



Welcome to Blackburn Baptist Church, on Sunday January 17th 2021 at 10:45.

The current lockdown restrictions have resulted in the decision to not meet in person at Bethesda Chapel at present. We plan to use our YouTube channel to broadcast the services, but will still continue to provide this written service sheet. We hope and pray that you will find this outline of our service helpful, as we all seek to worship God as a Church family, wherever we are.

Tim welcomes us to our time together today:

"A very warm welcome to you wherever you are joining us at Blackburn Baptist Church today as we join together to praise God, encourage one another and also hear about Gods work in our world, particularly this morning through the work of the Leprosy Mission.

We're pleased to be joined by Paul Moores from the Leprosy Mission, we're going to hear more from Paul shortly. Let's start our service now with a joyful song of praise to our God, thanking him for his amazing salvation that he's brought about for us"

We join together in watching, listening to or reading the words of "Salvation's song". Written by Stuart Townend and Andrew Small in 2007, it opens as a quiet reflective song which builds in strength and volume towards the final verses. (The YouTube link is included for those who wish to find it on the Internet).

Loved before the dawn of time,
chosen by my Maker,
hidden in my Saviour,
I am His and He is mine,
cherished for eternity.

When I'm stained with guilt and sin,
He is there to lift me,
heal me and forgive me;
gives me strength to stand again,
stronger than I was before.

So with every breath that I am given
I will sing salvation's song;
and I'll join the chorus of creation
giving praise to Christ alone.

All the claims of Satan's curse
lifted through His offering,
satisfied through suffering;
all the blessings He deserves
poured on my unworthy soul.

So with every breath that I am given.....

(Singing glory, honour, wisdom, power
to the Lamb upon the throne;
Hallelujah, I will lift Him high.
Singing glory, honour, wisdom, power
to the Lamb upon the throne;
Hallelujah, I will lift Him high.)

So with every breath that I am given...

Stars will fade and mountains fall;
Christ will shine forever,
Love's unfading splendour.
Earth and heaven will bow in awe,
Joining in salvation's song.

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<https://youtu.be/WWehzQbQ661A>

Tim leads us in a brief prayer:

"Father God we thank you for these truths we have just been singing about. Our lives were truly stained with guilt and sin, we could never meet up to your standard, but you loved us unconditionally and from the dawn of time you had a wonderful plan of salvation for us in Jesus. We thank you that he came into our world, and through his death on the cross and his triumphant resurrection, he totally transformed our situation. Our chains are broken and we are free to live as forgiven people, part of your great family. Thank you for this good news and I pray you'd help us to share it with others. Thank you for the Leprosy Mission who are doing just that, as they seek to bring spiritual and physical transformation through the love of Jesus, into the lives of so many needy people in your world. Be with us now we pray, as we carry on in our service. May we know the work of your spirit prompting us and encouraging us in our day-to-day lives. Amen"

It's great to be able to share with each other as Gods family and it's good to celebrate the special days in our lives. We're going to celebrate now special birthdays for two of our church friends, Bernard and Becky.

(For those able to access the Internet, there is a short video of events to remember in 1941, the year both Bernard and Becky were born.)

If you can't watch, here are some of the things you may or may not realise happened that year:

Events were dominated by the terrible ongoing World War, with some dark days for Britain, George VI was the King, Franklin D Roosevelt started his third term of office as US President and Winston Churchill was the Prime Minister.

The 1940's saw rationing, Bing Crosby, and the arrival of The Yanks!

Slogans were many and varied - including Careless talk costs lives.

Also born in 1941, Faye Dunaway, Alex Ferguson, Paul Simon, Vivienne Westwood, Otis Redding and Bob Dylan.

The most important babies born in January that year though, were, for us, Bernard and Becky. Let's be thankful for them and for what their friendship means to us.

Let's praise God for his blessings on their lives and wish them well as they celebrate their birthdays. **Because we are at home, we can all sing to them today**, even though they won't be able to hear us, and we can send them our congratulations.

Happy Birthday to you, Happy Birthday to you,
Happy Birthday, Bernard and Becky,
Happy Birthday to you.

Happy Birthday to you, only one will not do,
give your heart to the Saviour,
and then you'll have two!

Happy Birthday to you, from old friends and new,
may God bless you and keep you,
Happy Birthday to you.

Tim speaks to Paul Moores via the computer - here is an outline of Paul's story.

Born near Manchester, his Nana took him to the local Salvation Army, and when she moved, to the next-door Pentecostal Gospel Hall, with a cousin. It was there that he first gave his heart and life to Jesus, aged 14 - some 45 years ago!

He and his wife, Lou, now live in Mosley and attend a church, Reach Church, in nearby Stalybridge, where they are involved in house groups, Alpha courses and the like - mainly midweek activities, as most Sundays Paul is, under more usual circumstances, visiting other churches as he shares the work and vision of the Leprosy Mission.

He has been involved in that work for some 4 years, after a change in his working life. He and Lou were involved in full time christian ministry, in leadership of a local church, until they handed that over to the younger couples in the fellowship. For a while, Paul returned to his previous work, travelling up and down the motorway selling electrical goods, until after much prayer, and what he described as a "light bulb moment," he applied for, and was offered, the post of, Regional Manager with the

Leprosy Mission. He is now able to speak to and communicate with people, and feels this is his role in God's kingdom.

He describes the work of the Leprosy Mission as "Transformational" and shared that there will be a major campaign starting later this month, called "Unconditional" We will be given further details when the campaign begins, but it promises to be an exciting project which will result in transformed lives, all because of the love of God, demonstrated by The Leprosy Mission. The campaign will be fronted by Dame Darcey Bussell, who approached them to be involved.

Paul also shared that in 2020, bearing in mind that we are in the throes of a pandemic, the Mission met all its financial targets, such is the grace of God's generous provision.

On a personal level, he and wife Lou who are foster carers, asked for prayer support for the 2 babies they are currently caring for, that they may find their loving forever families, even during this situation.

We hope that we may be able to meet Paul in person later in the year!!

We are now able (via the internet) to watch a short video fro the Leprosy Mission from one of their hospitals, in Myanmar.

Dr Saw introduces the hospital and some of the staff, saying and showing that with our support they are able to make a big change for the leprosy patients and the disabled people there, and they appreciate every single support from all of us, "God bless you all."

The video goes on to show some of the ways the money is spent; on training specialist leprosy nurses and raising up a new generation of people to care for patients with leprosy. One such person is Grace, who is attending the training because she wants to be a nurse. She hopes to become like Hnin, a current staff nurse. Since qualifying, Hnin has also received additional training and says: "Now being unskilled instead of managing the wards I am now managing the operating theatre. God brought me to this hospital and I am so thankful. There are new challenges every day, but the Bible talks about the care and love we must show to others and we have the choice to do this. This is why I do what I do."

We are also making a difference to patients like Ko, who says: "Even my parents couldn't support me for a treatment so thank you all, God bless you all."

Dr Saw continues: "This year more than ever, we are so thankful for our Hospital Heroes. The Hospital Heroes at Mawlamyine couldn't do it without you. Thank you."

We are now invited to sing a Hymn familiar to many: And can it be. The version shown today is a new recording, to a different tune, but if you wish to sing at home you can sing whichever tune you like - as loudly as you like! You may wish to read the

words instead, as sometimes they can have more meaning when spoken aloud or in our hearts, but whatever you choose, we are giving God the worship in which he delights.

And can it be that I should gain
an interest in the Saviour's blood?
Died He for me, who caused His pain,
for me, who Him to death pursued?
Amazing love! How can it be
that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?
 Amazing love! How can it be
 that Thou, my God, shouldst die for me?

'Tis mystery all! The Immortal dies!
Who can explore His strange design?
In vain the firstborn seraph tries
to sound the depths of love divine!
'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
let angel minds inquire no more.
 'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,
 let angel minds inquire no more.

He left His Father's throne above
so free, so infinite His grace,
emptied Himself of all but love
and bled for Adam's helpless race.
'Tis mercy all, immense and free
for O my God, it found out me!
 'Tis mercy all, immense and free
 for O my God, it found out me!

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,
fast bound in sin and nature's night,
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray,
I woke, the dungeon flamed with light.
My chains fell off, my heart was free,
I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.
 My chains fell off, my heart was free,
 I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

No condemnation now I dread,
Jesus, and all in Him, is mine!
Alive in Him, my living Head,
and clothed in righteousness divine.
Bold I approach the eternal throne
and claim the crown, through Christ my own.
 Bold I approach the eternal throne
 and claim the crown, through Christ my own.

Bible reading: Ezekiel 47, 1-12,

The River From the Temple

The man brought me back to the entrance to the temple, and I saw water coming out from under the threshold of the temple toward the east (for the temple faced east). The water was coming down from under the south side of the temple, south of the altar. He then brought me out through the north gate and led me around the outside to the outer gate facing east, and the water was trickling from the south side.

As the man went eastward with a measuring line in his hand, he measured off a thousand cubits and then led me through water that was ankle-deep. He measured off another thousand cubits and led me through water that was knee-deep. He measured off another thousand and led me through water that was up to the waist. He measured off another thousand, but now it was a river that I could not cross, because the water had risen and was deep enough to swim in—a river that no one could cross. He asked me, “Son of man, do you see this?”

Then he led me back to the bank of the river. When I arrived there, I saw a great number of trees on each side of the river. He said to me, “This water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah, where it enters the Dead Sea. When it empties into the sea, the salty water there becomes fresh. Swarms of living creatures will live wherever the river flows. There will be large numbers of fish, because this water flows there and makes the salt water fresh; so where the river flows everything will live. Fishermen will stand along the shore; from En Gedi to En Eglaim there will be places for spreading nets. The fish will be of many kinds—like the fish of the Mediterranean Sea. But the swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt. Fruit trees of all kinds will grow on both banks of the river. Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear fruit, because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing.”

The Leposy Mission has produced another video, called Nagammal's Story.

For those not able to watch it, here are the subtitles, you will have to provide your own pictures!

Nagammal's story.

When I was a girl, I dreamt of becoming a nurse so that I could help others, but life took me on a different course.

I was 18 years old when I first notices patches on my face. But then things got worse. My hands and feet became deformed. The doctors told me it was leprosy. I had never heard of leprosy before.

Life was difficult but I had the support of a loving husband while I was going through treatment. He was my rock in times of struggle. At this time, I frequently cooked for my elderly mother. Sometimes I would burn myself and not even realise because I was losing sensation in my hands. Then my ulcers got worse. My toes and fingers needed to be amputated due to infection. I was no longer able to do anything for myself. As the leprosy got worse, the love and support of my husband meant everything to me. But

unfortunately his family didn't see it the same way. "Do you think you are her servant? All you ever do is help. Why don't you just leave her? If you spend your life caring for her what will you have for yourself? Go now and find work. You need to start looking after yourself."

He told me he was going away to look for work. When I begged him to stay he assured me that he would come back home. But I knew we had no future together. The pain of leprosy weakened my body but the pain of abandonment crushed my spirit. Then one day there was so much rain, more than I had ever seen in my life. "Many parts of the city and the suburbs have been flooded from the incessant rains that have hit Chennai in the past 24 hours amidst the worst ever flood situation in Tamil Nadu."

I waited for someone to come and rescue me from the goat shed where I was staying. As I waited, my ulcers became infected from the dirty flood waters. For 4 days and 4 nights no-one came to help me. I felt so alone.

A few days after the flood struck, an educated man from another village approached me as I was seeking refuge from the water. I couldn't remember the last time someone was happy to see me. He wasn't afraid of my leprosy. The man told me he was from the Leprosy Mission. He looked at my ulcers and bandaged my wounds. It was as if Jesus himself had come to visit me. After the flood, they took me to the Leprosy Mission Hospital. Every day they cared for me: feeding me, and helping me wash. They performed surgery on my arm. After rehabilitation, I could eat, cook, and even clean for myself. Now, I am fully independent.

I never imagined that while I was in hospital they would reconstruct my home, which was severely damaged by the floods. Now I have a place that is perfect for my needs.

The Leprosy Mission equipped me with the skills I needed so that I could advocate to the government for my human rights. "I have never had access to electricity. Everyone else has it. I'm not interested in excuses! I want to be treated like everyone else. I've tried every avenue, now I need you to assist me." Finally, for the first time in my life now have access to electricity, just like my neighbours. I feel like I am a part of society now; that I am just like everyone else. There used to be nights when I could not bear the thought of living for another day. But now, my life is transforming; I have become a person of hope.

Transform more lives, defeat leprosy.

Paul Moores now shares his sermon: Unconditional - these are the notes he has provided.

The Oxford English Dictionary definition for **UNCONDITIONAL:**

Not subject to any conditions, unlimited, absolute & unqualified.

Back in 2019 world renowned ballerina Dame Darcey Bussell contacted TLM whilst in **Mozambique**, she wanted to show her teenage daughters our work there amongst people affected by Leprosy. She was shocked to see the change in people's lives & said this.

"Unconditional love changes a person. The love they receive inspires them & draws them to change the lives of others"

THE SHORT VERSION Sermon

I wonder what you were thinking & feeling as we launched into EZEKIEL 47 as our reading, joining right in the middle of his vision

God's amazing UNCONDITIONAL love has been at work throughout history, let's go back to 597BC & follow a young man called to be a prophet to God's people in a time of exile & hopelessness EZEKIEL.

His message was hard to deliver & equally hard to receive – JUDGEMENT was coming on JERUSALEM this would mean God's presence leaving the temple.

Being God's people, having His presence with them, being in the Holy city formed their IDENTITY, it seemed that ALL Hope was gone & their relationship to God was a thing of the past.

BUT GOD..... is a RESTORER He planned for a returning & gave Ezekiel an amazing VISION (14 years later) of the TEMPLE & God's glory entering it – these descriptions were no patch up or just a common re-build but 95 Bible verses are given over to just the description of the measurements.

The VISION of HOPE & UNCONDITIONAL LOVE is outlined in Ezekiel 47

Let's measure the enormity of God's ability to turn around HOPELESSNESS with unconditional love.

1. NO MATTER HOW FAR - Distance

Manchester City tour of TROPHY ROOM / Heated Seats for Manager & subs

Ezekiel was given a GUIDED TOUR to beat them all, the temple of God, no patch-up or a simple re-build.

The vision was being MEASURED; he saw water flowing:

Firstly, up to the ankles

Then up to the knees

Then up to the waist

And finally, deep enough to swim in, even too deep for some to cross it.

The vision is not just about the return of LIVING WATER but it's replacement of the DEAD WATER, he is taken to view the river emptying into the DEAD SEA & becoming fresh.

What a picture of the lengths God will go to bring back life & blessing – **NO MATTER HOW FAR**

And that goal is what motivates Gabriel (who we will see later in our WLD Film) a specially trained Community Health Worker. Every day, he travels miles on his motorbike on red dirt tracks in baking heat to reach people in the most remote parts of Cabo Delgado, the most northerly region in Mozambique

2. NO MATTER HOW LONG – Time

This river that Ezekiel had seen was having an incredible effect:

Ezekiel 47:12 “Their leaves will not wither, nor will their fruit fail. Every month they will bear because the water from the sanctuary flows to them. Their fruit will serve for food and their leaves for healing”

Food & healing from the produce of the trees by this river, it gave hope that **NO MATTER HOW LONG** God will finally heal, restore & bless His people.

Again, in our FILM we will see a woman who has experienced rescue after a long and challenging wait her name is Zaina, a strong, confident woman from the village of Namatua in Cabo Delgado. She is a widow with five children and thirteen grandchildren. Zaina first noticed discoloured patches on her skin nearly 30 years ago when she was a young mum and people in her village would laugh at her. But one day her life was turned around. By God’s grace, a man found her, had compassion for her and helped her to build a hut for shelter from the rain. Later, the same man took her to a health post where she received the cure for leprosy for six months.

Meanwhile, Leprosy Changemakers, trained by The Leprosy Mission, went to Namatua to teach the villagers about leprosy and how it is easily cured. Now Zaina has been trained as a Leprosy Changemaker herself. She is passionate about finding those with leprosy who are hidden away and afraid, so that they can experience new life, no matter how long it takes.

3. NO MATTER WHAT- Forgiveness

Ezekiel 48:35 – Last verse in the book of Ezekiel is FULL of TRIUMPH

... from that day the name of the City will be “The Lord is There”

God’s people
Individuals
The Human Race

All have been exiles outside of God’s KINGDOM, there is no-one beyond redemption.

In the book ‘The Cross and The Switchblade’, a country pastor called David Wilkerson reads an article about teenagers who are members of a criminal gang. He moves to New York, risking his life to talk to about Jesus with young street gang members, such as Nicky Cruz from the feared Mau Maus. David meets Nicky and tells him “Jesus loves you and will never stop loving you”. Nicky slaps David and says to him, “I’ll kill you!” and David replies, “Yeah, you could do that. You could cut me into a thousand pieces and lay them in the street, and every piece will still love you”. Later, Nicky became a Christian, gave all his weapons to the police and began to devote his life to talking to others about the love of Jesus. The power of God’s unconditional love broke into Nicky’s heart and transformed him. This is the power of unconditional love.

Our UNCONDITIONAL campaign this year is a picture of GOD’S redemptive, healing RIVER reaching across the whole Mozambique region of Cabo Delgado – building HUBS that can affect communities.

These hubs are the beating heart of a village like Namatua. A safe space where every villager is welcomed unconditionally. A place where those who can’t read or write can learn about leprosy through drama, song and dance.

Debbie now leads us in our Prayers:

Dear Lord,

Thank you that we come today to a God who is Almighty and all-powerful, for whom nothing is impossible and yet who loves us dearly and for whom nothing is too small to bring to him. Lord, we thank you for the combination of power and love and mercy that is your character.

Lord we continue to bring our nation and our world before you in the grip of the Covid pandemic. Lord there is still so much suffering, so much loss and yet we praise and thank you for the arrival of various vaccines, and we continue to praise you for those who have already received it, Lord, and we pray that you would have your hand upon the program of vaccination, that it will run smoothly and that as many people as possible would be given the opportunity to have this vaccine to offer them some protection or some softening of the illness. And we just pray for all those involved in running that, that you would offer them wisdom and for the logistics to work.

We continue to pray Lord for our NHS, for staff who are so tired and so weary and maybe so stressed about some of the decisions they have to make. We pray that you would strengthen them Lord, for this hour and for this situation. We pray that that you would provide for them the support that they need both now and in the long run, and we just pray Lord for our own local hospital in Blackburn, that you would grant great wisdom to those who are deciding who to admit and where to allocate them.

We continue to pray, Lord, for our government, that they make the right decisions for our country and we pray for everybody in our country to play their part with regard to lockdown, Lord Instil in our hearts and our minds a spirit of responsible behaviour.

Lord, we also pray for the wider world in the grip of this pandemic Lord, particularly for those countries that have less of a way of health care, less in the way of communications, and less in the way of vaccines. Lord may we as part of the wealthier world look to what we can do to help and support others.

Lord we thank you for the opportunity to hear about the leprosy Mission. We thank you that they are doing such amazing work around the world with those who have so little. We thank you for particularly for the funding for this recent project in Mozambique in Cabo Delgado, we pray for your hand of blessing to be upon that and its final stages of preparation, Lord, that those community hubs will bring your light and your love to those communities, that they might provide a stepping stone for people to share the gospel, that lives might be changed in more ways than one Lord. We pray particularly for Paul and for Lou, for the wonderful work they do fostering children, Lord, we know that is a real vocation from you. Lord, we pray for the babies they have in their charge at the moment Lord, that despite the difficulties of the current situation that you would help them to find the perfect forever home, Lord, that they will be homes where they will be loved and cherished, and homes ideally Lord where they might come to know about you. We just pray for them all that you would put your hand of blessing upon their lives.

We pray too for Joe Biden's inauguration in America. Lord with all the tensions in America over the last few weeks we just pray that this would go smoothly and

peacefully. Lord we pray for his government that they would have the people at the very heart of their decisions, and that they would make their good decisions Lord, to support and cherish the people in the country of America.

We continue to pray for our own fellowship Lord. We pray for those who are finding life difficult. We particularly pray for those waiting for treatments, for appointments or just struggling generally with pain or illness. Lord, would you be what they need, would they know your presence and your love and your care, that they have not been abandoned. We just want to pray particularly for Brian and Beryl at this time, that God's peace would dwell with well with them and that Gods' healing will be upon them Lord, and that they will just know that you are with them. We also pray for those who are struggling just with the difficulties of isolation, of lockdown. Again Lord, may we be prompted to phone people, to send them a word of encouragement and would they know that you are with them.

We pray for churches across our land as they have to make decisions about whether to be open or not, Lord may they know your will and may churches that open, may they be safe places Lord, would you protect the people who go to services there because they believe that is what you are calling them to do. May your words still be preached, your name still be praised, and we pray Lord that you would enable all of us to seek to stay close to you, to seek your will, to just seek your heart and to praise you on a daily basis. Lord even when we cannot physically meet together may we still draw close to you each day. Thank you that you have listened to our prayers and you will answer them. We pray these things in your name Amen.

As we bring our worship to a conclusion, we join in a **final Song: There is a hope.** Again written by Stuart Townend and Mark Edwards in 2007, it has a more traditional feeling that speaks of the hope we can all have in Christ.

There is a hope that burns within my heart,
that gives me strength for every passing day;
A glimpse of glory now revealed in meagre part,
yet drives all doubt away:
I stand in Christ, with sins forgiven;
and Christ in me, the hope of heaven!
My highest calling and my deepest joy,
to make His will my home.

There is a hope that lifts my weary head,
a consolation strong against despair,
that when the world has plunged me in its deepest pit,
I find the Saviour there!
Through present sufferings, future's fear,
He whispers 'courage' in my ear,
for I am safe in everlasting arms,
and they will lead me home.

There is a hope that stands the test of time,
that lifts my eyes beyond the beckoning grave,
to see the matchless beauty of a day divine
when I behold His face!

When sufferings cease and sorrows die,
and every longing satisfied,
then joy unspeakable will flood my soul,
for I am truly home.

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<https://youtu.be/FVUfNEwRPno>

Let's join together in the words of the Grace:

May the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, be with us all, now and for evermore, Amen

(Gifts towards the work of the Leprosy Mission may be sent to Jane or Paul C)



Pray for your NHS

As a 2021 gets underway, the reality that many feared is becoming evident. Covid-19 cases are rising at an alarming rate and our health services are becoming increasingly stretched and challenged. While there is much we can do to play our part as responsible citizens in response, alongside this we are issuing a call across our churches to **pray for your NHS**.

We commit to our prayers all those within our communities whose lives have been lost, whose health has been harmed or who mourn the impact of this pandemic on those they love. As we recognise this tragic reality, it further underlines the vital role played by our healthcare services and our gratitude for their endeavours as we come together to pray for the wellbeing of all who work within them.

As we do so, we recognise the vital contribution being made by keyworkers across a whole range of sectors, particularly in our schools where there has been significant disruption. We do not and should not underestimate the stress and pressure that many are now working under – we encourage our churches to find appropriate avenues through which to express appreciation and support.

Many who regularly attend and comprise our churches are working in these key professions. They share stories of immense commitment, fortitude and genuine hope, but also bear testimony to the human cost of maintaining these vital services. Many are working long hours under constantly changing circumstances and are often exposed to the threat of infection while also seeing colleagues becoming ill.

First and foremost, this requires us to live and act responsibly, to do all we can to reduce the risk and spread of infection, and to support keyworkers by recognising the pressure under which they are operating. This will disrupt all of our routines and generate stress and anxiety for everyone. Now more than ever, we need to take to heart the New Testament invitation to *"value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others."* (Philippians 2:3-4) These words are inspired by nothing less than the example of Jesus himself.

Alongside this, we encourage our churches to intentionally and continually pray for our NHS institutions and all those who work within them. We offer this as a starting point and encourage that this is expanded to recognise and include other key workers and vital service providers over the coming days and weeks. In particular we encourage you to:

Deliberately focus on your local hospitals, G.P.'s, ambulance service and other key healthcare providers. Take time to recognise them and include prayers for them in your online services and shared bulletins.

Make contact to let these providers know that you are praying for them – A simple card or email to share your prayerful commitment can be a message of encouragement and hope.

Keep in touch with key-workers in your own congregation or contact network. This is something that everyone can do, and a quick call, voicemail or text to simply assure them of your prayers and concern can make a difference.

Maintain this commitment. Don't just make this a one-off response, but stay aware of the key developments and pressures, continue to pray and as we suggested above, broaden your prayer focus to recognise other key workers and service providers – along with those whose businesses and livelihoods are threatened by continuing lockdown. We would encourage that you particularly identify, recognise and engage with those located in your immediate neighbourhoods.

We recognise the significance of our calling to be a people of prayer, as we seek to embrace present realities as those whose faith and hope is rooted in God. Our Scriptures repeatedly remind us that our faith should be rooted in behaviours and actions that reflect its true meaning and worth. So we make no apology for repeating the call for our churches to do all they can to encourage responsible and supportive citizenship across our communities – and we do so as a people of prayer.

North Western Baptist Association – January 2021