

Introduction



Thank you to everyone who has contributed to our *Book of Learning* over the summer. It captures in both breadth and depth something of our personal experience of the season of lockdown. This summary and the detailed responses given will stand as *a testimony and memorial of this time* and will serve to guide the Ministry Leadership Team and PCC as we move forward into the autumn term. The headings below represent the themes mentioned most often by those who responded. The plans indicated are tentative at this stage reflecting *a limited and phased return to public worship*. Guidance and legislation may change with restrictions being further eased but a more restrictive lockdown may be imposed. This coming season, with a change in the weather and darker nights, will present a new challenge for all of us.

PRAYER

Promote and pursue activities with a renewed focus on Sabbath, prayer and devotion and wholehearted love for God.

WORSHIP

Develop and enhance our online offering in terms of worship and fellowship including some enhanced provision for children.

RETURNING

Plan for a phased, safe return to the church building from September onwards and make preparations for Harvest, Remembrance Sunday, Advent and Christmas.

PASTORAL CARE

Continue in our dedicated pastoral provision for the isolated and lonely while encouraging ongoing care for one another.

BEREAVEMENT SUPPORT

Provide prayer and pastoral support and care and a dedicated space in church for those who've experienced loss, trauma and bereavement (not just church members).

OUTREACH

Develop our outreach, evangelism and 'loving neighbour' with a shift from centralised to more local neighbourhood approach.

CARE OF CREATION AND ACTION ON JUSTICE

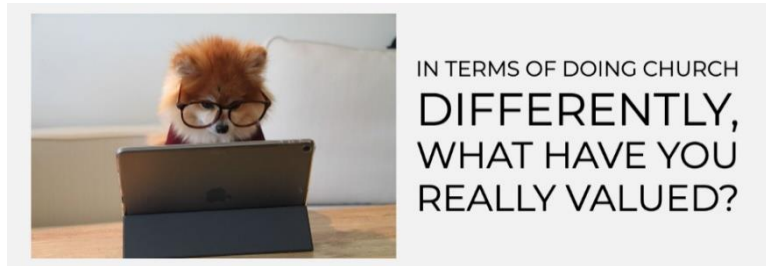
Encourage people to appreciate, care for and safeguard God's creation and take small steps in their daily lives.

Discuss together how we can become advocates for equality and justice.

In what follows, you will find selected (but representative) quotes from the Book of Learning for each question asked.

The top 2 or 3 key themes mentioned by people are shown along with the percentage of responses for that theme.

Comments and quotes which we're hearing from other churches and leaders are in purple.



50% of the responses highlighted **the online services**
30% of the responses highlighted **Zoom/use of technology**

“Using Facebook live so that we can ‘see’ each other attending and worshipping together and the zoom Bible studies exploring the passage from the Service afterwards has been brilliant.”

“Shorter services and later starts with less rush not having to be at church for all the additional time before and after a service. Slower start to the morning making Sunday much more of a day of rest. The chance to explore other ways of church on line.”

“The way in which technology has enabled us to remain a church community. The use of online service and Zoom meetings (courses and home groups plus other "whole church" events). Also that this enables those not able to physically attend regularly to join in. Strangely, the need to keep online service relatively short has presented the opportunity for greater focus on the weekly theme and how God is leading the church.”

“Church online has still felt very authentic and I enjoyed the relaxed feel of it. Having the people leading it do it from their sofas or kitchens made me connect with them as I sat on my sofa too. Having different people from the church family take part has also made me feel more connected with them. It also gives people the chance to join who would otherwise never enter church.”




**What others
are saying**

Many people have adapted surprisingly well to the new and different ‘on line’ environment. Churches have ‘surprised’ themselves at new opportunities to be outward looking and creative. People have embraced Zoom and on one Sunday, Zoom crashed, supposedly because of the number of people logging in. Many churches report increased numbers of people ‘connecting’ to their online services. Local Church Leader.

While the online service does not replace and is not as good as being gathered and ‘face to face’, people have been accepting and appreciative. Local Church Leader.

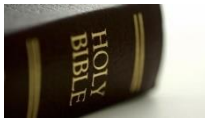
“Another positive outcome of the lockdown has been the improvements in our environment as traffic has reduced dramatically. With hindsight, will we see this just as a blip – an interruption to business as normal that we are longing to get past? Or might we find ways to tread more lightly on God’s earth? As so many have learned how to meet online, though, we should be looking for opportunities to avoid the greenhouse gas emissions and congestion of physical travel, as well as the costliness in time.” United Reformed Church paper: Ready for the new normal.



What we plan
to do in future

Sunday services will be shorter, more focused and less 'busy'. The wider level of participation will continue and will ensure that those involved will be more representative of the demographic, age and ethnicity of our congregation.

Tools such as Zoom will continue as a way of offering direct contact with others for bible study, prayer and fellowship and online courses. These tools will also 'extend the reach' for people who continue to isolate or cannot leave home.



*And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another - and all the more as you see the Day approaching. **Hebrews 10:24-25***



HOW HAS THIS HELPED YOU OR OTHERS?

37% of the responses highlighted **to stay/feel more connected**

16% of the responses highlighted **ongoing sense of fellowship**

"Huge variety of speakers, who have offered many different insights. Ability to share the services with others- Christians and non-Christians."

"I still felt connected with church. It reminded me again how church is about the people, not the building. It being online has also meant that on tiring weeks knowing you can do church from home rather than having to go out all the time has been a blessing. Church has felt very focused on things that mattered and not doing things for the sake of tradition. Reflection time was also very important to let the Holy Spirit move and have time to reflect on where I was with God at that moment."



"The services and Zoom meetings have been accessible to many people for whom conventional church is difficult. They have 'mixed things up' so that more voices have been heard and relationships built. Moments of stillness in the on-line services, breathing space to be quiet before the Lord."

"It would be great to continue some kind of Bible 'zoom' to give people opportunity to discuss the reading and sermon and how to apply it in our lives. Could that be around a table/ in table groups over coffee after a service? Can we continue to livestream or record and stream our services so that those who are not able to be present can still join in? It has actually reduced the feeling of 'business' of conventional Sundays in terms of getting ready, travelling into town, parking and coming home again x 2. I have felt that I have had more time to focus upon God and to rest during the day, conscious of His presence."

"It has helped me to keep in touch with church and our church family. My knowledge of modern technology (limited as it is) has been extended through necessity I have been able to point others to telephone messages (i.e. recorded talks from Sunday services) and also pass on and share church news."

"At a time of continued uncertainty it helps to know that it is not just me. It's a powerful weekly reminder of where my rock lies. It's refreshing."




What others are saying

"For us, like Jesus, there is a purpose in these times of retreating. The desert is the place of formation. We receive from God so that we can re-engage with the world, with a fresh power and passion." Pete Hughes, KXC.

"This is a scary and dangerous time. But a crisis is also a time of opportunity and this is I believe a significant time of opportunity and therefore a time when we need some courage together and I believe that God is saying to his people at this time be strong and courageous." Pete Greig, 24-7 prayer movement.

"Maybe we are experiencing 'enforced Sabbath'? Maybe it is God's way to enable us to press 'hard reset'? Maybe it's a gift? A gift of time. A gift of space. We may never have this time and space again in our lifetimes." Billy Kennedy, Southampton Community Church.



What we plan
to do in future

While restrictions continue, we will continue with what is 'on offer.' We are actively working on a phased-return while recognising that the online offerings will need to continue for the immediate future.

As restrictions ease, we'll be considering opportunities to meet together (safely) such as the recent prayer gathering, prayer walk and wellbeing café picnic.



*Though the mountains be shaken
and the hills be removed,
yet my unfailing love for you will not be shaken
nor my covenant of peace be removed,'
says the Lord, who has compassion on you. **Isaiah 54:10***



HOW COULD WE
INCORPORATE
THIS INTO OUR CHURCH
LIFE IN THE FUTURE?

51% of the responses highlighted **continue to stream services and use Zoom**

11% of the responses highlighted **shorter services in future**

"Shorter main services and the opportunity to join the different breakout groups afterwards to go deeper."

"It would be great to continue some kind of Bible 'zoom' to give people opportunity to discuss the reading and sermon and how to apply it in our lives. Could that be around a table/ in table groups over coffee after a service? Can we continue to livestream or record and stream our services so that those who are not able to be present can still join in?"



"I don't think we should go back to 1½ hour services More opportunities to discuss the bible with help from ministers - this 'feels' different to doing bible study on our own in home groups. Bible Zoom could be a new way of offering the Bible School."

"By still videoing the services so that people like me who are housebound can still share in what is going on at St Giles By still doing Zoom discussions"

"Even if the building opens up again I would still record services so that there is an option to watch them from home. For example for older people, or if you help out with kids church in the morning, you might be too tired to go in the evening but still want some spiritual input and this would allow you to watch the service from home. It was nice have different church members/kids lead prayers."

"Really want to continue the accessibility part of our church life. This time has really opened my mind to doing church differently and that it really works! We don't have to just be in the building! Have really appreciated the skill of our musicians and tech/ sound team. The quality of home produced music tracks has been outstanding."




**What others
are saying**

"We cannot be content to go back to what was before. There needs to be a resurrection of our common life." Justin Welby Archbishop of Canterbury

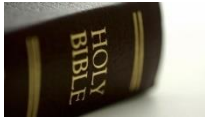
"Something is stirring in the UK. There, I've said it. I've hesitated to write this post. It's probably premature. We're still bang-slap in the middle of a vast crisis and no one really knows how it's all going to end. But here's the thing: over recent weeks, and particularly over this last week, prayers that some of us have been praying for decades, suddenly seem to be finding answers in the most unexpected ways."

Are all these developments any more than embers in the hearth? Has this past week been without its share of heartbreak? Are any of these encouragements guaranteed to last? To all these questions we must clearly answer with an emphatic 'no!' But could these embers spark a wildfire? Does tragedy inevitably precede resurrection? Could this be the beginning of the spiritual awakening in our nation for which so many have been praying so faithfully and for so long?" Pete Greig, 24-7 prayer movement.



What we plan
to do in future

As above...while restrictions continue, we will continue with what is 'on offer.' We are actively working on a phased-return while recognising that the online offerings will need to continue for the immediate future. The format and content of services will take account of the feedback offered while ensuring that what we do is God-honouring and God-centred. We also need to remain open to the 'new things' God is inviting us into.



He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."

Matthew 13:52



IN TERMS OF DOING CHURCH
DIFFERENTLY,
WHAT HAVE YOU
REALLY MISSED?

45% of the responses highlighted **the social side (seeing each other)**

40% of the responses highlighted **fellowship (doing church together)**

34% of the responses highlighted **sung worship**

“Physical interaction with others, to encourage/empathise. Opportunity to share and pray 1-1.”

“Meeting people face to face! (Zoom is great, but it's really not the same!) General 'catching up' with people (Zoom inevitably has to be more focused, and you can't talk one-to-one in a zoom room full of people listening in!) Being in the church building - because even though the church is the body of people, the place where we meet is special, and has been a focus of prayer and worship for centuries, and there is something good and important about that!”



“Social contact zoom is not the same and I will often choose to phone rather than face to face as I find it easier to think / communicate that way.”

“Fellowship (physical) with other Christians. Being able to pray in the presence of those who ask for pray. To be honest I have really missed the hugs and handshakes, to me, these two activities initiate a bonding/friendship/understanding when greeting people.”

“Participating in live worship especially music.”

“I have really missed communion and sung worship. I have also missed physically meeting with people, especially the children. Opportunities for prayer ministry.”



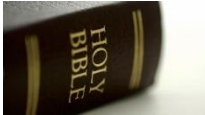
**What others
are saying**

“We are on a journey through a pandemic, not knowing our destination, but aware we follow in a line of saints of old, who have set off before us in the footsteps of Jesus, walking the way. Like those before us, we may travel with faith and doubt, hope and fear, and, perhaps, have a holy encounter along the way. That we travel at all will mean that we are changed. Pilgrimage is about taking and risking such a journey, faith is knowing that we are accompanied by God, hope is in a Kingdom destination, and love may be experienced with companions.”

United Reformed Church paper: Ready for the new normal.

What we plan
to do in future

We are actively working on a phased-return which will open up opportunities for fellowship and contact which people have missed so much. Priority will be given to gathering for prayer (in different forms) and to people in need such as those who attend the wellbeing café. We are also taking the opportunity to refocus around some key priorities so that we don't simply return to how things were before.



They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. Everyone was filled with awe at the many wonders and signs performed by the apostles. All the believers were together and had everything in common. They sold property and possessions to give to anyone who had need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favour of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved.

Acts 2: 42 – 47



HOW HAS THIS IMPACTED YOU OR OTHERS?

28% of the responses highlighted **isolation/loneliness**
40% of the responses highlighted **difficulties for the children**

"Some days are lonely and I have to be careful not to feel down too much. Zoom meetings are tiring and not the same as meeting in real life."

"I think for children and families the on-line services have been very different. Action songs and games/dramatic Bible readings etc. are tricky in an on-line setting. Those who don't have internet access haven't met with people physically or on-line to worship. I imagine this has been very isolating... even if pastoral provision has been good."



"So far I think I can say that I have been given the ability to cope, and apart from brief times, have not felt isolated or too downcast. I am very thankful for online resources which have been a real help. Also very aware that the good weather and freedom to be outside a lot has greatly helped sustain my sense of wellbeing. If we are still restricted when bad weather comes, that will bring a new challenge. I am concerned for those who are not online that they are feeling isolated and may be in danger of becoming cut off from the body."

"I have felt the loss of a sense of community – Zoom is helpful but not a substitute for actually being together."

"It has made me appreciate church more. I suppose Sunday worship was a habit albeit a good one. My worship both Sunday and daily is more intentional."

"Sometimes felt low and just a hug from a congregation member was sorely missed."



**What others
are saying**

"Let go of should, ought and shame and guilt. Our feelings will ebb if we let them be. Be gentle with yourself. We need connection, with one another and with God. Take how you are feeling to God and receive His compassion. Name your losses, be present to God where you are. Don't allow your feelings to be the final compass." Mark Brickman, St Aldates

"Through this season, God wants to deepen you not diminish you. He wants to embolden you not terrify you. He wants the power of this crisis to create diamonds in your character and mind." Pete Greig, 24-7 prayer movement.

What we plan
to do in future

We rejoice in the way people across the church family are caring for and supporting one another. We also recognise the ongoing pastoral needs which will require specific provision, especially as the autumn evenings draw in.

We will be thinking creatively about how we support parents, children and young people in the coming term.

We hope to offer the Bereavement Course in the autumn and to have a service of remembrance closer to Christmas.



*I will never forget this awful time,
as I grieve over my loss.
Yet I still dare to hope
when I remember this:
The faithful love of the Lord never ends!
His mercies never cease.*

Lamentations 3: 20 – 22



COULD WE AND
SHOULD WE RETURN
TO THIS IN THE
FUTURE?

39% of the responses highlighted **Yes**

21% of the responses highlighted **Yes when safe**

"We would love to return to church services when it is safe - to worship together in person, and for our daughter to return to her network group - being together is a great way to learn and grow in faith."

"Yes eventually when the coronavirus no longer poses a risk."

"Yes but perhaps in a new way."

"Communion - yes, please return to it but it may be a long way off. Sung worship - yes, please but maybe simplify. Children's provision within the service - yes."

"I feel that in some ways it is important to return as a church but safe guarding and safety issues need to be addressed. Church does not always mean a building."


"Regular services? Yes, of course – Heb. 10v25. There is not only a social dynamic, but a spiritual one involved in all worshipping together."

"It's a difficult question at this time. So, no, continue as we are until its 100% safe to reopen our church. Let's stay as we are with zoom and the calls, the emails, the encouragement from all the St Giles team means so much."



**What others
are saying**

"To this day the resurrection of Jesus is the solid foundation of all hopes for a better world. The first Christians found that God had made new life possible and offered it to us. In Christ Jesus, the first Christians were empowered with the resources to live in ways that brought abundant life to rich and poor, strong and weak, the privileged and the rejected. An amazing community grew and they loved and served in time of peace and war, of health and of great epidemics. This is the same community, the global church that still lives and grows all over the world. The resurrection changes not just us individually, but is the fuel for hope-filled ambition and for imagination that builds dreams into reality." Justin Welby



What we plan
to do in future

As set out above, we are actively working on a phased-return which will open up opportunities for fellowship and contact which people have missed so much.

In doing so, we recognise that safety is a real concern for all. Our 'COVID TASK FORCE' are paying close attention to the assessment of risk and ensuring we abide by the relevant guidance and legislation.



*Whoever dwells in the shelter of the Most High
will rest in the shadow of the Almighty.
I will say of the Lord, 'He is my refuge and my fortress,
my God, in whom I trust.
Surely he will save you
from the fowler's snare
and from the deadly pestilence.
He will cover you with his feathers,
and under his wings you will find refuge;
his faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.*

Psalm 91: 1 - 4



WHAT HAVE YOU
LEARNT OR BEEN
REMINDED OF ABOUT
YOUR FAITH, YOUR RELATIONSHIP
WITH THE LORD OR THE
PURPOSE OF BEING CHURCH?

31% of the responses highlighted **to focus more on God**
25% of the responses highlighted **my personal study/discipleship**
23% of the responses highlighted **it's not about the building**

"We have been reminded of the truth that God is always with us, whatever the circumstances and He can still minister to us through technology in these circumstances in a powerful way; that when all of the peripheral 'clutter' has been stripped away, our personal relationship is always there; that church generally gives us the opportunity to encourage each other and share experiences- even though distant; that, very obviously, church is much much wider than congregating in a specific building, especially in respect of evangelism. These present circumstances have given challenges, but also opportunities for more obvious sharing, especially with non-Christians."



"That the Holy Spirit is not only present in church. Maybe if the church is worshipping in many locations maybe it gives opportunity to allow the Holy Spirit to work in those locations."

"Church isn't just a building, it's the people. We are part of a big family e.g. we have joined other church services and Christian events. God is with us even in tough times."

"I've been reminded of the importance of my own daily times with the Lord and of going deeper in my relationship with him. At the same time, I've realised how important 'the body' is to all of us, and so have missed meeting together. I've been reminded that our purpose is to be salt and light in the places where God has called us to be (families, workplaces and communities) and that therefore what we do together as a church should be helping us to be better equipped and supported in doing that."

"Less corporate worship has been really helpful in resetting a need for personal walk with God and also pro-actively seeking fellowship. Prayer seems to have gone up as a priority and this needs to be maintained."

"The importance of a really good daily prayer time. The extra time being at home, not working has allowed me to spend more time 'with ' God in prayer and being conscious of His presence throughout the day. It has been good to slow down. Being Church is about what I do where I am, at home, in my road, and less about how many physical church services I go to! In a strange way, it feels good that the church 'has left the building', not just St Giles but worldwide. It's an exciting and challenging opportunity. Let's not rush back to what was 'safe'. Let's see what God wants to do with us in our neighbourhood and our country!"

"When you are in Christ, HE is our foundation and we are with Him always, HE will always be our bedrock and to go where HE wants us and the church to go. It should always start from the place of resting in our Lord before setting off wherever!"

"Be prayerful. Support one another. Listen more. Read the scripture and try and follow in our Lord's footsteps. Be patient - that's the biggest one! All prayers will be answered in God's own time. There is a reason for all that has happened. The world needed a break from pollution. It's us that has caused the world to break down, not God. Only we can't put things right without God."



What others
are saying

"Love is your mission statement." Tear Fund creation care seminar.

"This time was a divine invitation to consider what matters most. Eternal qualities that we can invest in now that will never fade. There are 3 things that remain – FAITH, HOPE & LOVE." Danielle Strickland.

"Many of the myths we've built up about competency, power, ourselves are being pulled down. We don't have control. We haven't conquered nature. We need to draw closer to God and embrace powerlessness and vulnerability. What will cut through? Not the platform but spiritual authority. Someone not seeking to do it in their own strength. Someone given over to God. Empowered by the Spirit. Pursuing holiness. People who are humble. People like Moses and Joshua." Mark Sayers.



What we plan
to do in future

We have identified 3 key priority areas to focus on in the autumn term: **PRAYER, WORSHIP** and **OUTREACH**. The Prayer Course will be offered again via Zoom. As we consider how to pursue these, we recognise that we won't be returning to the building immediately.

We will therefore need to support, encourage and nurture what has been helpful in sustaining people through this difficult season. We'll be offering a range of resources to home groups for the coming term.



Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up.

Deuteronomy 6: 4 - 7



AS A CHURCH,
WHAT SHOULD
WE DO MORE
OF IN THE FUTURE?

24% of the responses highlighted continue online services including Zoom

24% of the responses highlighted outreach and looking outward

24% of the responses highlighted fellowship

"Online presence, shorter morning services and after service breakout groups."

"Focus more on the community around us and how we can really impact on it in terms of unconditional love and social support."

"Be more 'agile', using technology, meeting in smaller groups, being church where we are. Less focus upon meeting our own needs internally, having a more outward focus."

"Open wide the doors literally, physically and using technology. Releasing the church into communities. Making it easier for others to worship."

"Find ways to really support and encourage each other in living out our faith where God has put us - deepening relationships, and prayer. Find ways to help each other to grow deeper in our personal relationship with God - helping people to find stillness and silence. Find ways to take the good news of Jesus out, and to reach out to those around us who are lost without him. Not always with words, but learning how to bless others."

"I've really enjoyed Bible Zoom. Wonder if we couldn't move this to a weekday evening setting for all? Loved the 'whole body of the church' Zooms - because everyone has equal space on the screen everyone can easily contribute - not easy to do that in a congregation in a church. Love that we have rolled with the times - we have to if we wish to remain relevant."

"Some meetings, especially those with small numbers, could sometimes continue to be held using Zoom thereby avoiding the travel time. Maybe alternate physical and Zoom meetings could be appropriate for some discussions/meetings. I have become aware of the how those who are not online have missed out on so much that has been provided during this time. I understand they have had phone calls, the telephone sermon service and very occasional posted material. We could have to make more use of online media in the 'new normal' which may well last for some years to come especially for those who are more vulnerable due to age and/or medical conditions. Given this perhaps we should consider finding ways to help such people to access online services by encouragement, setup help and appropriate training and support."




**What others
are saying**

"What your community needs most is a vibrant church. If you want to have influence then serve people. This is not necessarily through big projects but through practical actions and loving your neighbour." David Stroud

"Globally, the rapid spread of the disease has also demonstrated how the health and well-being of just one of us has implications for us all. We are deeply connected with one another and with the whole of creation. Climate change is a discipleship issue because the poorest communities are adversely affected." Tearfund rebooted guide

"Every time there's a new challenge or opportunity, it's an opportunity to exercise faith!!! When you're doing stuff you've never done before. When you're getting out of the boat! Online services, new challenges and technology! Rethinking from big to tiny, from gathered to scattered - you can do it. You might fail but there He is!" Danielle Strickland

 <p>What we plan to do in future</p>	<p>This is covered by some of the plans identified above relating to SERVICES, PRAYER, WORSHIP, use of ZOOM, OUTREACH etc.</p> <p>Love for God and love for our neighbour needs to be put back in to the heart of all that we do. We have the opportunity to simplify what we are doing, to be less busy and to ensure we have the right priorities.</p> <p>In looking outward, we need to look beyond our communities and our town to the wider world and our global neighbours. We'll be drawing on Tearfund resources for harvest time etc. to fuel our interest and passion.</p>
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All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had. With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all that there were no needy persons among them

Acts 4: 32 - 34



AS A CHURCH,
WHAT SHOULD
WE DO LESS
OF IN THE FUTURE?

21% of the responses highlighted **business and busyness**

6% of the responses highlighted **less reliance on a few (share the load more)**

6% of the responses highlighted **long services**

"Meetings? Busyness. Rush. Noise."

"Less talking more action."

"Be less busy..... So, really seek the Lord's wisdom before launching new initiatives.... Leave space to enjoy Jesus and learn from him. More Mary, less Martha - that's probably more for me than the church!"

"Less formal, less rigidly structured, less formatted by liturgy and more formatted to fit with what non-church people understand."

"Less coffee - more sharing around tables. Less praying through lists from the front. Less busyness."

"Spend less time focusing on the building."

"Long services!"

"Less 'business'. Stop and review what we do as church. We shouldn't carry on doing things just because we've always done them! Reduce number of physical meetings during the week."

"Also, be aware of not having too many activities that are cognitively demanding when poor mental health is so common. Remember many people are in survival mode: Will I lose my job? Will I lose my house? I don't feel safe; I don't know what's happening; will I get the virus? How will I cope if I get it? Who would look after me etc. etc. We cannot all aspire to spiritual heights at the moment. I think in this season, we need to be more practical and caring."

"We seemed to have loads going on ... but I can't really remember what it all was. So maybe some of that? I think it would be good to focus on the Sunday services, children's activities, and home groups in the way that we have been doing over lockdown."




**What others
are saying**

"We've been here before... when the old systems don't work. Let's rethink how we are living and how we want to live and relate to each other. Disruption often looks like a threat through the lens of fear. But through the lens of faith it's an invitation and opportunity. Worry and anxiety cause us to look down. Faith lifts our sights to God. The remedy for our smallness is the bigness of God and the beautiful creation will reframe and resize our thinking. He's awesome, beyond us. Birds and flowers don't worry." Danielle Strickland

"The wilderness is a place of formation. The soul comes out of hiding. Our attachments rise to the surface. We see the true state of our inner selves, our restlessness, our interior life. The wilderness can be the place of transformation, the place of healing and freedom... the place of new beginnings and new life." Pete Hughes, KXC

"We recognise that all growth comes from Jesus and that He is gracious and full of love and forgiveness. It is He who builds the church. Could it be that He is granting us space in these challenging days to listen afresh to the voice of the Spirit and to reflect upon what we are spending our time on?" Fred Drummond, Church of Scotland and Evangelical Alliance.~



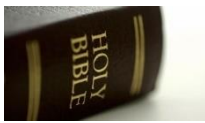
What we plan
to do in future

Not only do we have the opportunity to be less busy and to rethink our priorities but also to recognise the need for change in terms of our care for creation, our impact on the environment etc.

Slowing down and embracing God's intention for **SABBATH** is something we all need to attend to so that we don't lose what we've gained in this season.

There will be a cautious, phased approach in restarting activities, group and ministries with the opportunity to reflect on our priorities.

The format and content of our services will take account of this opportunity to reflect and rethink. We've been reminded that God is in control and Jesus is the Head of the church.



'I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.'

John 15: 1 - 2



AS A CHURCH,
WHAT SHOULD
WE DO DIFFERENTLY
IN THE FUTURE?

20% of the responses highlighted outreach and looking outward

15% of the responses highlighted keep streaming/online courses

"Online, regular Zoom opportunities for those who cannot attend church/bible-study and prayer groups etc."

"More prayer focussed, more outward looking meeting needs in our community."

"Be a church outside the building. Try new places. Go where people are."

"Actively encourage a diversity of voices and be prepared to do things differently in response to a growing diversity. Communion - Look at how this 'act of remembrance', this 'sacrament' could feature more richly in the Church's life. A common table, a place of remembrance, repentance and forgiveness, a looking forward to the return of Christ. A celebration of all that Jesus has done, is doing and will do. Prayer - rediscover the ancient paths.... contemplation, adoration, morning prayer, evening prayer."

"Use some of the amazing resources that are already out there on the web ... not feel we have to reinvent the wheel for everything."

"More encouraging everyone to pray in a broader and more accessible way a much greater focus on each person working out their own walk with Jesus - perhaps a different approach to courses and online resources to support people. Growing a much wider sense of Loving our Neighbour and less centrally organised activity would reach more people and enable a greater sense of personal calling and encouragement."

"Develop and become more comfortable with the premise that 'we have left the building'! Even though, I hope that we can return to the physical building at some point soon, to accept God's challenge and opportunity to change our mind-set...to be 'church' more locally, where we live and work without looking back!"

"This is hard to vocalise - but I think to encourage authenticity and to go off-script sometimes. There are so many great things about the C of E, but praying more freely, and sharing more personal faith stories would be great."



**What others
are saying**

"In the past, Christians have so often been central at moments of social renewal – from the abolition of the slave trade to the civil rights struggle. As Tearfund, we have seen the crucial role that local churches often play as communities rebuild. The church can demonstrate that a different way forward is not only possible, but a better option for everyone. And together we can call on governments and businesses to reflect this in the ways that they reboot our economy and society." Tearfund rebooted guide.

"Six months ago, our country went into lockdown. Almost immediately, we saw both the best and the worst of human behaviour. For many, charity truly began at home, with family members caring for shielding relatives, and neighbours pulling together in new and different ways. But for some, it was abuse, rather than charity, that began at home. Far too often, those living with abuse do feel there is no one to help. I have learned how vital it is to spread the word about the help that is available. For any readers in that situation, please know that you are not alone." Camilla, the Duchess of Cornwall

"Jesus doesn't offer us an escape. He offers us something far better: "equipment." He offers his apprentices a whole new way to bear the weight of our humanity: with ease. At his side. Like two oxen in a field, tied shoulder to shoulder. With Jesus doing all the heavy lifting. At his pace. Slow, unhurried, present to the moment, full of love and joy and peace. An easy life isn't an option; an easy yoke is." John Mark Comer.

"In the reformation, power shifted away from the institutions to the people. This season might be another reformation in the life of the church." Pete Hughes, KXC.

"Rather than rushing to re-spin all the plates, let this be a chance to allow a few to stop spinning and to give space for more reflection and listening. It may be that in this time, where everything has changed, that we too have the chance to change and find transformation." Fred Drummond, Church of Scotland and Evangelical Alliance.

What we plan
to do in future

This is covered by what has been set out above in terms of services, Zoom etc. But we do also need to radically rethink how we approach OUTREACH. There are opportunities to reach more people with the online offerings. And in rethinking outreach and evangelism we need to focus again on 'loving our neighbour.'

This is likely to need a shift from a centralised to a more local neighbourhood approach. We all have the opportunity to be a more prayerful, loving and caring presence in our communities. If it's true that the church has 'left the building' then we mustn't simply retreat back to our building!

And we want to encourage people to appreciate, care for and safeguard God's creation in new ways. This crisis has highlighted that we live in a connected world and we have global responsibilities. We need to find the small steps we can all take to play our part.

And finally, issues of abuse, justice and inequality have been dramatically and rightly highlighted in this season. The church must not simply stand in the side-lines but be ready not only to change but to be advocates of change.



*This is what the Lord says:
'Stand at the crossroads and look;
ask for the ancient paths,
ask where the good way is, and walk in it,
and you will find rest for your souls...'*

Jeremiah 6: 16



IS THERE ONE THING THAT GOD MAY HAVE PUT ON YOUR HEART OR ON YOUR 'RADAR' DURING THE LOCKDOWN PERIOD IN TERMS OF YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH HIM? WHAT MIGHT HE BE ASKING YOU TO DO MORE OF, LESS OF OR DIFFERENTLY

26% of the responses highlighted more time with God/slow down/rest

17% of the responses highlighted trust in God and give it to Him

"It's less about doing and more about being."

"As I prayed about my concerns about the virus I had a great sense of God the Father being with me through this."

"Be honest with him and know that nothing can separate me from him. To depend on him."

"He has asked me to do less, to do what I do more slowly and more prayerfully, to learn restful rhythms, the joy of stillness, quietness and solitude. Scriptures about resting in Him, trusting Him and about not being anxious have abounded."

"Not to let the things we have learnt in lockdown go away quickly when we go back to normal again."

"It's cliché but to go deeper into His word. I'm seeing the 'Bible as a story' in new ways and probably need make a note of all of these things I'm learning before I forget them."

"Initially I thought that the virus would almost certainly 'get me'. I guess I'm also reminded of an old song we used to sing: 'This world is not my home; I'm just a-passing through'. I think we can get so comfortable in this world that we almost don't want to go to heaven!"

"I think he's asking me to sit at his feet, adore him, listen to him, rest in him, wait on him. To see this not only as necessary but as an essential, beautiful practice. I wrestle with this being a 'waste of time' when there's so much to be done. The question John Mark Comer asks about what Jesus would be like if he lived in your shoes is a really interesting one..."

"To be more guided by His voice, showing me the way forward. Not to dwell on the past and to be there for others in need."



What others are saying


"There are so many different voices and people to listen to in this season: from scientists and those whose basis of truth is science, to the media and journalists, to politicians who are trying to lead our country. In these moments, it is important that we, as people of God, hear and listen to His voice above the crowd."

We need to be feeding our soul and digging deeper into God's word, because it is our walk with God that will sustain us during these times. I encourage you all to have a change of rhythm – to put down the tech and spend time with God, to open His word and spend time meditating on it, as you seek to discern God's voice. By rooting ourselves in Him we will be able to have peace at this time and be a source of hope to those around us." Gavin Calver

Evangelical Alliance.

"The war against racism is not over. Right now we are at a historic moment, an opportunity to change and the church must take the lead... we must not fail to speak out. Will you be an extremist for love and justice?" There's A Change Coming talk - Nicky Gumbel

"Despite the chaos, we know that God's plan is for peace, for 'shalom'. This transcends our modern notion of peace to include ideas of wholeness, balance and tranquillity: everything in its place, everyone in right relationship. The antithesis of chaos. A world reflecting back the love and beauty of God. Creation is groaning in anticipation of this (Romans 8:22). It's what we seek when we pray 'your kingdom come'. It's what we live out when we love God and love our neighbour." Tearfund rebooted guide.



What we plan
to do in future

The MLT recognise that this is not a time for **STRATEGY, BIG PLANS** and **BIG IDEAS**. Rather, we have been given a **DIVINE INVITATION** from God to come back to Him, to be with Him more, to deepen our **PRAYER LIFE**, to refocus on heartfelt **WORSHIP** and to rediscover **SABBATH REST** and a new rhythm. Opportunities such as ‘the big read’ (the Ruthless Elimination of Hurry) provide the opportunity for reflection and action. We will do all that we can to ensure that our activities encourage and foster the priorities of **LOVING AND WHOLEHEARTED DEVOTION** to God.



This is what the Sovereign Lord, the Holy One of Israel, says:

*“In repentance and rest is your salvation,
in quietness and trust is your strength...”*

Isaiah 30: 15

Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.’

Matthew 11: 29 - 30



67% of the responses highlighted Thank you/appreciation

"Thank you for keeping us all together online with the services and everyone who made them possible."

"Thank you to you and all the staff team for working hard to keep us all informed and connected. Thanking God for you all."

"These responses are composite- from both of us! Thank you to all who have done such a wonderful job with the online transmissions. We continue to appreciate these very much."

"Thank you for putting this together Alison and David. May the responses reveal threads of gold from God for our guidance and his glory."

"Thank you for asking and for listening."

"God bless you all and thank you for everything you do and continue to do."



Thank you for taking the time to read our book of learning!

