

Being Church from a Distance

In the area where I live there are no English language church services. Of course, I enjoy Christian fellowship with my friends and colleagues, and it has always been a pleasure to drop into HBC from time to time but for me 'Church at a distance' has been the norm for the past decade. Now, when many people are experiencing 'virtual Church' for the first time, the following observations might be of help.

- 1) Stick with it. If your home church has an online programme, then try to maintain a routine of joining in or watching the replays at a certain time. It is possible to listen to a sermon whilst doing the washing up, but your attention will be distracted. In a month of Sundays you need to keep Sunday special.
- 2) Stay smart. You may not be going to church, but you are Church. Put on a clean shirt, sit up straight. Jesus is coming to your house; behave accordingly. This will help to create the right frame of mind for worshipping and listening to God's word.
- 3) Give thanks. Major on the positives, count your blessings, see what God has already provided for you. If you cannot keep up with this year's fashions then stick with last year's, more comfortable, ones.
- 4) Read the readings. Physically open your Bible or boot up your Bible app and read along. In Jewish and Islamic traditions, it is common to read aloud – try it, nobody will hear you stumble over those difficult names, but you will gain much more from the passage.
- 5) Be involved. Has a particular Bible passage, song or sermon struck a chord with you? Offer to share it. Can you be a channel of blessing to others in your household or neighbourhood? Pray for those maintaining front line services, is there some way you can encourage them? They may not be able to 'do Church' in the same way, but they too need the support of their Church family.
- 6) Do not give up on giving. The church still has bills to meet, salaries to pay and missionaries to support. Some people may, of necessity, have to reduce their giving but others may well find that this is an opportunity to make up the shortfall.
- 7) Diversify your diet. If you don't like modern songs accompanied by a guitar then now is your opportunity. Christian music of all sorts of genres is readily available on the internet. Perhaps you prefer deeper Bible studies rather than the children's story then that too is available. Have you ever wondered how other people do Church? Go and see. These options do not replace our regular worship but they certainly can add an extra dimension to our spiritual lives.
- 8) Be Berean. The internet is flooded with people claiming to speak on behalf of God. Undoubtedly some of them are indeed true to His message but there are others who have a different agenda. How do we tell the difference? In Acts 17 the Bereans were commended for searching the scriptures in order to verify what they had heard – a principle that still holds good today.
- 9) Pray for those preparing the broadcast materials; they are isolated too. If you want to support them be positive and encouraging; observations that might be well-received when accompanied by a smile and friendly tone of voice can lose that positivity when conveyed only as written words.
- 10) Where there's a will. The taboo about talking about death has been overtaken by circumstances. We know that everybody is going to die, sometime, somehow. What sort of memories will you leave behind? When the Lord calls you Home it will be at His perfect timing, but will you be ready?

Here are some links as described in paragraph 7 above ...

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCXuOxVKoXRKxEjsNGUJIUqA/videos> Well known hymns that can encourage us.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/jointhebibleproject/videos> Helpful modern interpretations of Bible themes and stories.

<https://www.youtube.com/user/LovelsraelOrg/videos> In-depth studies of Biblical passages as seen from a Jewish Christian perspective. <https://albanybaptist.com.au/> - Albany Baptist Church is very similar to HBC, even to the point of implementing a building project. HBCYoursCO19-01.doc
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