

Preamble

The COVID-19 crisis has disrupted life for everyone at many levels. Within a few weeks, many of the activities that constitute normal life have had to cease, change or become more challenging. We are all dealing with restrictions, losses and uncertainties. When faced with such things, many of us usually find comfort and support through our engagement with our church community and activities. But now our usual church activities and community have been disrupted too.

Over the past few weeks, churches have tried to adapt to this developing situation. Often these adaptations have focussed on creative ways to provide worship services, teaching and administration. However, probably the aspect of church life that is most likely to maintain the health of our churches at this time is fellowship – our ongoing care for one another – expressions of belonging. After all, one of the chief biblical images of the church is that we are the Family of God. Family life is not primarily about programmes, places or events. It's about relationship. As the children of God who is love, we are called to “be devoted to one another in brotherly and sisterly love” (Romans 12:10).

One way we can show this love to one another and remind people that they belong to their church, is to make regular personal contact through phone calls with everyone we know is part of our church community. We encourage Pastors to make this a key ministry focus during this season. This will usually require mobilising a team of people. This template is offered as a resource to assist that team in making their care calls.

BUV Church Health & Capacity Building Team

Template for Leaders/Carers phoning church people during suspension of gatherings

Purpose – To connect with people associated with our church community during this season of disruption and uncertainty just to let them know we care and are here for them.

These don't have to be long conversations, but rather just an expression of care and belonging. A suggested conversation flow is set out below. However, remember the importance of listening, so don't let your desire to speak get in the way of paying attention to what the other person is saying.

- **Identify yourself** – 'Hi, I'm _____, one of the Leaders at _____ Baptist Church.'
- **State the Purpose of your call** – 'I am just calling today to see how you and your family are doing during these uncertain times.'
- **Listen...** Good listening is what most people will need right now. Allowing them to just share their thoughts and emotions. You will hear everything from 'God is good' to 'people are crazy and selfish out there' and everything in between. Try to be empathetic but don't add fuel to their anxiety.
- **Respond** –
 - 'I am glad to hear you're doing OK' **OR**
 - 'I am sorry to hear that... Is there anything we could do that would be helpful?' – *No promises but just a 'we will see what we can do...' Ask permission to share what they have told you if they want you to refer their need or issue to someone else.*
- **Make them aware**
 - What are some other connection points for your church
 - Online presence? Church Facebook page etc.
 - How to stream a church service – their own or another
 - Where to go for help – 'If you develop a need for help they can contact the office.'
- **Pray with them** – 'Can I pray with you? What would you like me to pray for?'
- **Share an encouragement or Bible verse or 2** – "Thank You Lord that you know all about this!" This reminds us that the Scriptures affirm that nothing takes our Heavenly Father by surprise. See a suggested list of possibilities below
- **Thank them for their time and say goodbye.** Ask if they would be happy with you calling them again in the next few weeks just to keep in touch.
- **Make sure you pass on to a Pastor any significant matters requiring their follow up.** It is important that people know they can trust their church to keep its promises.

Possible Bible verses to share

- "The Lord is near to all who call on him." Psalm 145:18
- "Trust in the Lord with all your heart" Proverbs 3:5.

- “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest.” Matthew 11:28
- “I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” John 10:11
- “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.” Romans 8:38-39
- “...because God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you.’” Hebrews 13:5
- “Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” Hebrews 13:8.
- “Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.” 1 Peter 5:7
- “Come near to God and he will come near to you.” James 4:8