

*To our Baptist family in the East Midlands*

*Dear friends, we write to you at a time when once again, our nation faces a huge challenge as we enter a further period of national lockdown. In his address to the nation on Monday, the Prime Minister warned that ‘the weeks ahead will be the hardest yet’. And it’s easy to see why, with a NHS that is struggling to cope, schools closing and businesses fighting for survival. And all of this in the darkness of winter – it’s tough for everyone.*

*At this time of strain when so many of our movements and interactions are restricted, it is good to be reminded that we are still invited to come home to God who remains the source of our life. Here is a priority for the people of God at this time, to practice those disciplines that take us deeper into God. You know what they are – prayer, Bible engagement and time set aside to meet with God in the quietness of our hearts. “One thing I ask from the Lord, this only do I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze on the beauty of the Lord and to seek him in his temple. For in the day of trouble he will keep me safe in his dwelling; he will hide me in the shelter of his sacred tent and set me high upon a rock.” Psalm 27:4&5.*

*It is also important that we look out for those who care for us in our church communities – our Pastors, Ministers and Leaders. They are called to serve, for sure, but loving service is something we are all called to. So, let’s encourage and support those who are set apart for servant leadership; let’s have realistic expectations of them and of what can be achieved in these difficult times; and let’s play our part in the upbuilding of the church family. May loving kindness rule in our church communities and may we, through our words and actions, continue to witness to our Saviour whose birth we have just celebrated.*

*Friends, in writing to you at this time we are wanting you to know that we are here for you, to offer help, support and encouragement as you seek to remain faithful to God’s calling in these most challenging of times. If we can serve you in the coming weeks, please don’t hesitate to contact us and we’ll do our best to help.*

*As we close, we wish to commend two things to you:-*

*Firstly, the most recent guidance offered by the Baptist Union which we wholeheartedly endorse. You can find the details [here](#) but in a nutshell, the recommendation is that at this time of crisis churches should voluntarily refrain from in person gathering. The motivation is twofold – to express a duty of care to those most vulnerable in our church family and to stand in solidarity with our*

*fellow citizens.*

*Secondly, our call to 'Lockdown Prayer' for the country and particularly the NHS and key workers. You can find the details [here](#).*

*Remember, the God who came to us as Emmanuel remains with us. And he will triumph.*

*With our love and prayers,*

*Mark, Nick and Mike*