

The Baptist Manse,
Griggs Hill,
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21st July 2020

Dear church family,

It's been a strange time over the last few months, hasn't it? It feels like so many things in our lives have changed, and we have needed to learn how to do things in new ways. Ian received a picture from God in the prayer meeting the other week which I think sums up where I sense we are now. He saw a picture of someone leaving a dark tunnel and entering a completely new landscape. The landscape was unfamiliar, and the person didn't know how to live in it, but there was a strong sense that God was there. As we enter a strange new landscape and are not sure how to proceed, let's be encouraged that our God is going ahead of us, leading and guiding us in the way forward.

As you know, the deacons have been meeting to pray and discuss the way forward regarding when to restart services in the church building. The Baptist Union has provided us with a detailed risk assessment including lots of safety precautions which we are working through, so you can rest assured that we will do everything we can to keep people safe. We listened to everyone's views via the survey and conversations. Some church members wanted to restart services in the building as soon as possible, but the majority had some concerns about restarting too quickly. The deacons discussed the advantages and disadvantages of worshipping together in the building, bearing in mind the current government restrictions about what we can and can't do. We also discussed how best to include everyone.

Taking all of this into consideration, we have decided to continue services on Zoom for the time being, whilst gradually reintroducing services where we can meet in person. The first of these is planned to be an outdoor service in the chapel grounds at 10.30am on Sunday 23rd August (depending on the weather of course!) Following this, we are planning to hold a service in the building in September, but have not decided what date yet. We will continue to keep an eye on the ever-changing government guidelines and will continue to review our plans for services. We will keep you informed about future plans.

Recently, I listened to a talk from Lynn Green, the General Secretary of the Baptist Union. She spoke about what she has heard from God and where she feels the church in the UK is at present. This is the verse she feels is particularly relevant for us at this time: Isaiah 43:18+19 “Forget the former things; do not dwell on the past. See, I am doing a new thing! Now it springs up; do you not perceive it? I am making a way in the wilderness and streams in the wasteland.” She believes that we are in an in-between time. Our old ways of doing things are gone for now and we can’t go back to the way things were. We need to go forward, trusting God that He will lead us into new ways of being church.

Here is a picture from God which Lynn shared with us. Imagine a sailing boat setting its sails so that it can catch the wind and be blown along by its power. The boat is us, so we need to set our sails in order that we can catch the wind of the Holy Spirit, so that God can take us wherever He wants us to go. I will share more of this with you during services, but I wanted to share a little with you now so that you can pray with us that God will lead and guide us as we explore this new landscape, and investigate what God wants us to do at this time.

If you have any questions about any of the above or any ideas to share, please contact me and we can have a chat.

Blessings to all of you and I look forward to speaking with you soon,

Sonya

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