

christians
against
poverty

CAP

Serving your community

A resource for churches
and individuals as part of
our *Pathways out
of poverty* project



We've heard some amazing stories of churches across the UK stepping up to serve, pray and bring hope during the coronavirus crisis. This resource is designed to spark ideas around how you and your church can do the same.

Chances are you're doing this stuff already, but we hope you'll find some useful new ideas for serving those in need in your community.

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This resource is part of *Pathways out of poverty*, a wider project looking at equipping churches and individuals to serve their communities and empower those experiencing poverty to overcome their circumstances. Please look out for more information coming soon.



Volunteer your time

This is a rich time to connect with neighbours, show God's compassion and be kind to those we're able to interact with. What we do now as individuals and as churches will be remembered and lays a foundation for what is to come.

National resources

Age UK Digital Buddy training video: [Watch here](#)

Linking Lives UK telephone befriending service: [Find out more](#)

The Trussell Trust have launched a new volunteer system: [Find out more](#)

How can I volunteer my time locally?



Volunteer your time

Look out for your neighbours

With many in self-isolation, this season might feel like a marathon for people who are lonely, vulnerable, elderly or who suffer with anxiety or depression.

Call or text a couple of times each week to ask how they're doing, using open questions and giving them time to talk. Remember extended times of solitude can give people a feeling of being out of the habit of speaking so it can take time for them to 'warm up'.

Could the children in your church write encouraging letters or draw pictures for neighbours? This could cheer them up and help them feel noticed.

There are now lots of localised Facebook groups where neighbours can connect and help each other out. Search for one in your area. You could also set up a WhatsApp group for your street where everyone can chat and ask for help if needed.

Get involved with befriending services

Many local charities have telephone befriending services you could get involved with. If you know of a local charity that does this, why not give them a call and offer to volunteer? Or you could contact your local council who may be able to redirect you to a service.

The NHS asked for volunteers and an amazing 750,000 people came forward. The scheme has been paused now to process the first wave but it's expected this will open again. To find out more visit goodsamapp.org/NHS.

Lend a hand with food deliveries

With many people unable to leave the house, food deliveries are vital. It's anticipated that those self-isolating without access to food or funds will suffer the most.

Slip a card through the letterbox of a vulnerable neighbour with your phone number, offering to pick up groceries or emergency supplies if needed.

Your local foodbank may need extra volunteers too. Could you give your time to collect donations, make up additional parcels and help with non-contact doorstep deliveries?

Local pharmacies are also accepting volunteers from both national and local organisations to help deliver medicine to those unable to collect for themselves.



Donate

As Christians, we're called to love one another as God loves us (John 13:34). Whatever we have we should share, whether it's material items, time or certain skills.

National resources:

Make a donation to Acts 435:

[Find out more](#)

Donate to Trussell Trust:

[Find out more](#)

How or what can I donate locally?



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Donate

Share food and toiletries

Most of us are fortunate enough to have plenty of food and toiletries, but many are forced to ration or go without. Especially in a time when certain items are proving hard to come by, we must all look out for those less fortunate than ourselves.

You'll find collection points in most supermarkets and cooperative food stores. If you can, add a few extra bits to your trolley while you're shopping and leave a donation. If you have surplus stock sitting around at home, bring this with you and put it to good use.

Give a cash donation

Without the daily commutes, morning coffees and lunch meal deals, you might be saving some money right now. Use what you've saved to support local and national charities who are responding to the impact of coronavirus. We can't all get out to physically lend a hand, but your financial support will be hugely appreciated.

You could donate to [Acts 435](#), a Christian charity that provides immediate help to people in financial need. It works by matching up those who want to give with those in need.

Pass on unused games and craft items

For lonely and elderly people, the provision of activities that can be enjoyed at home during a period of self-isolation will be invaluable. If you know people who are in isolation, you could give games, jigsaw puzzles, craft items, knitting wool, magazines, DVDs, books, writing paper and stamps. You may even have these things in the back of the cupboard gathering dust, so put them to good use.

Many children are feeling frustrated by social distancing - and their families too. Could your church arrange activity bags for them?

*Please make sure any items you pass on directly have been wiped with a disinfectant.



Honour those still working

While many of us are getting used to working from home, there are many key workers bravely heading out every day to serve the rest of us.

National resources

Nextdoor is a useful way to stay informed about what's going on in your community: [Find out more](#)

How can I support local businesses and those still working?

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Honour those still working

Support self-employed workers

Perhaps you have a cleaner, gardener or mobile hairdresser who would usually visit you at home. Or maybe through your work you employ casual or self-employed workers. For these people, this can be a particularly stressful and uncertain time as work is limited and income unsteady.

If you're able, could you decide to pay them something anyway? Instead of wondering 'Which bills won't I have to pay now?', think 'What bills might my cleaner/gardener/hairdresser not be able to pay now?'

Support local businesses

Where you can shop local, do so. Some restaurants, pubs, food shops and small businesses are offering takeaways and food deliveries, and some garden centres are still delivering too. Give them your business; give yourself something to do while you're at home.

Why not ask your usual restaurant, hair and beauty salon or garden centre if you can buy a gift voucher now to use when they reopen?

Honouring key workers and NHS staff

What can you and your church do to say thank you to NHS workers, supermarket employees, delivery drivers or those collecting our bins?

We've heard of people giving them special parking spaces, shopping for them, walking their dogs while they're at work, and sending thank you cards and messages.

One hospital has asked for pump bags for scrubs so they can be put straight in the wash without being touched, and is asking people to get sewing. Could your congregation get involved with something like this?

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THE NHS



Support spiritually

An offer of prayer or an invitation to join an online church service can really brighten someone's day, whether they're a Christian or not. Let's use this opportunity to demonstrate God's love.

National resources

YourNeighbour.org connects those who need support with a local church: [Find out more](#)

Mind and Soul Foundation provides advice and support on mental health, spiritual health and wellbeing. [Find out more](#)

Christian charity Kintsugi Hope offers online wellbeing groups and other resources on emotional and mental health. [Find out more](#)

24-7 Prayer provides an online prayer course and other useful resources. [Find out more](#)

Who can I pray for or invite to a church service?



Support spiritually

Pray every way you know how

Many of us are finding we have more time and space to slow down, to more intentionally seek God for all our needs, and to be thankful to him for all we have.

Praying for your community is a really key thing to do. If that's 'all you can do' at this time, don't devalue it. Remember 1 Timothy 2:1 (MSG) says, 'The first thing I want you to do is pray. Pray every way you know how, for everyone you know.'

The verse goes on, 'Pray especially for rulers and their governments'. Right now, our national and local leaders need protection, wisdom and direction as they make some of the hardest and most important decisions of their lives.

Pray alone, pray with others by phone or online. Spend time remembering God's sovereignty, stand in the gap and soak up his word. Let others know they are being prayed for – it's a real kindness treasured at this time.

Bring church into people's homes

If inviting someone to church felt like a big ask before, now it's easy. Joining in with an online service can be a far less scary way to test the waters as it can be done in your own time and at your own pace. People with mobility issues have been crying out for this kind of church for years.

Some churches are running Alpha courses online or sharing Bible verses by text. There's all sorts we can do to bring church into people's homes, many of whom might not have the chance to join in otherwise.





Looking ahead

Long after the threat of the virus, our nation and communities will be affected by its consequences. How will we shine God's love in the months ahead, meeting the needs of those around us?

How can I serve the needs of my community in the aftermath of the coronavirus crisis?



Throughout this crisis, we've seen a real spirit of kindness across our nation. People have stepped up in their droves to volunteer and support our NHS, donations have been flying in for those hard-hit by the sudden change in circumstances, and communities have been pulling together to get through this difficult time. If there's one thing the pandemic has confirmed, it's that compassion and unity can and does make a difference. As individuals and churches, we must all work hard to maintain this spirit once life returns to 'normal'.

Once we're out of 'crisis response mode', we'll need to move to longer term community development, helping and supporting our neighbours in the aftermath of the pandemic.

But where do we start? The first place to go, of course, is to God. Pray, ask him how he wants to use you in the coming months, and listen to what he has to say – he knows you and your church better than anyone!

Ask yourself:

- What might our community need three or six months down the line? As a result of the coronavirus crisis, we expect to see greater unemployment and financial loss, broken relationships, bereaved and traumatised families, a rise in mental ill-health and people close to us affected – we may lose members of our own church community.
- How could our church respond to these needs? What courses and services could we provide?
- Who in our network has a vision for long-term community transformation? Who could step up and serve? Perhaps someone who has been furloughed, or someone with particular knowledge, experience and skills.
- What structures and resources will we need?
- What inspiring stories are we hearing during this season and what can they teach us?
- What other local organisations can we collaborate with to fulfil our vision of community transformation and how? This is a great time to identify what else is happening locally and develop relationships for the future. Why not send out some emails or make a few phone calls, ask about any struggles they're facing and offer to pray?
- What sort of a church do we want to be when we're able to gather again?
- How will we celebrate together after the crisis and who do we want to be celebrating alongside? How can we create a welcoming, open environment for new church members?
- How can we pray for our community and the people within it now?



Useful resources

Financial help:

Get advice on how to claim benefits. [Find out more](#)

Guidance on how to deal with or put off any of the financial effects due to the coronavirus. [Find out more](#)

StepChange's phone lines are open for most vulnerable and full help is still available online. [Access here](#)

Anyone on a Pre Payment meter should contact their provider to access pre-paid fuel vouchers. [Find out more](#)

Information on what energy companies are offering to customers during this time [Find out more](#)

Information about eligibility for Free School Meals during Covid 19 [Find out more](#)

Funding for your project:

Find help funding your church's Coronavirus Projects with the Cinnamon Network. [Find out more](#)

The M&S group has set up a Neighbourly community fund to help charities support their community during the Coronavirus crisis. [Find out more](#)

Health and wellbeing:

Get information on independent local food banks. [Find out more](#)

Asda has created the volunteer Shopping card providing a volunteer who is doing your shopping with funds for them to spend at Asda. [Find out more](#)

NHS health advice for everyone regarding Coronavirus (COVID-19). [Find out more](#)

YooToo is a software app that helps people organise care support for an elderly or disabled family member in their own home. [Find out more](#)

Advice on how to plan a meaningful funeral in the current situation plus more advice. [Find out more](#)

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We're committed to working in partnership with other charities and organisations to share ideas for compassionate practice and empower churches throughout the UK.

Thank you to Acts Trust and Alive Church Lincoln for inspiring this resource and informing much of the content with their Good Citizen Guide. Find out more about this fantastic charity: actstrust.org.uk

capuk.org



CAPuk



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