

### A beacon of hope

#### Dear friends

The new guidance issued to us this week means that we are (cautiously) able to restart some of our activities.

We're really grateful for those who work hard each week to provide our music, teaching for our children and young people as well as those who organise the deliveries of food for Lunch Club friends. Particular thanks goes to Lars, Gary and the AV/IT team who put this all together.

Many of you have shared your thanks for the way we have been able to gather, albeit virtually, whilst in lockdown. I also know that the contact through our Home and Care Groups is equally appreciated - I'd encourage you to join one of those groups, which meet regularly, if you can.

We've really missed being able to meet together especially as Advent is here and Christmas is on the way. The relaxation of the guidelines over the Christmas period is something to look forward to from a personal point of view, even if we are very restricted in how we can meet as family groups.

Thankfully, we're now also able to meet on Sundays - observing appropriate social distancing. We'll be in regular contact with you over the next few weeks detailing how you can join our Christmas celebrations.

These will be different as compared to other years but we will still be sharing an age old message that we need to hear, perhaps more than ever at Christmas 2020.

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Some of the most important words in the entire Bible are these:

*"The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us" (John 1:14).*

Our God has not remained remote and unapproachable; He has come to us in person. He did not simply write us a letter. He did not send us a representative. He did not just speak his laws from a mountain.



He came to us as one of us. The Infinite became an infant. The Eternal One became a little one. It is impossible to overemphasise how important God's arrival on earth was. The world, and life itself, is changed forever.

As we approach this Christmas season, in a year like no other, I pray that we will all come to know that, at the heart of this story, is something special for all of us.

This is the fact of God identifying himself with His people - those who He desires to save. God is not, and has not been, absent or preoccupied elsewhere as we have faced the many issues Covid has brought to us.

We have been - and are - able to turn to Him not just in our time of need, but also to express our thanks for the way He's helped us and enabled us to care for others.

He has come to us and will come to us: I pray that you experience His hope and peace this Christmas time

Every blessing in Christ

*Steve*

## OUR MOTTO TEXT FOR 2020

### 1 Timothy 4:12

... set an example for the believers  
in speech, in life, in love, in faith  
and in purity



#### Finding God's face in a dark place A message from Isaiah 58 verses 9 to 12

*What do we really want to be known as/for (see verse 12)?*

##### *Expectancy (vv. 9)*

- God wants to get involved (vv. 9)
- God's here to help (Psalm 46:1)
- be intentional: not "if" but "when"

##### *Choice (vv. 9b & 10)*

- a conscious desire & a decision to respond to God
- acting with honesty and integrity: character (vv. 9b)
- generosity as a way of life: practical discipleship (vv. 10)

##### *Outcomes (vv. 11 & 12)*

- personal: the ability and character to keep going (vv. 11)
- communal: moving beyond the past to a sustainable future (vv. 12)
- transformational: what was dead is now alive

### Christmas Project 2020

This year's Christmas Project reaches out to those in Africa, Latin America, Asia and here in the UK.

We are supporting seven causes that we have supported for a number of years, but whose income will be badly affected by the pandemic.

At the same time the poverty and need they address has never been greater. Our donations will be allocated to specific programmes run by BMS, Spurgeons, Leprosy Mission, Tearfund, Education Plus, Mary's Meals and Centre Mokili.

Details of how to give to the project are available on the website and in the weekly news sheet

### This week (and until Christmas)

Up to Christmas we'd like to invite you to join in a few of our activities. We have pre-recorded crafts and stories, Live game clubs on Zoom and an interactive trail on Cricklade Road. Contact us or find out more with the various links below.

All kids activities and videos can be found on the links and sites below. All of these have the same content but can be found in whatever format suits you best.

#### **@ghbcyouthworker on Instagram**

(<https://www.instagram.com/ghbcyouthworker/> )

#### **@GorseHillBaptistChurch on Facebook**

(<https://www.facebook.com/GorseHillBaptistChurch/> )

#### **@JakeBarron on Facebook**

(<https://www.facebook.com/jake.barron.92754397> )

#### **Gorse Hill Baptist Church on YouTube**

([https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnzeYwM-VaZ\\_Y2osez9mag](https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCnzeYwM-VaZ_Y2osez9mag) )

**Gorse Hill Baptist Church**  
Cricklade Road, Swindon SN2 1AA  
Phone 01793 534193  
E mail [pastor@ghbc.org.uk](mailto:pastor@ghbc.org.uk)

**Sunday Service**  
Currently meeting at 11am each week  
by Zoom and Facebook live  
Website [www.ghbc.org.uk](http://www.ghbc.org.uk)

### Supporting God's work at GHBC

We have discovered many innovative ways of fulfilling God's Mission over the months of lockdown. Whilst some of our activities have had to close for a time, others have continued in different forms: we have also been able to extend our support through a number of new expressions. I'll be saying a bit more about this later in the update under the specific heading of Bags of Hope/Stepping Stones.

This work can only happen when we work together using the personal gifts, talents and resources God has already provided and which we are prepared to release. Our team structure works very well and, following our Deacons' Away Day, we've allocated specific responsibilities for oversight within the overall church structure.

This is a temporary arrangement but we feel that in ordering our work in this way, we are able to provide support for the Church's Ministries through Covid and beyond.

The financial cost of providing every aspect of Ministry is considerable. GHBC has always been generous in its giving to Mission and in its support for ministerial staff. Over the last few months these costs have remained static, yet our income has fallen considerably. (This reflects the loss of letting income, alongside the absence of financial support through the weekly offerings at Sunday Services). The impact of this has led to a reduction in income of around £40000 over the past 9 months - around one third of our annual forecast for 2020.

Whilst we have, historically, held a healthy level of reserves, this cannot be used for ever. Even setting a very conservative budget for the next 3 years, this level of continued reduction to our reserves is unsustainable beyond the end of 2022. (Our Bags of Hope project is currently self-funding through grants and other support and so has little impact on the financial position of the wider activities).

Many of our members give regularly and sacrificially to support the work that the church is doing directly in Swindon, as well as providing indirect support to other mission causes reaching across the world. If we are to continue with the work we believe God has called us to, then we all need to consider what we are prepared to commit to, in order that it might be possible.

There are a number of ways that we can help:

- Above all, pray. Pray for those we reach out to, pray for the people involved, pray that God's Kingdom will be built and Good News shared - in any way and at every opportunity
- Get involved in some of the day to day activities. There are lots of areas where we'd value more hands on support -from Kidzone to practical help
- Be prepared to give financially to enable this work to continue. Ian or Julie would be happy to talk to you about how you can give and how the money will be used.

If you haven't considered it before then why not commit to regular giving through your bank by standing order? Alternatively, you may wish to make one off gifts direct to the bank account or via GHBC's Just Giving page. Again, Ian and Julie can help with this.

- If you have been giving, then can I encourage you to pray and consider what God may be saying to you about supporting the church by increasing a gift that may not have changed for some time?

Thank you for what you are doing and for considering where God is inviting you to join in with His work at GHBC.

## Boxes of Hope



Are you finding things difficult at the moment?  
Is it hard trying to make ends meet?  
It is a struggle to feed yourself and your children?  
If so we can help you with a box of hope. A box includes lots of food and fun activities for children of all ages?  
Contact us on the e-mail below or on the church Facebook page, we'd love to help.

Please email:

[boxesofhope@ghbc.org.uk](mailto:boxesofhope@ghbc.org.uk)

**Gorse Hill**  
BAPTIST CHURCH

### Stepping Stones

... is the name we've given to the Project which supports the community through Covid and beyond. At the moment we're chiefly expressing this support through Bags of Hope but we are exploring the possibilities of extending this support into CAP and other areas such as Wellbeing.

We'll be bringing our thoughts and suggestions to the members for discussion and consideration in the New Year.

To date, the work done through Bags of Hope has been truly remarkable

- we've been in contact with many local schools and statutory agencies who are happy to refer people to us
- we've given out 897 bags (as at 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2020)
- we've helped 1858 children and 1196 adults

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- we're meeting with agencies across the town to co-ordinate help for those in need
- special gift bags are being put together to bless families in need at Christmas

We've received Grant Applications from a number of sources and other applications are currently being considered.

On 3<sup>rd</sup> December we heard that the Baptist Insurance Company had approved a Grant of £10,000 to be used in missional work. This will help a broad range of activities over the next year. We are thankful for God's generosity from the Baptist family as well as the financial and practical support from within the church fellowship.

### Trust in God



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