

Dear Church Family,

During this period in which we are required to practice social distancing, we are unable to meet physically, which includes our Sunday services and small group meetings. **Here are some of our early thoughts around our devotional life during this period:**

### While Sunday Services cannot happen

The plan is that we will provide a video recording which will be uploaded to the church website [www.wokinghambaptist.org.uk](http://www.wokinghambaptist.org.uk) on Sunday mornings in time for our regular meeting time of 10.30am. This will feature some scripture, a talk and some prayer led by me or someone else, and some suggested ways that people can follow up from this either alone or with others, be that with a small group or with your children and family.

In addition, it looks like the BBC will be broadcasting services on the radio and TV, so do keep a look out for those if other technology isn't available to you.

### Small Groups

Small groups (and other small networks) are going to play an important part in helping people stay connected, which in turn helps our wellbeing in various ways. **If you aren't in one at present** and would like to join a virtual one for this period, please fill in the **'Helping you, helping each other' form** and return it to the office.

We would like to encourage small groups to find creative ways of connecting with each other regularly, perhaps especially when you would normally meet so that we maintain that rhythm.

One way to do this, if people are comfortable with the technology, would be to do **conference video calls** via something like Skype (it's free to sign up) or Facebook Messenger Video calls. Or the allegedly more robust Zoom [www.zoom.us](http://www.zoom.us) – also free for calls up to 40 minutes. For longer calls *one person in the group* needs to sign up for the Pro package with monthly fee of \$14.99 – about £13. I've used this a lot and it's very good. The cost could be shared, or contact me if it's a problem.

For some groups with members who aren't so comfortable with technology, this won't work. Devotional messages and prayer requests could be shared by regular email (we know that all but a handful have this), WhatsApp groups via phones, or a good old encouraging phone call.

### Ideas for Virtual Meetings: Remember our 'Up / In / Out' DNA:

Up – our relationship with God

- Pray together – praise God for who He is, what He's done, give thanks for blessings and prayers answered
- Read a passage from the Bible and reflect on it together (see more below)

In – our relationships with each other as we follow Jesus together

- Spend time catching up – how is everyone feeling? Be vulnerable about fears, concerns and struggles. Share encouragements too
- Pray for each other's needs

Out – our engagement with a needy world

- Consider ways you can make a difference to others in these challenging times. How can we be people of hope and light?
- Pray for our world

### One way to do an easy Virtual Group Bible Study:

- Someone choose a short passage from the Bible, preferably in advance - something from one of the gospels, or a psalm, or a favourite bit from Paul's letters. Something accessible!
- Read it together once.
- Have some quiet. Then read it again.
- Everyone takes a couple of minutes to think about two things:
  - Blockers: what's hard to understand or challenging here?
  - Shockers: what stands out to you and why? A phrase or verse
- Take it in turns to share a blocker or a shocker. Everyone's question or contribution is legitimate. Discuss as you go along, giving everyone a chance to share who wants to.
- Everyone says one thing they are going to do as a result of the study
- Pray about what comes out of the discussion. That's it!

### Families

- Nick and Becky Drake are doing some live family worship sessions twice a week. Their first one was great. These are happening at 4pm every Wednesday and Saturday live on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/worshipforeveryone/videos/2581231221983147/> or you can catch up with them anytime on their YouTube channel: <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2dYemDuCz36mIKAt0DwhcA>
- There is a new Facebook page called Together at Home, which posts a Bible based activity each Tuesday for families to do together.
- The website One Way UK seems to have a list of other websites and resources for families [www.onewayuk.com](http://www.onewayuk.com) . Have an explore!

### Individually:

One way to stay positive during this time is to use it as an opportunity to deepen and grow our relationship with God.

Prayer will be vital in the coming weeks, for ourselves, for others, and for our world. Do look out for opportunities to pray alone or with others remotely. For example, Baptists Together are facilitating some live-streamed prayer evenings via Facebook – look out for more of those.

In the series on Prayer that we started...and may revisit in the coming weeks (!) we were exploring this pattern for prayer using the mnemonic **P.R.A.Y.**:

**P for Pause** – stop, quieten your mind and begin to connect with God

**R Rejoice** – have a time of adoring and thankfulness

**A for Ask** – bring to God the things that are on your heart – big or small, for yourself or others

**Y for Yield** – surrender to God's good will, to serve His Kingdom.

In addition, I often recommend these helpful resources:

- **The Bible in One Year** (doesn't have to be done in one year!) Read or listen daily
- **Lectio 365** devotional resource /app from the 24/7 Prayer movement.
- **Bible Society** Daily Reflections online or **Lyfe App**
- **Reimagining the Examen app**, a great way of reflecting on the day.

### And Finally...

it would be great if we could encourage one another by sharing helpful things we see or hear about, whether on Facebook or by email or whatever. Whether that's a verse of Scripture, an image, or a devotional resource that might encourage others – put it out there!

## Coronavirus Response – Devotional Resources for the coming weeks

If you have a prayer request, or an answer to prayer, please put it out there too! Do message me or the Pastoral Care Team (via Frances Jeffery or Mary Garrod) and we will try to circulate it.

Thank you for staying the course of this long message! I hope there are things here to encourage and help you. Doubtless things will change and develop over the coming weeks. If you have ideas and suggestions, do message me, Karen or others. **Let's Get Connected!**  
We continue to trust in the love and faithfulness of God.

### **PS Some links:**

Bible in One Year

[www.bibleinoneyear.org](http://www.bibleinoneyear.org)

Bible Society – Daily Lyfe – daily devotional resources:

[www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible/lyfe/daily-lyfe/](http://www.biblesociety.org.uk/explore-the-bible/lyfe/daily-lyfe/)

Lectio 365 daily devotional resource:

[www.24-7prayer.com/dailydevotional](http://www.24-7prayer.com/dailydevotional)

Reimagining the Examen

[www.ignatianspirituality.com/reimagining-examen-app/](http://www.ignatianspirituality.com/reimagining-examen-app/)