



Church Street

Ashbourne

Derbyshire

DE6 1AE

2<sup>nd</sup> September, 2020

Dear friends,

I hope you are keeping well during challenging times for us all. You are frequently in my prayers and the prayers of the members of our Church.

I'm just writing on behalf of the Leadership Team to thank you for your ongoing commitment and support to the life of the Church in Ashbourne.

We are still offering an amazing ministry through the various groups that are meeting, such as Craft & Chat and the housegroups. We are also using Facebook and "Zoom" with our kids@cornerstone and Mustard groups, as well as a new group for primary aged children called Wicked Wednesday. We have had quizzes and the weekly coffee morning by Zoom and a wonderful day of craft and reflection "Beside Still Waters". The resulting 53 "prayer squares" which people have made, which tell of our experience during these days, is being made into a banner as a reminder of this time. Then there's been 40 "Take Away Church" in pizza boxes given to young people and 50 "Self-care and Comfort activity booklets" given to people living alone, and feeling particularly isolated.

Our weekly worship – both on Facebook, via our website - has at times tested our preachers and worship leaders, but it has been a joy to see how we have been able to "step up to the plate" and have a go. I know that the services have been a real blessing to many. A huge thank you to Stuart Green, Tom Haines and others for making this happen. As well as being attended by lots of our own church members, it is heartening to know that a number of other people locally and from all over the country, have joined watching them. They have commented how much they appreciate what we do.

Then our monthly evening Zoom services have been very well received, adding a new dimension to our worship by being "live". This has also been a new experience for those of us who lead worship, but we have coped! Once again Stuart, Alan

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Paterson and many others have made this happen. We have also appreciated the regular Songs of Praise compiled by Tim Dutton.

I have really enjoyed helping to prepare and deliver (apart from when it's raining!) the Worship at Home sheets, weekly notices and, each month, the Connections magazine to those who can't, or find it difficult to access them online. It has been good to sometimes be able to spend a short while with many of them seeing how they are.

Our Pastoral Visitors are doing a great job in keeping in contact with members and friends, and I hope together we have been able to respond, support and care for people who have faced difficult times during these days.

The Church is open from 10am-5pm on a Tuesday and Saturday for individuals to come and use to find a moment of peace and quiet, to pray and give thanks. This has been appreciated by those who have come. Again a big thank you to those who prepared the Church to be opened, and to Enid and Kath for opening and closing each time, and the stewards who check on proceedings during those two days. Thank you.

We are obviously missing many aspects of our fellowship together, including the ministry of The Gateway Residential Centre and the Cornerstone Coffee Shop. Both of these amazing volunteer-led ministries of our Church are deeply valued and really show what our Church does well. That's why we are sad that we are not able to open them just yet.

I wanted to tell you all these things to remind you of a flavour of what we are still doing. I know there are very many people still offering their time and commitment to activities such as Ossie's kitchen, the Foodbank, chaplaincy, community work, or activities which engage with neighbours, friends and family. Well done. We are being the Church, even though we are not in our Church building.

We are aiming to be able to meet together again in worship and to reopen our buildings when safely possible. We have gauged opinion about returning to worship at church from those who receive notices, etc., by post. We will eventually be doing a similar exercise among those who currently share in our worship online. It's a work in progress, and we want to make sure that we do it right. It will then be for the Church Council to decide as and when to proceed, subject to the Risk Assessments needed being robust. Watch this space.

So friends, as we continue to journey through these strange times, keep well, look after one another and those you love and be assured that our kind, generous and outward looking church is as active and energetic as ever.

If you have any pastoral concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me, or your pastoral visitor.

God bless you and keep you, til we meet again

Your minister and friend,



on behalf of Ashbourne Church Leadership Team

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