



Small Church
Connexion

BIG BLESSINGS IN SMALL CHURCHES

The last 18 months have been a season of new challenges for the smaller churches, as we left our buildings and faced a steep learning curve of connecting digitally. Zoom and other video conferencing technology has been a blessing and churches have enjoyed worshipping with local, national and international people tuning in. Alongside this, there have been sermons in print and on disc to share with those with no tech, as well as phone calls and visits with cake! Bags of goodies have been distributed to neighbours and craft bags have kept families engaged with church. Meeting in person was sorely missed.

More recently, the challenge became 'if and when' to begin gathering again with all the restrictions in place. Sensitivity was needed to the different levels of anxiety people felt about meeting in person again.

There has been both good and bad news regarding church buildings. Some have been decorated and even refurbished while empty but some are in a bad state of repair and much prayer is needed as to the way forward.

BUT... God is always with us through **every season and circumstance** and we are reminded in Romans 8:28 *'that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose'*.

Support and encouragement were brought to the smaller churches by the **Small Church Connexion**¹ through four national webinars during lockdown. These Zoom sessions were well attended and the great speakers covered a range of topical issues, alongside a retreat day. Many of the churches shared stories of unexpected blessing. Here are six to encourage you:

1 www.baptist.org.uk/scc

Welling Baptist Church (Bexley) had decided on a refurbishment plan and a new name before lockdown. The work took four months and they were back in the building in early July. **'The Vine Christian Community Church'** is exploring partnership with local groups and has already opened as a Covid test centre. Their approach is hybrid, with Zoom during the week and in person with live streaming on Sundays. The church plans to start a Christianity Explored course in September. Part two of the refurbishment is coming in 2022, to spruce up their large hall and to set up groups for wellbeing, domestic abuse, IT training and a job club. They are excited about the future!

www.vinechurch.uk

Prayer Requests

- Christianity Explored course in September
- Large hall refurb and the plan for new groups

Lawrence Weston Baptist Church (Bristol) was blessed by running an *Alpha* course on Zoom jointly with two other churches and seeing people grow in faith. They have all benefitted from more contributory services with a number of people sharing, commenting or asking questions on the short talk. Faith is growing!

www.hopecafeandchurch.org.uk

Prayer Request

- Plans to start a Renew Wellbeing Cafe

Bromley Common Baptist Church (London/Kent border) were blessed by getting to meet, know and relate with immediate neighbours around their building. The tranquil church garden was a place of quiet and refuge for many on their daily walk. There has been more freedom and willingness from people to stop and chat on the street, sometimes having quite deep conversations. This strange time has been a wonderful opportunity to slow down and be still with God, to think about what is important in life and faith - to take stock.

www.bromleycommonbaptist.org.uk

Prayer Requests

- To rethink how we do things; to be more creative in what we do and how we do it.
- For a refreshing touch from God and have the energy to move forward

Totteridge Baptist Church (High Wycombe) enjoyed having new people meet on Zoom sessions and then attending the church in person. One of their new additions has applied for membership and is actively helping within church already! Church members were allowed to sing in the car park at the front of the building, an unexpected way to share joy with the neighbours. Smaller numbers meant that they were all able to meet in person without the same problems with logistics as in a large church, once worship services could resume.

With the building closed, major repairs to the roof and gas supply could be done without disrupting services or the dementia group that meet in the church.

www.totteridgebaptist.org.uk

Prayer Requests

- New people involved in the spiritual leadership of the church.
- People seem positive and excited for the church to be open and meeting in person.

West Drayton Baptist Church (West London)

experienced God's abundance during lockdown, with 45-50 devices tuning in weekly on Sundays on Zoom and giving increased as more people gave online instead of cash. Prayer too has increased, as people gained confidence, speaking out or writing prayers in the chat box. The children's work has also blossomed! But the most unexpected blessing was a call from a local Heathrow hotel asking for a local minister to meet some Christian Iranians. At the time of writing, at least 40 Iranian Christians have passed through the church; some were sent on to other parts of the UK, some have stayed. Sixteen were baptised on the three Sundays the building was open, bringing the total of baptisms for 2020-21 to 32. The Thursday Bible studies are now translated into Farsi and the Q&A session about the Bible for new Christians has been very helpful.

www.thechapelwestdrayton.com

Prayer Requests

- Changes to the service format to involve young people more
- To be patient, wait, pray and seek God for the next step.

New Brighton Baptist Church (Merseyside)

John Cheek had just been appointed minister when the pandemic began. "I began in November 2019 and didn't think I'd have to close the church four months later! We have remained closed for public worship since then, but we've had a weekly Zoom evening service each Sunday and on-line midweek meetings. Church members have been developing their talents, from hosting Zoom meetings to helping people in the community with financial advice, or cookery skills.

"Every week in lockdown, we have delivered free food-parcels to impoverished households in the area and for some, it's their first experience of church and it's a very positive one."

www.baptist.org.uk/newbrighton

New minister John is a presenter on Flame Christian and Community Radio
flameradio.org 4-6pm The Drive Home Show with John (Fridays)

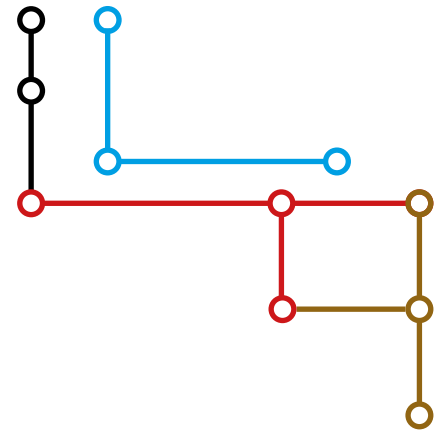
[www.facebook.com/
NewBrightonBapt](https://www.facebook.com/NewBrightonBapt)

Prayer Request

- Just to re-open again, safely!

God is always with us through every season and circumstance and we are reminded in Romans 8:28

'that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose'.



Hilary Taylor is the London Baptists Small Church Enabler

There is an area on the Baptists Together website dedicated to smaller churches: baptist.org.uk/smallerchurches

