

Avenue Baptist Church response to COVID-19

In the wake of Matt Hancock's (Minister of Health) statement in the House of Commons (follow this link if you wish to hear it yourself https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=62&v=Ubm2aLpmLwU&feature=emb_logo) and the advice of the Baptist Union that **'The advice is now that people should avoid meeting together wherever possible and this will have an impact on meeting on Sunday and at other times during the week. Sunday services should not now take place.'** We have decided with much regret and sadness to suspend all meetings connected to the church. This includes small groups, mid week meetings, upcoming events and Sunday Services.

In their place we will stream a short service live through our You Tube Channel on Sundays at 10.30am. If you wish to view it please go to our website and click on the you tube icon at the top of the page or follow this link <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXffAdJXI6g>

Myself, Stephen, Callum, Dave and Lesley will be broadcasting from Church which will be closed to everyone else (Lesley will be the steward on the door telling people who come on Sunday that services have been suspended). Unfortunately because of licensing laws we cannot play or broadcast any music and therefore the service should last around 20 minutes. Although we are looking into streaming live music in the near future.

You might like to know that there is a National Day of Prayer at 7pm on Sunday. If you would like to be involved please light a candle or put a lamp in a window of your home as a visible symbol of the light of life, Jesus Christ, our source and hope in prayer. And then pray for our world at this time

Those who have bought tickets for the Centurion and Big Church Day out will be fully reimbursed.

It is expected that our finances will drop during this time as people will no longer be able to hand in their offering. We therefore encourage people who normally give on a Sunday to keep hold of their offering until the church is open or to set up a standing order. If you wish to do this then here are the details of the church account, sort code 40-52-40, bank account number 00021177.

We appreciate that this outbreak could last for several months and that care for one another will be vital in helping us get through this as a church family particularly as this virus outbreak is being combatted in part through social isolation and therefore we will endeavour to communicate in various ways:

- 1) Through an e-mail once a week in part to inform you of decisions made, pass on any information and provide spiritual resources during this time.
- 2) We appreciate that not everyone is on e-mail and so there will be a distribution of the weekly e-mail by hand. If you know of anyone who doesn't have an e-mail and would like this weekly letter do let me know.

- 3) Lesley will communicate via our Facebook account and will set up a church twitter account
- 4) Many people have been identified as needing extra support and 5 people (Andrew, Stephen, Lesley, Jim and Alison) will ring these people each week to see how they are doing as pastoral visits are being discouraged as they can be a source of infection. Do let me know if you have anyone in mind who might appreciate a regular phone call.
- 5) All small group leaders have been encouraged to contact their small group members on a regular basis. These small groups are homegroup leaders, WHOP, A Ladies Venue, Worship Group, Seekers, Children's leaders and volunteers.
- 6) If you have any or aware of any pastoral needs could I ask you to contact me via a new e-mail address pastoralcare@avenuebaptist.com. This e-mail address will then forward it to myself, Jim, Alison, Stephen and Lesley. This means that if one or more of us are unwell responses to concerns can be responded to quickly. The other means of contacting the church with any pastoral concerns is to ring 01702 346896. This will be the main number for contact as I will monitor the phone every day and it has an answer machine. If I am unwell others can access my office to listen to any messages. Could I also suggest you might like to pass on these contact details to family and friends who will then be able to get in contact with the church if you are unwell.

As you know our Christian identity is reflected in how we do life together and how we serve our communities. Therefore we have drawn up a strategy to respond to our wider community.

Pastoral Care for the Community

1. We will reach out to churches near us, St Marks, St Helen's and St Alban's to see if there could be a joint response
2. We will distribute prayer cards around the church with contact details and offers of a phone call and prayer
3. We will continue be open to receive donations of food for the Food Bank.
4. We will make sure we have information to communicate how to get food bank vouchers
5. We will encourage people to show acts of kindness during this time of anxiety and isolation. From seeing if their neighbours have any needs to picking up litter when we walk the dog or go to the shops.

We appreciate that this is a very fluid situation at this time and information and guidance is changing rapidly. Therefore a small team will be meeting via a conference facility called Zoom on a regular basis to discuss our further response.

In the midst of all our anxiety, fear and uncertainty let me finish this statement with a prayer from Ephesians 3

For this reason I kneel before the Father, ¹⁵from whom every family in heaven and on earth derives its name. I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, may have power, together with all the Lord's holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, and to know this love that surpasses knowledge—that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, for ever and ever!

Amen.