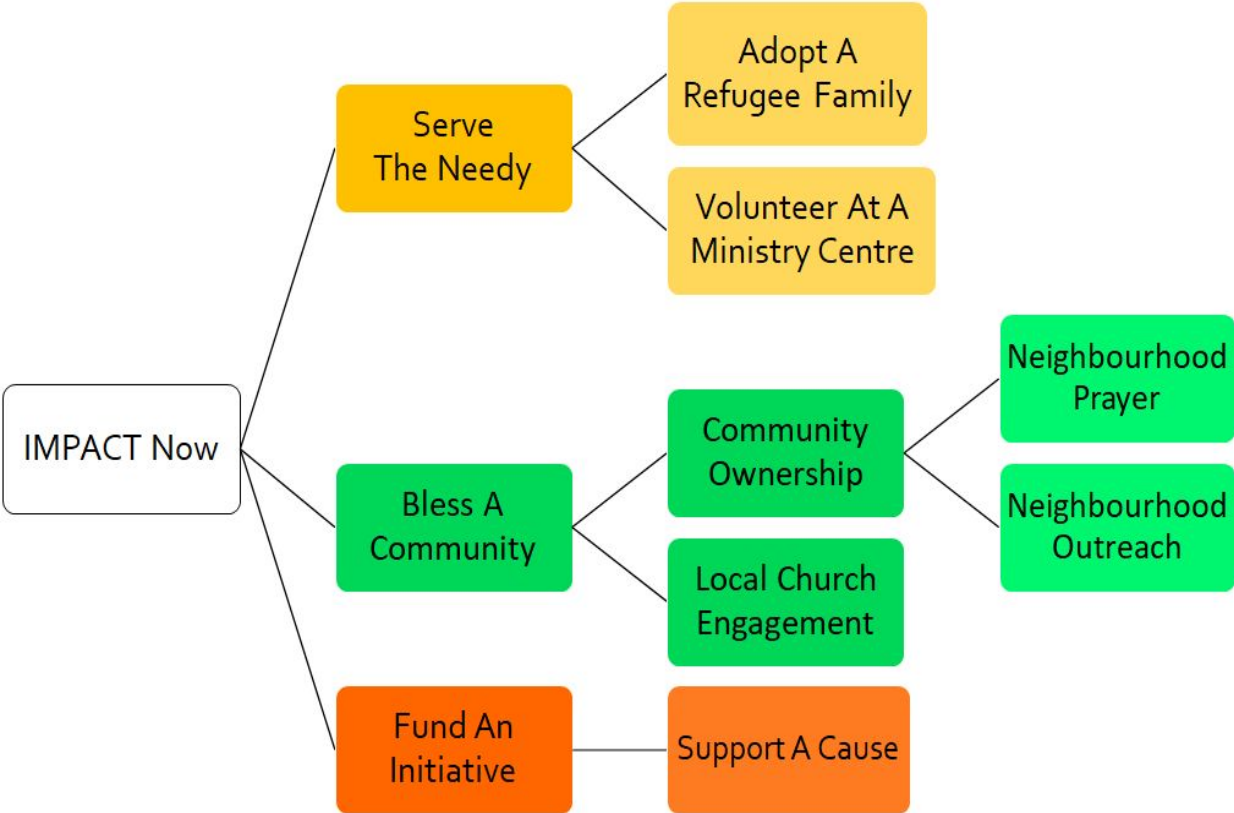
*Teach me to do your will, for you are my God; may your good Spirit lead me on level ground. **Psalm 143:10***

*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. **Ephesians 4:2-3***

Let us heed the call to go, and be salt and light where He has placed us. Be strong and courageous and may the fruit of the Spirit be seen in and through us as we step out to make an impact for His glory.

Overview

The chart below outlines the three main strategies of IMPACT Now and the sub-categories where CGs can be involved in. The following is a general view of the stages involved in an IMPACT Now project.



IMPACT Now PROCESS FLOW



PL: Project Lead; ZC: Zone Champions; ZL: Zone Leaders; ZP: Zone Pastor
 *for Serve The Needy projects

Health & Safety

Below are the general Covid-19 guidelines¹ from the Ministry of Health, Malaysia. Please adhere to these preventive measures at all times and abide by current and future guidelines for the interest of public health. Remember to protect yourself and others.

Practise the **3Ws**:

- Wash** - wash your hands regularly with soap or use a hand sanitiser. Be mindful of high-touch surfaces including door knobs, stairs, lift buttons, etc.
- Wear** - wear a mask and change your mask once it is damp.
- Warn** - if you are unwell or show any symptoms of fever, cough, sneezing, sore throat, flu, or difficulty breathing, please stay at home, isolate yourself and seek your doctor's advice.

Cover your mouth and nose with tissue when you cough or sneeze, dispose tissue in a closed bin/tied up bag and wash/sanitise hands.

Social Distancing

- Avoid crowded areas.
- Always keep a distance of at least 1 metre from each other, including meal times at restaurants.
- Greet without physical contact.
- Use contactless delivery for delivery of food or packages.
- Virtual teaching and learning is encouraged.

IMPORTANT: If visitations are allowed, go in pairs and remember to observe Covid-19 preventive measures and social distancing. Be alert, wise and sensible with your personal belongings. We would like to encourage you to take extra precautions if you belong to the high-risk category of individuals.

High-risk category include:

- Senior citizens (those above 65 years old)
- Pregnant mothers
- Those with pre-existing illnesses (diabetes, cancer, high blood pressure, asthma, heart condition)
- Children (below 12 years old)

¹ As of 24th June 2020

Do's & Don'ts

These general guidelines apply when you're interacting with vulnerable peoples whether a refugee, children, or when volunteering at a ministry centre.

DO's:

- Pray before, during, and after your ministry and remember to be sensitive to His Spirit throughout
- Take care of your health and be considerate to others around you - remember to practise good hygiene and adhere to social distancing measures.
- In the interest of safety, conduct activities during day time rather than at night, whenever possible. Keep doors open and run activities in a visible, safe area.
- Always serve *in pairs* or more and observe the "Two Adults Rule" - which is, to never be on your own when serving for the accountability and safety of everyone.
- Listen more than you speak and communicate with gentleness and respect.
- Seek to get to know and understand the culture of the people you're reaching out to.
- Always maintain a patient, humble and pleasant disposition.
- Remember that your actions, body language, expressions and tone speak louder than words.
- Ask permission before you take photos, videos or information of recipients. Remember to respect their privacy, dignity and wishes - you are the guest, they are your host.
- Exercise good judgment, wisdom and discretion when sharing about yourselves, your faith, your cell group and the church.

DON'Ts:

- Act overly surprised or grossed out if the sights, smells and sounds including living situations, hygiene levels or when practices are not what you're used to.
- Criticise, be impatient, or show arrogance when certain situations may not meet your expectations.. Pray for grace, remain calm and try to express your thoughts in a positive, helpful way.
- Speak or treat any person impolitely, even when provoked. Pray for calmness and wisdom to be a good witness. Think long-term relationships.
- Comment or criticise political, religious or socio-economic situations.
- Make promises to offer help in cash or kind before consulting, discussing, praying, and discerning requests for help with your respective CG leader. Consult and discuss this with your CG leader prior and prayerfully decide. We do advise that the value of gifts are capped at RM200 per month.

- Give out your own phone number or that of your CG member without consent.
- Share or post personal information including names, contact information, addresses and the vulnerable people's background. Observe anonymity and respect the privacy and dignity of others.
- Take, use, circulate or post on social media or on online platforms any visuals (images or videos) of the recipients without their permission. Respect their dignity, confidentiality and be mindful of their safety concerns.

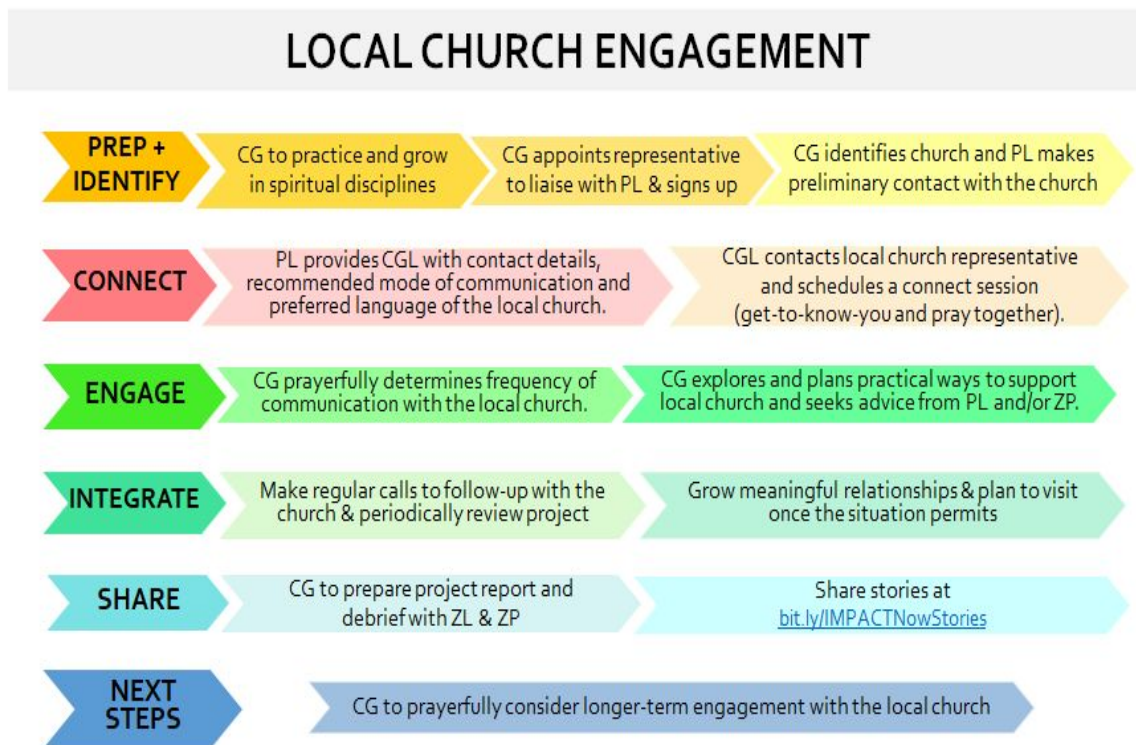
***IMPORTANT:** Many of those in need are from vulnerable, at-risk backgrounds. Please prioritise their safety, honour and protect the identities of the vulnerable individuals as well as the organisations, staff and volunteers serving them.

**BLESS
A
COMMUNITY**

BLESS A COMMUNITY: LOCAL CHURCH ENGAGEMENT

A. OBJECTIVE

As CGs are challenged to engage with the local churches virtually, we believe that God will open up our eyes to see and meet the needs of other churches around Malaysia. Through the engagements between CGs and the local churches, we hope that these relationships would mature over time - with CGs visiting the local churches to provide continuous prayer and practical support in the future when the situation permits. When it does, remember to adhere to Covid-19 preventive measures and practise social distancing as stated in the *Health & Safety Guidelines on pg. 5*.



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B. PREPARATION STAGE

1. Spiritual Disciplines

As we go out to bless others, we must grow in our spiritual disciplines to cultivate dependence on the Lord instead of our own abilities.

Every time you meet as a CG, here are 5 spiritual disciplines that you can do together.

a. Meditate on God's Word

God's Word is the number one authority of truth. His Word is unchanging, absolute and undeniable. He reveals His love, His nature and His will for us through the Scriptures. Apart from the Bible, we **CANNOT** know God.

To meditate on God's Word means to ponder on it, dwell on it, chew on it, roll it over in our minds in order that we may apply it in our lives. Instead of just reading many chapters in a day, meditate on a few verses for the whole day in your mind, letting the truth of God's Word sink deep into your heart.

Meditating on God's Word must be done regularly. Spend regular time reading Scripture. Make it a daily habit. The key is to take in God's Word on a regular basis and let God reveal truth to your heart in the process.

As a CG, spend time reading His Word - read Scripture to one another, study a passage together, encourage each other to memorise Scripture.

b. Giving Thanks

As we come to know God in all His goodness, we cannot help but give Him thanks for everything that we are, everything that we have and even what we do not have.

Giving thanks is not just a posture we have before meals or during year-end reflections, it is a response we can actively choose to have before God, in all things.

In your CG, make it a habit to share what you are each thankful to God for every time you meet together. Encourage each other to have a heart filled with thanksgiving to the Lord.

Enter his gates with thanksgiving and his courts with praise; give thanks to him and praise his name. Psalm 100:4

c. Pray

Prayer is an essential part of the Christian life. Prayer is not merely asking the Lord for help or strength. It is a daily discipline to align our hearts with God's.

As we come to God in prayer on a regular basis, we learn to rely on Him, cast our cares on Him, and humbly present our requests to God because He cares for us.

In preparation to connect with the local church, practise praying together as a CG - ask the Holy Spirit to open your heart to want what God wants, to feel what God feels, and to see what He sees in the people around us. Ask the Lord to reveal to you how to pray for the local church that your CG intends to engage with.

d. Fast

This spiritual discipline may not be a command but fasting is a great way to discipline our minds and bodies to pray and seek the Lord.

Fasting can be as simple as skipping a meal or two for a day or a week or fasting a day a week. Start small and build the habit of praying in the time you are fasting.

If the Lord impresses on your heart to fast on your own, go for it! If as a CG, you feel led to fast and pray to prepare to go out and serve others, do it together!

e. Serve

To serve is to put our faith into action. That is what we are aiming to do together as a church in IMPACT Now, but it doesn't start and end at IMPACT Now. Serving is a way of life as how Jesus has modelled it for us.

Serving others can be challenging because it requires discipline. There are times where we will not feel like serving others and in those times, we will need to look to Him for the grace to continue to do so.

Start the habit of serving others now. You don't have to wait until you go out into the field to serve. You can serve those around you right here and you can start by volunteering to serve in CG, if you haven't already done so.

2. Establishing The Lead Contact Person From Your Cell Group

Once your CG has selected a local church, nominate a person from the CG to be the main contact person for the project. This person should liaise directly with the respective Project Lead.

3. Establishing Preliminary Contact With The Local Church

After the Project Team has vetted your CG's selection of the local church, the Project Team will make the preliminary contact with that local church in order to establish the right person to contact and the mode of communication BEFORE your CG makes any connection with the said local church.

C. MAKING THE FIRST CONNECTION

1. How To Setup The First Meeting

The Project Team will provide the CG leader with details of the local church's contact person and the recommended mode of communication as well as the preferred language of communication. The Project Team will lead in coordinating between the local church and the CG leader to determine the mode of communication and the time and date of the first connect session between your CG and the local church.

2. Who From The Cell Group Should Participate In The First Call

Depending on the mode of communication, we would encourage as many CG members as possible to participate. Regardless, the CG leader, Assistant CG leader (if any) and the main contact person (if different from the CG leader) should be present in this first connect session. Be ready to communicate in the language that the local church leaders are most comfortable with to ensure effectiveness of communication.

3. What Tools or Technology Can The Cell Group Use

In reference to the Local Fields Selection Guide (refer to Appendix), locations can be divided into the 3 following categories:



WhatsApp or Zoom

No connection - WhatsApp

Google Meet or Zoom

Depending on Accessibility to Video Call Conferencing connectivity



4. Who From The Local Church Would Participate In The First Meeting

The Project Team would recommend for the local church to have their pastor and some or all of their leadership team to participate in this meeting (subject to the mode of communication that best suits the local church).

5. How Do We Start The Conversation And What Do We Talk About

The session need not be long, any duration between 30 to 60 minutes would suffice. However, both parties are welcome to talk longer if they wish to. We **do not** recommend recording the virtual sessions so as to respect the privacy and confidentiality of what the local church would be sharing.

The following are broad guidelines and conversation starters that your CG could use:

- Start by thanking those from the local church for participating in the call and for connecting with your CG.
- Have everyone from your CG introduce himself/herself and have those from the local church do the same.
- Share about your CG's background e.g. a brief history, how it grew, what is the mix (young adults, family with young children, mature group, etc).

- Ask the pastor or the contact person from the local church to do likewise - share about their church's background. This could naturally lead to the local church opening up to share the possible challenges they may be currently facing.
- It is important for your CG to not attempt to offer any solutions to their challenges and issues in this first conversation. Instead, practise active listening and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you in the conversation. Do encourage CG members to share their testimonies so that the session remains uplifting and encouraging.
- Ask and confirm with the local church what is the best way for your CG to continue to remain in touch with them and how frequently should both parties be connecting.
- Spend some time to pray for the local church and the leadership as you identify their needs through their sharing before you end the session.
- Do let the local church know that your CG will get back to them on how the CG could help with the needs of the church, within a reasonable and mutually agreed upon time frame.

D. ENGAGING THE CHURCH

1. Continuing The Engagement & Conversation

There is no prescribed frequency of the connect sessions. We recommend that your CG seek the counsel of the Holy Spirit in determining how often you should be connecting with the local church, taking into account the needs, availability and the resources of the local church as well as the availability and capacity of your CG.

If the local church has no specific needs but would like to remain in touch with your CG, that is fine as well. It would be good to try and keep regular contact (at a fixed frequency) with them till the end of year 2020.

If the local church prefers not to continue with the engagement after the first meeting, that is also fine as we do not want to impose upon them. If this happens, please inform your Zone Champion, Zone Pastor and the Project Team. If your CG would like to contact another church, do let the Project Team know and the Project Team will discuss with the CG leader and assign another church to your CG.

2. Adopting The Right Posture

CG members must adopt the following attitude at all times:

- be humble – in learning new things
- be flexible – in expecting that situations may change
- be adaptable – to take on new responsibilities assigned to you
- be submissive – to the team leader and assistant leader
- preserve unity – conflicts to be resolved swiftly

3. Avoid Controversial Subjects

In the process of engagement between your CG and the local church, there could be instances where conversations step into potentially controversial subjects such as:

- Speaking in tongues
- Usage of Bible versions
- Usage of musical instruments for worship
- How Holy Communion and baptism are conducted
- Doctrinal topics

CGs should endeavour to not let divisive topics, such as the above, or other similar topics divide themselves with the local church. Your CG's purpose is to serve and help the local church with no strings attached. If there are differences arising from such topics in the process of engagement, please refer to your Zone Pastor for counsel immediately as we do not want the relationship with the local church to be strained any further. Maintaining unity is fundamental in engaging with the local church as ***Ephesians 4:3-6*** reminds us:

“Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope when you were called; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all.”

4. Money Matters

In the first meeting or during any subsequent engagements, the local church may ask for financial assistance. Your CG is advised not to say yes immediately but at the same time, do not turn down their request outrightly. Your CG can respond by telling the local church leaders that they will discuss the request with your Zone Pastor. All financial support given has to be discretionary.

5. What Can The Cell Group Do To Support The Local Church

During the course of engagement, your CG may find that the local church could be facing some ministry or practical challenges. Below are some suggestions on what your CG can consider doing (subject to your CG's capability and capacity and the resources available).

- Help the local church get connected to DUMC online celebrations.
- Help to set up online meetings for their small groups or small church via Zoom, Skype etc. Be aware of certain limitations of each of the different tools suggested.
- Help to facilitate an online CG meeting for them or have them join your online CG meeting.
- Provide training to the local church on how to conduct and run a CG meeting.
- Lead and facilitate Bible studies with the local church.
- Help to lead a Bible study for new or young believers in the local church using materials and resources from DUMC.
- Provide training to the local church on how to run a children's programme within a CG.
- Just remain in regular contact with the local church - to pray and listen to them.

Do note that the suggestions above are non-exhaustive and your CG is encouraged to partner with the Holy Spirit to come up with creative ideas in helping the local church. If your CG needs any tools, materials or support, do contact the Project Team. The Project Team will be there to provide support and advice to your CG in the on-going efforts in connecting and engaging with the local churches.

6. Spiritual Guidelines For Teamwork With The Local Church

Spiritual disciplines help us to cultivate godly habits. These habits are largely built individually, although we can encourage one another in our own journeys of faith.

What then are some **spiritual guidelines** that we can follow to reflect Christ and enhance teamwork? Underlying these guidelines are 5 very familiar principles to us in DUMC.

a. Honour one another in speech, conduct and confidentiality

How we treat one another in comfortable and safe environments can reflect one's spiritual maturity. One way to grow in maturity in Christ is to grow in the way we interact with others.

How do we honour one another **in speech**? When someone else is sharing his/her opinion or idea, do not rush to cut the person off to share your opinion. Refrain from dismissing, ignoring or suppressing others when they are speaking. Listen intently and speak life and encouragement towards the other person.

How do we honour one another **in conduct**? Be kind and gracious to each other. Value everyone's time and make an effort to be early for meetings. Consider others in the things you do or plan to do.

How do we honour one another **in confidentiality**? As the team grows closer, and as some share their heartfelt struggles and pain, honour them by not sharing their story to others unless consent has been given. Build trust amongst the group to know that whatever is shared in the group, stays in the group.

b. Support and pray for one another

*If one part suffers, every part suffers with it. If one part is honoured, every part shares in its joy. You are the body of Christ. Each one of you is a part of it. **1 Corinthians 12:26-27***

We are all members of one body and Scripture tells us that we share in each other's suffering and joy. Make that practical by supporting each other in your words and deeds. Pray for one another's needs and challenges. Seek to keep each other together in unity.

'Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.' **Ecclesiastes 4:12**

These two guidelines are in line with our core habits - **Honour** and **Humility**. As we honour one another and support one another, it requires us to attribute worth to each other and that we do not think too highly of ourselves to not support and care for each other.

c. Seek to share your life appropriately with others

In the family of God, we are able to find support and care from those around us. Yet, it can be difficult to open up to others and share what we struggle with. It is vital that we try to share about our lives, allowing others to affirm and encourage, and perhaps even lovingly correct us. We must, however, share only what is appropriate with discernment.

Note: This guideline is not to be used to coerce others to share their deepest thoughts and hurts, rather it is to encourage us to not keep our masks up when we come together.

d. Create and maintain a safe environment

In order to encourage each other to share our lives appropriately, each person has a responsibility to create a safe space in the group. Confidentiality and a non-judgmental approach will go a long way to foster a safe environment for honest sharing.

This is in line with another one of our core habits - **Be Real**. We are part of the body of Christ where we can remove our masks and be authentic with one another in our walk with God. Together we each have a part to play to create and maintain that safe space between believers.

e. Encourage and affirm the growth in others

'Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.' **1 Thessalonians 5:11**

Scripture tells us to build each other up as fellow believers. What does that mean?

In addition to what has been mentioned above, do find opportunities to intentionally affirm the progress or growth someone else has made – however simple it may seem. Whether it is affirming someone after they have shared openly when they would otherwise be uncomfortable to share, or telling someone they did a good job after leading prayer for the first time, being proactive to affirm growth will encourage the team to persevere in their own journeys of faith.

This guideline is in line with our core habit - **Pass It On**. Discipleship remains a key part of our walk and encouraging and affirming one another is one step towards that.

The 5 Core Habits drive what we do as a CG. The last core habit, **Have Fun**, may not be in the spiritual guidelines but it is essential to our lives as fellow disciples. Keep meetings and gatherings engaging and fun, not for fun's sake, but as a natural outpouring of the joy of the Lord in us!

E. BUILDING THE RELATIONSHIP

1. Visiting The Local Church

Any visit to the local church should be done according to the Covid-19 guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) from the Ministry of Health, Malaysia. Any visit to the local church must be approved by the Zone Pastor, and the CG leader should present the plan for the visit prior to making a full commitment to the local church for the purpose of spiritual covering.

2. What will happen after December 2020?

The relationship between the CG and the local church would have matured substantially and bonds developed over this period. CGs are encouraged to prayerfully maintain that relationship for as long as it's needed.

F. APPENDIX

Refer to [Local Fields Handbook For Guidance On Local Churches](#)