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Leadership in Lockdown



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Leaders Under Pressure



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Truth 1: Times of pressure are normal for servants of our Lord Jesus.

Truth 2: Times of pressure are purposeful in God's wise & loving providence.

Trust 3: In times of pressure we are helped by each other's prayers.



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"we do not want you to be uninformed"

Being informed about pressures
others face is a vital part of genuine
Christian fellowship

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"Hugely multi-faceted"

"bit of splurge"

"I am going to vomit my email on the
page"

"rant"



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Pastoral

Practical

Personal

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Pastoral

- **Concern about how the flock are doing**

As helpful as regular phone calls/brief face to face interactions I'm missing 'the ministry of shaking hands' on the door on Sunday and the opportunity to catch up with everyone quickly, notice non-verbal cues that there might be something wrong, or for people to say can I have a word with you.

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Pastoral

.... my biggest challenge is not really knowing how people in the church are doing.

I've realised how much pastoral work I do through 15-20 two-minute conversations on a Sunday, where you can get a quick sense for how most people are getting on

The main impact is a struggle to keep up praying for the church. Not seeing them, and having the short five-minute conversations, or reading people's faces, means you don't know what people are going through. The prayer list has become just list of names.

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Pastoral

Pastoral issues abound in any church and lockdown has increased these. Women in ministry tend to do a lot to seek to meet the needs of women. This is harder at the moment and the burden of care has increased

..... the biggest challenge has been to ensure that people are properly cared for during this time. No one is surprised that people's spiritual health has been damaged by an extended time away from fellowship but trying to mitigate the effects is harder when we just don't know for certain what engagement people have with the temporary online provision. We can text and call, and write, but in these times, it is far easier for people to be evasive.

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Pastoral

Concern over who is still with us. I'm feeling really disconnected from the church. That has led to a feeling that everyone has left (they haven't, although we have lost one family).

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Pastoral

- How to engage with complex pastoral problems

Feeling too distant/disconnected to effectively address pastoral concerns that are clearly rumbling under the surface (e.g. marriage issues)

A particularly messy pastoral situation with a struggling married couple – the situation itself has been worsened by his intake of false teaching via YouTube, which might have happened anyway, but has been accelerated by COVID, lockdown, etc. – and I've felt hampered by local and now national restrictions in what care I can give.

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Pastoral

We seem to have had more pastoral issues in the last few months than we have had at other times. marriages that are really strained. One of which the husband has been thrown out by his wife, they're a core couple in the church and no one else would have any idea.

More people are struggling with their mental health/self-harming/alcohol and drug abuse.

..... I'm spending a greater proportion of my time trying to care for those people and counsel them (which I feel totally inadequate at!).

In normal times I'd be spending time with them alongside time with others who are kicking on and growing which is a great encouragement - I think I'm seeing the encouraging people less and the needy people more.



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Pastoral

- **Maintaining Unity**

..... everyone has their own ideas about what should be done by the church. It is harder to remain united and to go forward together because of the double whammy of people having a whole variety of ideas and it being impossible to get the whole church together to address issues and communicate a sense of direction.

Couple of families really not happy as to our submission to government

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Pastoral

- Areas of ministry we are struggling to fulfil

Ministry to teenagers has been the thing most impacted by not being able to meet.

I think I am putting a lot of pressure on myself to be 'creative', most often in evangelism. Because we can't do events, I wonder if many pastors worry 'are we doing evangelism?'

evangelistic efforts have been hampered and if there is any online fruit it is too early to see that.

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Practical

“everything seems stretched really thin”

- Time & emotional energy taken to keep up with constantly changing guidelines.

The continuous need to rethink, re-plan, re-communicate. Admin mounts up.

Brain freeze when looking at a document with guidelines!

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Practical

- **Acquiring new skills to do online church**

Steep learning curve with new technologies.

Everything takes more time

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Practical

- **Preaching to camera with no feedback**

Just tired of doing everything by camera.

At first it was a novelty, now it isn't. We have for some time had a small congregation meeting for our livestream, but with the latest government decision that's stopped. You do wonder if it's worth carrying on. Intellectually I know it is, but my heart is taking time to catch up.



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Practical

- Additional Admin

The workload has increased

Because the rules keep changing and we are continually having to come up with new ways of doing things, I seem to be spending vast amounts of time in "organisation/leadership" ... rather than keeping my priority as prayer and the ministry of the Word.

I've had to reduce amount I am trying to achieve



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Practical

- **Managing people**

Wisely and sensitively managing staff / volunteers amid increased fragility / reduced capacity.

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Practical

- Finances of the church

Finance is a concern, and COVID has made that worse. Some people have moved to electronic donations, but income that normally comes in cash has gone down.

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Personal

- **Weariness, worry, difficulties in resting & relaxing**

Feeling hemmed in and fed up. Made worse by having to shut down again. Having days off is harder.

"stretching me"

"Just feeling tired"

"I'm pretty exhausted"

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Personal

- Getting it all done

Little issues take more time; sermon prep takes more time; pastoral conversations take more time.

"I sat down to look at the passage for Sunday, and to begin with, it felt like wading through treacle. My mind was full of thoughts about never-ending govt regulations, risk assessments, and sanitiser, let alone pastoral concerns"

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Personal

- Family life

"Boundaries are more fluid at home in the digital world"

My poor wife - a few weeks ago she was weeping over little things and not getting enough help with the [children]. Mainly because I had been more concerned about other people rather than my own family.

these past few months have taken their toll on us emotionally, mentally, spiritually.

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Personal

- Discouragement & Doubt

“especially when hear of gospel success in other places. Thrilled as I am, it sometimes makes me wonder why not where I am.”

“hard to know if I’m doing an ok job or not - feeling a bit insecure / guilty. Part of it is seeing other churches with higher capacity / output (wrong comparisons etc)

The temptation to “paint with colours I do not have” seems to be bigger than before.

Sometimes it’s the little positive steps that make [exhaustion] seem endurable – but at the moment most of the steps seem to be backwards!

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Personal

- Loneliness

From a pastor who is single:

"The reality is that I am just spending a lot of time on my own in a way that feels vaguely unnatural and not quite as the Lord designed us. Now I'm grateful for technology which has taken the edge off that, but it probably means I'm more emotionally fragile (sleep has been a bit harder over the last few months) and temptations can be harder to fight. None of that is terrible- I'm still going by God's grace. And I suspect in the years ahead I (along with others) will look back with gratitude at the Lord's ability to sustain us."



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Personal

- Loneliness

From a woman in ministry:

"The isolation of being a woman in ministry has intensified, especially if you are young or single."

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Personal

- Loneliness

Lack of genuine plurality of leadership has been a pressure too. I've one other elder, who's great, but his time has been stretched thinly, so most things have fallen on me.

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What should we do?

Listen to Paul in 2 Corinthians 1:1-11

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His love in time past
forbids me to think
he'll leave me at last
in trouble to sink;
and can He have taught me
to trust in His name
and this far have brought me
to put me to shame

John Newton



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COVID Crisis Update



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Current Statistics - November 17th

- 598 deaths
- Weekly average 455 (+18.1%)
- 15,000 in hospital And 1,400 on ventilators

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Wales

- 'Firebreak lockdown' ended 9th November
- 25 October police broke up illegal service
- Churches re-opened
- No limit attendance but must maintain social distancing
- Wedding receptions and wakes up to 15 people
- Face coverings mandatory
- No congregational singing indoors
- Up to 30 can meet outdoors and sing

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Scotland

- 5 Tier system of restrictions
- Under Tier 4 (highest level) church services limited 20
- Other tiers church services limited to 50
- Face coverings compulsory and no congregational singing

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England

- National lockdown until 2nd December
- Places of worship closed for public worship
- Open for private prayer, serving community, support groups
- Able to visit the vulnerable to provide assistance
- Able to meet one other person for 'recreation'
- 99.9% of churches are obeying lockdown
- London church prevented by police from holding service
- Judicial review of lockdown due to be heard Friday

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What will happen after 2nd December?

- No official confirmation
- Introduction of enhanced local tier system
- Most areas likely to be Tier 3 or new Tier 4
- Unlikely to allow resumption church services without restrictions ahead of Christmas
- Likely will be requirement face-coverings, no congregational singing, household groups
- Saving 'secular' Christmas
- Introduction vaccines but no impact until late Spring
- Government furlough scheme until end March

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Other European Contexts

- Most European countries in lockdown or curfews
- Limits on size social gatherings
- Sweden introduced local restrictions & 'rule of 8'
- Ireland & Slovakia churches closed for public worship
- France gatherings limited to 10, Germany 50, Netherlands 30
- Madrid limited to 1/3 usual congregations & 'state of emergency' to May 2021

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