

Tuckingmill Baptist Church, Camborne



September 2021

Another milestone in the slow, long haul back to normality for us as a church: the morning service time returns to 10.00.

In itself this is really rather trivial. Remember that the Bible doesn't tell us how many times we have to meet together, for how long, and at what times. That's just down to us to choose wisely. But 10.30 was the time that we opted for, back in April 2020, when working out just how to use this strange new programme *Zoom* suddenly became a priority for church life ... and an extra half-hour to remember which buttons to click on ... or to ring for help! ... seemed a sensible precaution.

So now, at the start of September, we are moving back

to 10.00 again, which will permit us also to re-launch our All-Age Bible School, following refreshments - though we do still need to finalise how this will work for our few younger people.



And we still need to remember that we are not out of the woods yet. We had considered a church lunch, following our Guest Service / Harvest / Return to Church thanksgiving meeting on the 12th, but with Cornwall

having acquired the dubious honour of being the nation's top spot for new Coronavirus infections, a big, protracted mingle seems a rather less good idea after all.

But a few other things will be kicking in again as well. A few years ago we thought it would be

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appropriate to meet for special times of prayer concerning the future of the church. It seems just as appropriate again now, with our decision to start the process to recruit a new pastor. So can I ask you to consider seriously whether you can join us for these: one hour on a Saturday at 10.00, once a month, starting on the 11th September.

Also, back before everything had to move online, we had just found that alternating our mid-week prayer meeting times, morning one week, evening another, meant that some more people could join us, particularly during the colder, darker winter months.

Now it could be that we have now found that *Zoom* is the answer to this problem. There probably aren't many who can't make a 7.30 meeting *from the comfort of their own homes* - whereas 10.45 (or whatever) at the chapel on a Thursday morning is not going to suit many people holding down a day job. So resurrecting the alternating time-of-day schedule might be unnecessary - or even a retrograde step - but we want to check this out again during October.

We had decided, back at our Church Members' Meeting in July, to return to (at least predom-

inantly) *Zoom* for our evening meetings during the winter months - though now we have worked out the logistics for decent sound to and from the chapel, sitting around the table downstairs, I could see that it might also make sense to maintain a foothold presence there, even through the chill and likely damp of our British winter. Some of us might still prefer (and be able!) to get there in person, even if it's a bit less comfortable, admittedly, than during the summer.



So that means that we will all need to be a bit more careful to check our diaries over the coming months. We now have options over when *and where* our meetings will be. And we need to regard

this as not a problem, but an opportunity: we can participate in some activities that we have become far less able to, as the years have rolled on by. We would have been reluctant to investigate the new-fangled hi-tech stuff if we hadn't *needed* to ... but now we can reap its benefit.

All of which reminds me that we are greatly privileged that our heavenly Father treats us as his *children* and not his *kids*. Kids, you make all the decisions for, on their behalf. This is where and when we are going out. You *will*

wear your Wellingtons and a scarf. No, four ice-creams do not constitute a square meal ... so *eat your greens!*

And God does not treat us so. Dress code, times and places, types of song, length and pitch of sermon ... God does not appear to be greatly fussed.

How far we live from the Chapel ... whether you home school your children ... Apple or PC ... Ford or Toyota (or public transport) ... all of these could be acceptable options.

We can see - and too often judge - one another's outwards appearances. But it is a great comfort (as well as, at other times, a great challenge) that ...

"... the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart."
(1 Samuel 16:7)

I know it's possible to be overawed by the breadth of choice. Goodness, just look at the choices we get in some of our

supermarket aisles nowadays! How can you work out what is "best" if you have to compare every possible option?

And actually the answer is that you don't need to work out "the best", but one that is good *enough*, and works for *you*.

So please let's not worry about tweaking our church diary's regular bookings. There is no perfect timetable, and certainly not anything laid down in Scripture for us to obey in minutest detail ... at peril of our salvation. Our gracious God does not work that way!

We're even allowed to make mistakes (and learn from them), or just to change our minds. Or ring the changes, just for the fun of it, if we're all so inclined (which I know we wouldn't be!).

All in all, don't you feel you can rejoice that, even at a difficult time like this, with such a considerate and loving Heavenly Father, who "knows our frame" and "remembers we are dust" (Psalm 103:14), that ...

*The lines have fallen for me
in pleasant places;
indeed, I have
a beautiful inheritance.*
(Psalm 16:6)

Peter Ham



Sunday meetings:

	10.00 a.m.	6.30 p.m. (cafe church)
5 th September	Phil Willetts	Communion then video
12 th September	Harvest Thanksgiving	Communion then video
19 th September	Mike Coles	Communion then video
26 th September	Bob McFarland	Communion then video
3 rd October	Phil Willetts	Communion then video

Other meetings:

2 nd September	7.30	Prayer meeting
6 th - 9 th September	7.30	West Cornwall Convention
11 th September	10.00	Prayer meeting (in person only)
16 th September	7.30	Prayer meeting (John Carter)
18 th September	10.00	Work morning
23 rd September	7.30	Prayer meeting
25 th September	7.30	Rendezvous (Nick Fuller @ CCC)
30 th September	7.30	Mission prayer meeting (Phil Pengelly)
6 th October	7.30	Joint prayer meeting @ CCC
9 th October	6.00	Skittles @ Townshend



	Stewards	Teas	Flowers	Creche	Cleaning
5 Sep	Jenny	Arwen / Jennifer	Lilian	Marsha	Greg / Marsha
12 Sep	Greg	Marsha / Jenny	Jenny	Jenny	J/J/J Carter
19 Sep	Heather	June / Phil	Kay	Marsha	Peter / Jenny
26 Sep	Kay	Heather / John B	Heather	Jenny	Heather / Kay
3 Oct	Jenny	Arwen / Jennifer	Marsha	Marsha	Greg / Marsha
10 Oct	Greg	Marsha / Jenny	Lilian	Jenny	J/J/J Carter
17 Oct	Heather	June / Phil	Jenny	Marsha	Peter / Jenny
24 Oct	Kay	Heather / John B	Kay	Jenny	Heather / Kay

(Cleaning is for the week *following* the stated Sunday)

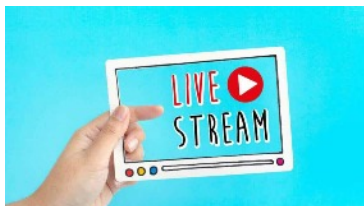
Tuckingmill Baptist Church, Camborne



September 2021

**15 reasons your soul needs gathered worship,
not just a livestream**

(Dane Ortlund, on the 9Marks blog)



("Livestream" is not exactly what we have been doing over the last year, with Zoom - it is entirely one-way, just watching *live* what is happening at church - but many of the principles here carry over.)

The pandemic continues. Physical attendance in many churches remains sparse — or at least sparser than before. For various reasons, some may need to continue staying home. But other low-risk or fully vaccinated congregants seem to prefer the livestream far longer than we expected.

Amid these various circumstances and uncertainties, we need to lead our people well. Part of that means we need to remind our people of what we lose when we don't physically gather in worship. Below, I've written 15 reflections on all that is lost when we choose to worship from the couch instead of the pew.

1. As Bonhoeffer said in *Life Together*, "The physical presence of other believers is a source of incomparable joy and strength to the believer." The mere **presence of other Christians** has a fortifying effect

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on our souls, beneath what we're even able to consciously recognize. That's one reason the Bible exhorts us to meet together. We are Christ's very body, organically connected to each other, the life and strength of Christ himself flowing into us through one another.

2. A virtual worship gathering is one-way participation, not **two-way**. You're receiving, but you can't give. You are seeing those leading worship, preaching, praying — but they can't see you. They don't see your eyes, your body, your solidarity. At best you're a number, piping in on a livestream.

3. We use **our screens** for work and for entertainment. But corporate worship is neither. Watching worship on our screens can subtly dilute the special-ness of corporate worship, as the very medium tends to mush it into other more mundane realities of life like work and entertainment.



4. Coming in for worship takes **more effort**. You have to get out of your pyjamas and put on jeans. You have to get in the car. If you have kids, you have to go through the routine of getting them all presentable and into the minivan. Up here in the north, you have snow and ice and cold to deal with. Good. We're teaching our kids, and we're training our own souls, to value corporate worship. The very effort to come in trains us in a healthy direction, reinforcing the irreplaceable value of gathering with other Christians.

5. There's not only the worship service itself; there's all the **hallway time**, the passing conversations, the wave across the sanctuary, the smile in the parking lot, the greeting while washing your hands in the restroom. All of that is lost in virtual worship from home. Instead of getting in the car at 9:10 for the 9:30 service, arriving at 9:25, and having several minutes of passing fellowship — along with the unhurried fellowship and encouragement after the service — you open your laptop at 9:29 and close it one second after the benediction. A protracted period of virtual worship weakens our relationships.

6. There's something else that's harder to articulate, though it's related to the above point. Mentally and psychologically, there's a certain **"ramp-up"** as you drive to church, park, walk into the building, settle into

your seat or into the pew. And there's a certain reflective "ramp-down" as you leave the sanctuary, drive home, and reflect on what just happened. All of that is lost when the ramp-up and ramp-down is replaced with opening your laptop and closing it. Corporate worship must be prepared for and then absorbed, and going in physically helps facilitate that in a way that's almost certainly diluted with couch worship.

7. **Prayer.** With whom can we pray if we're staying home? With a spouse, perhaps. But we need other Christians to pray with. We need other Christians to pray for. We want to keep learning how to move through life as if God is actually there, because he is. That growth atrophies in protracted isolation.

8. **Encouragement.** We grossly underestimate the spiritual power of encouragement, both for the encourager and for the encouraged. One reason we gather is to en-courage, that is, to build courage into one another. I greet a friend; he asks how my week was; I mention a challenge I'm navigating; he says, "Hang in there; God is with you." A 30-second exchange, come and gone just like that — and my soul just got enlarged.

9. It's harder for your preacher if you are home. He can't see you. He knows some of you are out there, and he's trying to acknowledge you from the pulpit as he glances at the livestream camera from time to time. But he doesn't know if you're nodding along or nodding off. He has zero feedback from you. You could be jumping up and down with excitement and he'd have no idea. Healthy preaching is **dialogical** — your preacher is feeding off of your eyes, your nods, your attentiveness, as he preaches. He needs to see you.

10. And the preaching is harder for you if you're home. Sitting on your couch watching your preacher as a head on a screen simply isn't as enjoyable as sitting 20 feet away, in a room with better acoustics, surrounded by dozens of other Christians who are also listening with you. **Attentiveness** to a 2-D preacher necessarily wanes compared to a 3-D preacher.

11. In corporate worship inside your church, not everything is scripted. You'll greet someone you didn't expect to see. A visitor might sit near you and you'll get the opportunity to welcome them. You might even play a role in leading someone to Christ. From your couch, none of that happens. Everything is scripted. It's nearly impossible to have a **fortuitous interaction**.

12. When you're in the sanctuary, you can't press mute. You can't pause it to grab another cup of coffee. You can't turn the volume up or down. You're less tempted to pull your phone out and see who just texted you. When you're at church, you're wonderfully captured by the environment. You are **trapped**, with other Christians, before God. That's good.



13. **Singing.** Perhaps you can hear the congregation sing through your speakers at home, but we all know it's not the same as hearing the real voices all around you. The same goes for reciting Scripture corporately, or reading a confession of sin in unison, even if through masks. There's a necessary artificiality built in when these things are done with just you and your family from your living room. Your fellow members need to hear you sing. You're strengthening them as they hear your voice. It doesn't matter if you can't carry a tune. Whether they know it or not, you're reinforcing their theology with your voice.

14. **Sacraments.** We lose the opportunity to partake of the Lord's Supper if we're home, yet we believe that this is a vital source of spiritual strengthening — not merely a memorial act.

15. **Time.** The more time goes by, and the more comfortable we get trying to do worship from home, the more “out of shape” we're getting. We're not exercising our corporate worship muscles. The longer we wait, the more normal it will feel for us to do worship from home. For the above reasons, that's less than ideal.

This is not easy for any of us. Let's be patient with each other. Let's love and understand and show grace to each other. But with the requisite safety precautions in place, let's boldly encourage each other to come together for corporate worship.

This virus is bad. I get it. Let's protect our bodies. But not at the expense of our souls.

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