

Tuckingmill Baptist Church, Camborne



June 2021

The country is a-buzz. The end to these Lockdown restrictions is in sight. It has been a long, hard slog for all of us, in our individual lives, in our families and in our church.

For us at Tuckingmill it will hopefully come mainly as relief, but I still do not think the immediate path ahead is simple. We have choices to make about when to re-start precisely what.

Inevitably, with all judgement calls, we will not all agree with everyone else about everything. For some, this will be a time of wonderful, radical opportunity: it will be the chance to rework the church programme from scratch, just like when things started fifty years back. For others, that very liberty appears more like a threat: why change? What was so wrong?

So don't expect to feel totally

comfortable about everything over the next next few months. Your preferred timetable may not be identical to someone else's, and nobody is likely to be totally satisfied with everything that is started, re-started, stopped, or modified (no, not even me! ... what made you think that?).

Think about it; it's just like family life. When different members of a family have different tastes and preferences, nobody gets *everything* they would choose simply for themselves. Compromise, in that context, is not a dirty word, but an opportunity to graciously give and receive. As it must be for us over these next few months.

Obviously, you will be aware that we had re-started meeting at the Chapel on Sunday mornings already.

Not quite "life as we know it, Jim" as yet, with masks and no singing allowed. But with mainly tolerable weather, we reintroduced re-



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refreshments following, just *outside*. Following the further significant date of May 17th, we hoped that more people would feel able to join the hardy little group at the Chapel.

And if all goes according to national plan, then from June 21st all these frustrating restrictions should be lifted. We therefore would like to re-start things *almost* as normal from Sunday 27th June.

By *almost*, I mean that I hope we can base all of our main meetings at the Chapel again from that date. Masks gone, singing allowed (and aloud!) again, not simply the routine refreshments on Sunday mornings and Thursday evenings permitted again, but the more substantial sharing of food at a weekly Cafe Church. Occasional events on or off the premises, such as church lunches or barbecues, should also be open to us.

However, since we typically change to a summer-holiday set of arrangements from mid-July, with a single meeting on Sunday mornings, it would seem simpler to continue with the single meeting at 10.30, through to the end of August.

But precisely what will kick back in, when we come to September, is now the big choice before us. The Church Members' meeting on the 1st July will be the time when we need to take the decisions. But we also wanted to share our thinking with the broader church community too, to make sure that everyone who wishes to can take part in the earlier discussions.

So then ... what might things look like from September? I suspect that our evening meetings, Sundays and Thursdays, will continue largely unchanged. Though, having now discovered *Zoom*, and with an internet connection at the Chapel, our intention will be to sustain the participate-from-home option throughout the winter. Evening "congregations" have been larger and more regular through this last year, and therefore we hope that this could boost our prayer meetings, particularly, though the darker, colder, wetter (etc) winter months.

But we had not long discovered that alternating Thursday mornings and evenings for the prayer meeting meant that more people could attend. We could still reinstitute that, if some people are just starting to find evenings too challenging, even in their own homes. For that matter, we don't need to keep it as Thursdays. Used to be Wednesdays. Could be again. It's not actually a huge deal to review this choice regularly.

And what precise time for a midweek prayer meeting? We pulled it forward to 7.00 on Zoom, but the intention was to revert to 7.30 when meeting at the Chapel again - that extra half-hour likely being of more significance to those still in paid employment.

I didn't mention Tuesday evenings, though, because this is currently in use by *Treasure Seekers*. However, precisely when and how we



make provision for our church youngsters might need to change, too.

We've now got a toddler, a primary and two middle-teens to consider. For the younger ones, what needs to be available to run *alongside* our Sunday morning service? For our teens, what will work best for them? Would they prefer their main input to come somewhere within our Sunday programme, or would it be better to repackage *Treasure Seekers*? We're looking for the families concerned to guide us on this one, and hopefully we will all be amenable to changing things for their benefit, if need be.

Before we think about Sundays, though, what about that monthly prayer meeting we had started on Saturdays, specifically praying for the future of the church?

And what about that anomaly in the calendar, the fifth Thursdays, when we cancelled the prayer meeting to relieve the pressure on people's busy diaries, so that some time during the week could be used for "something intentionally evangelistic"? Being honest, I can't remember anyone telling me they did this ... so is it about time that we admitted to ourselves that our zeal to spread the Gospel is actually pretty feeble? Do we need to make sure that we use a Thursday (or whatever) every month to pray specifically for our own church and individual evangelism? Perhaps we should first concern ourselves to pray ... and

maybe *that* might lead to some actual *doing* of it?

And Sundays, finally. I still think that Cafe Church is a fine alternative way into the church for any new contacts - though we need to make sure that we are willing to forego our beloved heavy-duty theology around the meal table if there are visitors who may be "unchurched". But is 6.30 the best time for this? If it's too dark and late for some ... maybe a more snack level meal later in the afternoon instead?

And have people grown so accustomed to the recent 10.30 starts that this is now the new preferred start time for Sunday mornings?

I think we need to accept that if this is the case, a 12.15 start for an All-Age Bible School (or just a single "class" pitched to include our teens) might just be too late. Although, on consideration, we could flip the morning over and *start* with the class(es) at 10.00, with refreshments served *before* a service starting at 11.00.

Lots of possibilities, and we really must not fear introducing changes, if there's reason to do so.

And that is because our constants have not changed. We're not defined by the colour of the carpet or the times of the meetings, but by a commitment to take the Scriptures seriously.



They tell us to study, to pray, to sing God's praise, to spend time together "encouraging" one another to ...

grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ
(2 Peter 3:18)



Our meetings, their times, their locations and their individual objectives all have to be subject to God's agenda for us in meeting together.

Our church diary, and our own personal diaries, need (as does everything else) to come under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

So what should we be looking to write into those diaries for September 2021, not just to suit ourselves, but to serve one another, for the glory of God?

Peter Ham

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Church website:
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Zoom meetings - "online church":
maintaining the times we have become used to over the previous months, but with increasing numbers of people meeting at the chapel in the mornings:
Sundays, 10.30 and 6.30

	10.30 a.m.	6.30 p.m. (cafe church)
6 th June	Phil Willetts	video / led discussion
13 th June	Exodus 20:12	following on from a.m.
20 th June	Fathers' Day guest service	video / led discussion
27 th June	Exodus 20:13	following on from a.m.
4 th July	Exodus 20:14	following on from a.m.

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Engaging Our Emotions, Engaging with God

Alasdair Groves
(CCEF mailing list)



Emotions are tricky. Everyone has them. Everyone struggles with them. Many struggle with how they feel more than anything else in their lives. Then there is the sea of other people's emotions in which all of us swim. I suspect most of us consider emotions to be more of a liability than an asset.

What does the Bible have to say about emotions? The Bible doesn't talk about emotions quite the way we do. We'd like Romans to lay out a theology of emotions, or Proverbs to include a section beginning "Here are six ways to manage your feelings, seven to feel as you should...", but they're not there. However, Scripture frequently does exhort us to feel certain things and not to feel others:

we are to consider our trials joy (James 1:2)

we are to put off rage and bitterness (Ephesians 4:31)

we are to have compassion for each other (1 Peter 3:8)

we are to love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength
(Deuteronomy 6:5).

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I've spent a great deal of time reflecting on God's call to us to have a whole array of emotional responses to his world, from awe-filled delight (e.g., Psalm 8) to vehement hatred (e.g., Psalm 139:21–23). How can we live up to this? Does God expect us to have perfect, instantaneous control over our emotions? No. God does not stand at a distance and command emotions we can never fully attain. Instead, he meets us with countless mercies, transforming our hearts and character, which always influences our emotions.

Throughout the Bible God continually encourages, comforts, convicts and reorients us. Instead of handing us a manual on emotional self-transformation, he patiently and tenderly invites us to simply come to him with all our feelings. This makes our emotions one of the premier opportunities to deepen our relationship with him!



Understand your emotions

If you are surprised to hear that God actually wants you to draw near to him when you feel like you are an emotional mess, remember this: the Bible views emotions as fundamentally good. How do I know this? Because we are image bearers of God and he has emotions. His joy, hate, wrath, compassion, jealousy and love are the model for ours.

We are more than computers cataloguing facts. He made us both to “taste and see that the Lord is good” and to “hate what is evil.” He commands us to “rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn” because he is a God who is moved by his children (e.g., Hosea 11:8), a God who commands feasts and celebrations in Israel's law (e.g., Leviticus 23), a God who weeps at the tomb of Lazarus (John 11).

God doesn't call us to avoid or squash our emotions (as Christians often suppose). Neither does he call us to embrace them unconditionally (as our culture often urges). Rather, he calls us to engage them by bringing our emotions to him and to his people. I like

the word engage because it doesn't make a premature assumption about whether the emotion is right or wrong, or how it might need to change. Instead it highlights what the Bible highlights: our emotions (good and bad) are meant to reveal the countless ways we need God.

Our emotions invite us to see the world as God sees it - both broken and beautiful - rejoicing where he is redeeming it and yearning for the full redemption that is yet to come. Only in the safety of his strength and patience can we face our visceral reactions, name them honestly, and talk about them with God and others.

Bring your emotions to God

At this point, you might be wondering, "But what does it actually look like to bring our emotions to God?" Let me give you an example from a passage that has been especially powerful for me. Look at Psalm 22:1.

*My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
Why are you so far from saving me,
from the words of my groaning?*

Here is a man in deep distress. He is in trouble and groaning. Worse, he is also alone and abandoned. Stop for a moment and consider the nature and intensity of emotions he'd have to be experiencing to write something like that. Panicky fear. Deeply confusing disappointment. A shocking sense of betrayal. Tangible grief.

Now look at what this man does with these painful emotional experiences: he takes them to God. He is apparently free to engage God - with loud cries no less - even about being abandoned by God. He calls this God, from whom he feels so distant, "My God," and speaks directly to him, not about him in the abstract. "Why have you forsaken... Why are you so far?"

Of course we know from other passages that God will never leave or forsake his people - the psalmist's feelings in this moment are not the whole story. The psalmist knows that,



too, because the psalm ends with an affirmation of God's faithfulness. Yet this psalm and many like it come to us without a swarm of footnotes about how God hasn't really abandoned us. And, importantly, this psalm doesn't direct this person (or us) to ignore his feelings because they don't reflect the truth about God. Instead, we are shown a path that forges endlessly toward God, even through the center of emotional storms.

God hears and cares

Like the psalmist, you can come to God with a raw heart and lay your burdens before him (Matthew 11:28–30). He will receive you in your pain and walk with you. When your emotions feel overwhelming, turn toward God and put those feelings into words. You will be heard by the God who hears. And when you don't have words, read Psalm 22 and ask God for help. Know that when you do, you will find your father in heaven feels great joy for the opportunity to embrace a child he loves.



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