

Hello LBC,

I hope you are well. This is an update to inform you that our Sunday Services this week and mid-week meetings will now no longer be taking place.

As you may be aware, in light of recent concerns regarding the spread of the Coronavirus, the Government has decided that all non-essential contact should be avoided. Further advice has informed us that the Government considers this to include faith groups. Both the FIEC and Baptist Union have clarified that this should mean the stopping of services. It is our duty to follow National health & safety advice and, for this reason, we believe this is the best call for all involved.

The wellbeing of all connected with LBC is something we take very seriously. Therefore, we shall not be meeting this Sunday 22nd March or subsequently until we receive National confirmation that meeting together will not place you at undue risk of infection. Furthermore, it does not seem responsible to hold small group gatherings either and so all planned small groups/ Circles will also be suspended, until such a time as it is deemed safe and responsible to do so. I understand this news will weigh heavily with many of you; please know we are praying for you and are available via phone or email should you wish to get in touch. We have been led to believe that this situation may last for at least 4 weeks, but we will be continually monitoring the situation each week and notify you of any changes. There is a possibility it could last longer.

Obviously, this news has come suddenly and I wanted to outline some of the plans we have in place and some steps we will be taking in the coming days to continue to provide care, support, advice and direction. We want to both provide for the needs of our Fellowship and consider how we can be a shining light in this situation.

#### **Sunday Services**

- 1) We have acquired some equipment and software to put together a weekly video that will loosely follow the pattern of our weekly service to bring some worship, updates, a message and prayer to everyone. We will upload this to our Website and Facebook page at the time of our normal service so we can share it together. For those without access to the internet we will be delivering DVD's so that all can access the video together.

#### **Care**

- 2) We will be arranging a weekly update on activities and information about what is happening among the Church Fellowship to keep people informed and encouraged. We will include advice, news from the Fellowship, prayer points and opportunities for Ministry.
- 3) We are talking with those who are vulnerable and/or self-isolating to compile a list of needs and of services that we can provide for them. There is also a list of people who are available to make deliveries and run errands should you wish to help out. We will ensure regular communication and be thinking of ways to encourage and care for the needs of the vulnerable and all who will miss the regular Fellowship.

#### **Prayer Meetings**

- 4) We have put together guides for prayer meetings to aid us in prayer which we will share on Wednesdays. We may not be able to meet to pray but we can still set aside the normal time and pray as one.

#### **Witness**

- 5) We are in conversation with local community groups about the possibility of heading up the Town's response to the spread of the virus and co-ordinating care for the vulnerable and those self-isolating. We are only in the initial stages of these talks and will update you on how you might play a part.

- 6) At the normal timing of the Ministries we run we are considering ways of carrying on each Ministry in a different format. e.g. ringing those who attend Lunch Club and arranging for meals to be dropped off if suitable; contacting parents from Sunbeams and providing advice and ideas to care for children in isolation.

There are some things that we would like to ask you to do at this time:

- 1) Please keep trusting in Jesus and seeking him. There is grace and peace to be found in all the uncertainty.
- 2) Please pray with us for our Country and the impact of this disease. Pray for those on the frontlines of the NHS who are providing care in difficult circumstance.
- 3) You may still want to see others, to check on people and catch up, although we would suggest that these are not done in confined spaces or for prolonged periods. The advice would also mean exercising high levels of caution and common sense. Our advice would be that if you have the ability to chat/pray together through other channels (such as on the phone), this may be preferable.
- 4) Begin contacting relatives, friends and neighbours to see what steps they are taking and how you might be able to help them.

I understand there will be fear and uncertainty around this step, many of you will be shaken by this development. Please let us know how you are doing and don't feel you are alone. I am more than happy to call, text or even meet with you if you're concerned and would value this. Thank you for your support and understanding in this. For years the meeting of the Fellowship has been a source of strength and encouragement and it is a cruel aspect of this situation that this is no longer possible. However, it is our desire to be creative, vigilant and determined to ensure the love of Jesus which binds us together is still expressed, still felt and still remains the cornerstone of our Church family. We are still the church and will strive to find new ways to express and live up to this.

In Him,

Dean

1 John 4:18-19

There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us.