



'WHAT'S HAPPENING & PRAYER SHEET'

April - May 2020

"I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in His word I hope." Psalm 130: 5.
"Pray constantly." 1 Thessalonians 5: 17.

SOME NEWS FROM CHURCHES:

We give thanks for our Home groups, our phone support network and Parish nurse. We pray for our technical team as they provide Sunday services and our daily thought for the day video and the great work of the food bank: storehouse.

Everyone seems to be ok within the fellowship. All I can say is that when we do get back to church it will be....a continuous Songs of Praise!

Church is doing well, I think. Zoom deacons' meeting and home-groups. On-line sermons recorded in the church are used, and for non-internet users a summary of the online sermons is posted for people to read. Pastoral contact is all by phone.

Services continue on-line, and we keep in touch with a weekly newsletter. We continue to pray for each other.

In our church, with help to get some of us up to speed, we now "zoom" for Sunday morning services as well as mid-week prayer and bible study. Children and young people also have a 'Zoom' session. We celebrated communion on Maundy Thursday and Easter Sunday, together but separately, an unusual experience. On Good Friday many of us joined in the stand of Witness, what a brilliant idea, and in the afternoon we read through Mark, again via Zoom. We post out weekly: suggested prayers, worship songs, and a short written sermon summary. In Easter week many of us enjoyed the Spring Harvest at Home sessions, what a blessing to have this teaching and worship in our homes. Keeping in touch with the congregation is a priority and we have several volunteers who are committed to phoning people. Isolation obviously brings its own challenges, but, as a church we had been considering for some time how to do "church" differently so...now we are getting the opportunity!

We already had a Pastoral Support plan. This meant that each person has a contact person within the church, about 10 of us act as those contact people. This was in place long before the virus kicked off. The virus has meant we've tightened up on that a bit and I know that those in the 8am service have actually organised their own support group too. Some older members of the congregation are being shopped for by others. As for ministry, that is happening more across the whole Lark Valley/North Bury group. Each week we have a service on Facebook that people can either follow live or catch up on. I understand that in future two streamed services per week are planned, and a weekly Viral Bulletin which includes the readings, and a reflection. An interesting plus has been a few more people wanting to join the

NBTnews Google group, our team group that I send the Churches Together Google group stuff on to. This means they get these Bulletins.

We are going to see whether there would be any interest in a 'Zoom' next Sunday. This would be probably to say hello visually to each other, then hear the readings, a reflection and have some prayers together. I'm not sure whether there will be any interest in this. I think most people are either watching on-line or using television or radio. However, we will see. As with all these things, the worry is it excludes those not on the internet.

I get excited about the new things that we're doing and finding out what works for people and what doesn't. Praise God that 135 people worshipped with us on Zoom yesterday. I'm most concerned about the people who are lonely and frightened. I think for all of us the continual mood of dread that's around is a difficult backdrop for our own lives and our own concerns. It must be hard for people who have no one to talk with. Here's a brief list of what we're doing:

Live Morning Prayer streamed every day of the week at 9:30am

Live interactive worship on Zoom every Sunday at 11am

Thought for the day resource, especially for families with young children, using Bible App for Kids

Recorded worship with crafts and stories, especially for families with young children

Pastoral care is being co-ordinated by phone, and mostly organised through home groups.

There is a lot of paired prayer going on by phone, besides general neighbourly help. Our usual Pastoral Care plan is a bit more active, we've stepped up the amount of contacts. Each week we have guidelines for Sunday worship. Many people are also using the Radio and TV services. There are also the 'Easter Pilgrim' daily on-line reflections.

[...With thanks to the churches who contributed these excerpts of news. I have edited to try and cut down on stuff that is common to all or most.]

Give thanks for all the new things happening at cross-church neighbourhood level, and the up-surge of giving to the Food banks. Let's continue to support them, and pray for those in greatest need in our town, and villages.

CORONAVIRUS: Pray for the controlling of the Coronavirus outbreak, healing for those ill, and comfort for those dying and those bereaved. Pray for the work to find a safe and effective vaccine. Pray for the NHS, Care-staff, and other key workers. Pray for Parliament to have integrity and God's guidance and over-ruling, and for peace and unity in our country, that as a Nation we will work together for the common good and for mutual respect.

PRAY for our churches, for pastoral care, neighbourhood concerns and gospel outreach, and Christian influence in local public life.

Please circulate this sheet if you can.

For more information about Churches Together see our web-site: [Churches Together in Bury St. Edmunds and District](#). For regular information about activities join our google group (instructions are on the web-site).