



Purley Baptist Church

20 March 2020

Dear church family

In times of crisis, it is good to remember that Jesus is Lord and his church remains the church whether gathered or scattered. As we enter into a period when we cannot enjoy each other's presence so easily, we aim to create new ways to continue to express our love and concern.

During this season of 'social distancing' here is how we are looking to 'build community'.

1. LIFE GROUPS

A Life Group provides a context where people can experience friendship, care and encouragement. Although for now, these groups will not be able to meet physically there are a variety of ways to keep in touch including:

Virtual meeting platforms: Some groups have already started to have remote meetings via such platforms as 'Google Hangouts' and 'Zoom'. Although these will be new approaches to many of us, Life Group leaders will be supported in setting up these platforms for virtual gatherings. Leaders of groups are encouraged to continue to meet when they usually would (weekly or fortnightly) to ensure there is regular contact with each other. The Life Group Guide will continue to be uploaded to the website weekly to provide questions for discussion based on the Sunday sermon. We suggest gathering online as a group of approximately 6 people. This may mean that larger groups divide into two groups. This should make it easier to interact over the internet. Information about using the suggested software can be found on:

<https://zoom.us/> or <https://hangouts.google.com/>

Messaging services: Many of our Life Groups have been using these services long before the current pandemic. They include: WhatsApp, Messenger, Skype.

On Mondays 23 and 31 March I will be running the New Life Group Leaders training sessions as originally scheduled. The plan is now to meet via Google Hangouts. With the emergence of new groups, this is a perfect opportunity to join a group if you are not already a member of one.

If you would like to be allocated to a group, please do contact me on tim.allen@purleybaptist.org

Reaching out: As a group, you will no doubt be reflecting on what it could mean to 'love your neighbour from a distance'. Attached to this email is a Pro-forma you may wish to use as you look at ways to care for neighbours in need. Please also pray and discuss ways you feel we could be reaching out as a church. We'd love to hear and share ideas from Life Groups.

2. INDIVIDUAL PASTORAL CARE

As well as receiving support in your Life Group the pastors want to be in regular contact with you. With a membership of over 400, we intend to be in contact with you at least once a month. There will, of course, be those whom for a variety of reasons need extra support and we will do all that we can to be in touch with you. This will most likely be through a phone call. Therefore, please access the online church directory and make sure your contact details are up to date.

3. CHURCH ONLINE

Each Sunday we will post a sermon video and time of worship to the church website (available from 10.30am). These will have been recorded specifically for the Sunday. The speaker will be one of our pastors – much like a normal Sunday. Our worship team will lead us in worships songs, prayers and Bible readings. The aim is for as many people as possible to come together on Sundays to worship and receive the Word.

There will also be a shorter video of a devotional for children and families. We are already in touch with our young people and are working on how best to communicate with the various groups.

For those who use Facebook (and even if you don't at present), we also encourage you to engage in the Purley Baptist Church Congregation Group. Increasing numbers of the congregation have been enjoying light-hearted and thought-provoking conversation. It is a place of encouragement.

4. DAILY DEVOTIONS

From Tuesday 31 March, every day, we will post a short video devotion to the website where one of the pastors will share some encouragement from the scripture. This will be available from 10.30am.

5. PRAYER

We will set aside a day each week for special focus on prayer and fasting. For next week we will do this on Wednesday 25 March when we were due to hold our 'Thy Kingdom Come' meeting at the church.

Of course, we want to be even more prayerful than usual during this testing time. We will encourage prayer in all our communication with you. Please do encourage each other in this too.

6. OUTREACH

We are mindful that people may be more open to the gospel at this time. We are looking for us to reach out beyond the church family by:

- Personal conversations and relationship between church members and friends/family/neighbours/colleagues (as always, by far the most important)
- Content on our website and Facebook page
- Content on the external digital screen facing out to Banstead Road

I realise this is a lot of information to take in all at once. Please bear with us as we bring these plans to life. I think most of us will be learning lots at this time including making the most of the technology at our fingertips!

For now, during this Covid-19 season, let's make it our ongoing prayer to "consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds" (Hebrews 10:24).

With much love in Christ Jesus

Tim Allen, Wendy Colpus, James Collins, Mark Humm and Marilyn Webb