

## Leading in Uncharted Territory – Rachel Roche notes from:

FAST4 Online Teaching Series: Taking your children's ministry from good to great with Karen Warner, Patsy Way and Rachel Roche, Episode 3 (Covid-19 special), 6 April 2020 [lifelonglearning.nz/children](https://lifelonglearning.nz/children)

You are leading during a moment of transformation for our congregations and world. This is uncharted territory for all of us. Things are changing so fast, there is so much to attend to.

Bolsinger<sup>1</sup> gives a great image to think about as I talk today (some of the comments written here are taken from his talk listed below)...

'Zoom' which lots of you have been using is the balcony (the overview, big picture)

Conversation on the bar is the floor (to the side we chat, ask questions, practical how tos, down to earth details)

You have to tend to and be on both balcony and floor. That is why it is exhausting. You are running up and down the stairs. To the balcony from the floor and back again.

If you are not exhausted you will be at some point, if you have not cried yet you will. In addition we all need to ride this out in our own lives as well as in ministry. We all are living through this together. This is our story too, but we are leaders. This experience will test us but we can rise above it knowing we have hope.

There are some questions we need to ask ourselves to help us as we navigate forward....

What has C19 taken away?

What has C19 not taken away?

How has C19 changed us?

What has C19 given us?<sup>2</sup>

I'm going to work through these questions now. You can work through them later as well in your own context with your own teams. I want to note here it is important you process things with your church team within your churchwide vision and values.

### What has C19 taken away?

It is said, "people don't resist change they resist loss." At the moment the loss we all have encountered is vast as Patsy has chatted about. My selfish losses include no Graduation for my Masters in Applied Theology and I am in a house of males so I am really missing the gender balance. Anyway once we have navigated and grieved loss we can get to the good aspects of change.

When people are new to ministry and I am mentoring them one of my catch phrases I have picked up is "you have arrived and you want to or need to make changes, ..... but wait, watch, listen and think carefully as you have only so much change to spend."

I am not sure if that is now exactly the case in the new space we find ourselves in, but the principles are still there. Slow down. I do know you are adjusting and changing your ministries. For change to last it needs to be a healthy adaption of our core life giving characteristics. You are changing your programmes to online, recorded clips, emailed resources, and fb pages. But what are you including there? Are you trying to recreate the busy, pumping children's ministry you had? And what did you actually have there?

### What has C19 not taken away?

You still have your church history, your earliest practices and things that are important to your congregations.

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<sup>1</sup> Todd Bolsinger, Fuller Seminary – Two Churches at Once, 2020.

[https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_pDuMvtHRRSKCNIfibJWscg](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_pDuMvtHRRSKCNIfibJWscg)

<sup>2</sup> From Shannon Kiser, Fresh Expressions, Fuller Seminary– Two Churches at Once, 2020.

[https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_pDuMvtHRRSKCNIfibJWscg](https://zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_pDuMvtHRRSKCNIfibJWscg)

C19 has not taken away your stories, your positive life giving core. Hold onto values and mission, resources, experiences, the people. Remember when were you at your best? Name what is your core characteristics are, the things you want to never loose.

Go back to the early church practices that will never change, beliefs, traditional elements, and, convictions.  
Act 2.:42. This is still part of us.

What is unique about you, what do you value, what is your core inherited values? If you have heard of Appreciative inquiry, I facilitated one with Franklin Baptist Church so they are a step ahead here. If you want to know more you could read my thesis which should be available online soon 😊 One thing FBC learnt doing that is they have it all within them. They have DNA and life-giving characteristics to take them forward no matter what they face. Right now for you this is not the time for aspirational values, but what you are already doing, what you do well, what already is your core and be intentional about nurturing that.

Figure out together - what can we take forward and what can we let go?  
What are the unique reasons why God has you in this community?  
This is not the time to work on what we would like to be. What and who are we?

### **How has C19 changed us?**

Overnight PB tech sold out of tripods, selfiesticks and microphones and we all become online stars. The change does not stop there. Within a few short weeks we have had to let go of things of the past, and make hard decision of what we take forward. This is continual as you go between the balcony and the floor. We don't know all the changes that will take place, but they will continue for some time. The future is here and we need to experiment as we are transformed by the current context.

The change is like walking a tightrope where we need a pole to help a balance us. On one side we need to hold onto tradition and our core values, and on the other we need to be creative and experiment with change for our community. As leaders we need to navigate the two.

Chat with your team about the changes. How is this effecting you? How is this growing new things in you? Where are you seeing God changing things and working?

And that leads us to the gifts and in some ways the 'how' to do this....

### **What has C19 given us?**

I don't know about you but C19 has given me the gift of reduced commuter time. Travel and extra hobbies outside the home have been reduced and now I am sure people will be questioning how much should we do/travel/shop/work and where going forward.

We all now see the capacity using technology. I am sure you have considered that some people will not want (or see necessary) to come back to our buildings. I think we will find some quite like church on the couch or in bed. Not saying that is right, but C19 have given us church in slippers.

I think a gift of C19 is humility from learning as we go, new ways of communicating, working and being. For some it is the realisation we are not able to produce a publishable tv series with every podcast and fb live service.

Another gift is the opportunity to extend mission. Online church is reaching so many, scripture on footpaths with chalk and on windows for people on their walks, and hope is delivered with the groceries by caring neighbours!!!

Prayer times – I see so many are now each day incorporating household prayer (7am prayer rhythm and regular using prayer books). What a gift to households.

You will come up with many more gifts but one last one I want to mention is the opportunity C19 has given us to listen to others - new voices are rising up, look who are the influences in your spheres. There is now an opportunity to hear new fresh emerging voices through online platforms.

You all may not be social media savy techo whizzers but some are and they are tapping into people spare time, creative time, fun time, spiritual time, heart time, family time..... TIME C19 given alot of people time. What should we do with the time we have been given?

We exist to participate in the work God is already doing. We are to participate with him. This is his story he is writing. I'm not sure we are being called to take the busy busy and pop that online to be consumed. What do you think?

Todd also gives us another helpful image. Right now we are telling the same story as we always have – a story of the gospel, the trinity and hope. It is the same story, but there are different ways it can be expressed. We are developing a different kind of art – a story can be told through a play, or a movie, or a book. The creative communities you are creating come in many forms. We have different skill sets, yes we can share and help each other but we each are in different communities, with different needs. Each of you have a unique context, with your own needs, strengths, characteristics and you will have your own unique story.

Within this new uncharted territory we are developing creative communities and we cannot be driven by what is comfortable or by survival. We are in this for the long term not a couple of weeks.

What does our community need?

What do the children and parents need?

We need to be listening to where God is at and respond.

We have been given a unique opportunity. Yup it is scary at times, but how exciting. I look forward to the stories that will come from you about how your church communities found your core characteristics and did not just survived C19 but thrived!!

Concluding statement

You have heard a lot from us, the media, your congregations, your internal thoughts but what are your takeaways right now as you lead in a time of change.....

Take time to **DWELL** in the word of God and **WAIT** in his presence. **LISTEN** to him, to your congregation, to the heartbeat of those around you. Be attentive to God as he revives his church, wakes the sleeping giant, and redesigns community in creative new ways.

This is exhausting so **REST, BREATHE** and step back from the news, the work, and the constant communication.

Get **EXCITED** because this is a once in a life time opportunity. **GOD CHOSE YOU** to be leading at this time. thinking about **CREATIVE COMMUNITIES**. To make changes impacting the church as it transforms into a new normal. Make sure you have **TIME ON THE BALCONY** and **THE FLOOR** each day, each week. Find your core, your **POSITIVE LIFE GIVING CORE**.

**BE CREATIVE** how you encapsulate that core to carry with you as you embark in places no one has ever been before. Right now we don't have all the answers. You are not in control, however, you know the one who is so you can navigate this new territory with **PEACE** and **CONFIDENCE**. **PARTICIPATE** in God's unfolding plan, his Spirit at work..... love and mercy, healing, kindness and transformation in his church, his community and his world.