

Pastoral Update 08/01/2020

Dear all,

Welcome to the first pastoral update of 2021. Once again, happy new year! I hope it doesn't seem incongruous to say 'happy' given we are in another lockdown. These are tough times. My own thoughts and prayers are with NHS staff, teachers, lecturers, children, young people, students and parents, as well as the whole CBC family. In fact in a range of different ways these times are challenging for pretty well everyone. The issues are different depending on our own particular circumstances, yet 'challenging times' is a phrase that's appropriate to most of us. May God strengthen us day by day, help us to seek fellowship and support, and enable us to be his people 'for such a time as this'.

1. Online Service 10 January

I'm really looking forward to our online service this Sunday. Nathan Shipley is leading, Sophie and Ed Borrett (Connect@Copperbeech) are leading sung worship, Hannah Childs (who is now officially a member of staff) is giving our All Age talk, Tim and Hazel Rowe (Headingley) are leading prayers, Anna Sweeney (Cragg) is reading God's word. Our preacher this Sunday is Chris Makufa (Headingley). It's great to welcome Chris to the preaching team. He is a PhD student studying for his doctorate here in Leeds. He linked with us as a church soon after his arrival in the UK. He is in Swaziland at the moment: one of the benefits of online as that we can here from people in different locations. Chris is a church leader of great experience and we really look forward to what God is going to say to us through him.

To engage, go

to <http://www.cbcl.org.uk/onlineservice> or <https://www.facebook.com/CBCLeeds/> for the WatchParty, with the service beginning at 10.30. There is no Zoom into Church this week, but this will return soon with a revamped format.

It was good to share Communion as a whole church on Zoom last Sunday. This Sunday we'll split into breakout rooms to share and pray. As usual, the Zoom Room details are <https://zoom.us/j/9947430435> The password remains

Numbers engaging with the online services over the Christmas period were good. The DVD ministry continues to be really appreciated. I encourage you to engage with these services as much as you can, as a source of encouragement and challenge to equip you for all that God is calling you to do. Also, please continue to direct friends, neighbours, family and colleagues to our online ministry. There are some who would find it extremely difficult to step over the threshold of a physical building who will find viewing something online easier. Let's not miss the opportunities God is giving us.

2. Physical Services

We move into the third national lockdown. The Baptist Union / Baptists Together issued this advice to churches at the beginning of the week which includes the words:

In light of the Government's announcement on 4 January regarding the national lockdown in England, and the Government's announcement in December in Wales, we strongly encourage churches not to open their buildings for in-person meeting if at all possible.

We recognise that the Government guidelines allow churches to remain open in England during this period; however, given the significant increase in numbers of Covid-19 infections and pressure on the NHS, we advise churches to stand with the wider community in making every effort to limit the spread of the virus.

This is a changing situation and we very much hope this will be our advice for only a short period.

The full guidance with an accompanying theological commentary can be accessed here.

[The Baptist Union of Great Britain : Essential Guidance](#)

The Risk Assessment Group and the Eldership were unanimous in concluding this advice should be followed. The importance of supporting the NHS, our own members who work within it and all health care professionals, was particularly emphasised. But we also followed the spirit of the BU guidance in taking this view reluctantly. We recognise this is a real sacrifice for those who have found our physical services a lifeline.

We can reflect on the situation at our church meeting, and we will be reviewing the decision thoroughly in a month's time. The hope and prayer is that we will be able to meet together again physically soon.

3. Continuing Ministry and Mission

The buildings may be physically closed, but the church is not closed and never has been. Here are some snapshots of what is happening.

Under Fives and Young Families

Kate Burkett and Spike will be starting up Bedtime Stories again on Zoom this Sunday (10th January) from 6.45pm - 7pm. The Zoom session will also be open slightly earlier from 6.30pm for any families who would like to chat together beforehand. Although the Bible story will be aimed primarily at CBC tots aged under 5 across our Gatherings, Key Stage 1 children are welcome to join in the fun too! Please contact Kate B for the Zoom details and to join the Bedtime Stories WhatsApp group: kate.burkett@cbcl.org.uk As Cafe Tots is unable to operate under the current Covid lockdown restrictions, Kate B is currently exploring other ways to reach out to young toddler group families at this time.

Children and Young People

As already noted, Zoom into Church will return soon with a revamp. Connect have had lots going on as always, and Hannah will work with Ed and Sophie to look at what is planned for this year. The children's small group continues to go well. The Young People's Small Group has been consistent and will carry on in Zoom.

Online Services

We are looking to provide some variety to these without losing what people have consistently found valuable and helpful. Such variety will include some more interviews, maybe some different video clips and hopefully some live elements. Also, for some services, we'll include more sung worship. We are still aiming for an hour for the service, so that might mean that for different services some elements, for example, the all age talk, might need to be shorter.

For the preaching series we'll be looking at selected passages from the OT books of 1 and 2 Samuel under the heading 'Living as the People of God in Challenging Times'.

These neglected books have much to teach us. I've been challenged personally recently by the accounts of how God was with his people and was working in seemingly unpromising circumstances (and through seemingly unpromising people!). God is gracious and - in Jesus by the power of the Spirit - is with us.

4. Church Meeting

Greg McLeen has already sent email to church members about the forthcoming church meeting, which will be via Zoom. Just to underline that this will be on Thursday 21 January – the third Thursday of the month – and the not the fourth Sunday which is more usual.

5. Staffing News

Kate Burkett continues on flexible furlough but the hours she works for church are increasing to two days a week, a significant proportion of her usual contracted hours. Matt continues to be off work. In accordance with government guidance we are working from home as a staff team and not going into our buildings unless this is essential.

6. For Such a Time as This



Here is the design accompanying our verse for the year. You may like to print this off, stick it on your fridge etc. God in his grace has not only saved us but also called us - for such a time as this.

This comes with warm best wishes, and prayers,

Peter

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