



18 March 2020

Dear RBC church family,

At this time of worldwide turmoil and unknown future, we focus our minds on our God.

With the latest government advice that faith gatherings shouldn't meet we have taken the decision that, in order to fulfil our social obligations, we should cease meeting for now. This includes gathering on Sundays, as Life groups, through the Meeting Place, the April Holiday at Home and any other regular activity. We have taken this decision with a heavy heart but also a deep peace that it is the right decision.

However, we are still a family united in our faith in Christ and my expectation and hope is that we will grow during this time, in depth and in the numbers of people to whom we can reach out.

Using an online tool, Zoom, to gather last night, the focus of our prayers at our Leadership team meeting was the passage from Luke 12:22ff where Jesus told us not to worry. Although this is hard to put into practice, I would encourage us all to keep looking up, to focus on Christ and on loving one another.

The leadership team is working to develop a plan for pastoral care, prayer and practical support as well as our continued spiritual growth. We are seeking to ensure that we take care of the most vulnerable amongst us and to find ways to create community, particularly for those most isolated. However, we are sure that you will recognise that things are still in the early planning phase. Please see some of the early plans below.

Our prayer is that we will emerge from this stronger, deeper, humbler and with a far deeper appreciation of God's grace.

More emails will follow as our plans develop so do keep an eye on things. Please pray that we have wisdom as leaders as we change the way we work as a church and pray for those most vulnerable amongst us, as well as for those whose work and income isn't protected due to self-employment or being in an industry that will suffer acutely.

The world may be changing but the gospel is timeless. Our lives are built on rock, not sand - let's remember that and be at peace. We look forward to the day when we will gather in celebration and worship together in the building.

A few things.

1. This Sunday morning the service will be broadcast live at 10.30. To view go to www.romfordbaptist.org.uk/live where there is also a link for your giving. Sadly we will not be broadcasting an evening service.

2. From Monday a telephone **helpline** will be in action on 01708 743382 (select option 1) and a staff member will be there from 9.30am – 1pm. Please call this if you have any practical needs, need prayer or just someone to talk to. We have also set up a new Facebook group (RBChelp) for people to ask for help or if you can offer help such as collecting prescriptions, shopping etc.
3. Prayer meetings and study groups will be created online and using tools for people to interact with one another. More details to follow soon.
4. A youth programme and virtual meetings will happen as soon as possible to support our youth and students.
5. We will be providing children's resources in the way of online session videos and downloadable content. This will be sent out by email in due course but sadly will not be ready for this Sunday.
6. The foodbank is operating as usual. Donations are vital and can be dropped off at the church between 9.30am and 1pm Mon-Fri unless staff ill health prevents this in which case an update will appear on RBCplus. If you are able to donate but outside of these times we may be able to arrange an alternative evening slot so please let us know if this would be helpful.
7. We are going to try and keep in contact with every family regularly during this time so please do expect a call from time to time from a member of the leadership team.
8. We are going to share ideas for people to get involved in to bless one another.
9. We want to encourage all of us to watch over one another so do phone one another and seek to ensure your friends and neighbours are looked after too.

We will continue to stay in touch but please also keep in touch with the church as we will be delighted to hear from you. This is obviously a time we have not been through before and we will do our best to journey through it together.

God bless you

Ian, Vikki, Jan, Hannah, Jide and the whole leadership team

Key contact details:

Church telephone number 01708 743382

Email address: ibunce@romfordbaptist.org.uk