

# Newsletter 2020 April

## Varna Baptist Church, Bulgaria

Firstly, we give thanks to the Lord for His goodness and protection at this time. We praise the Lord that in spite of the lockdown and very hard restrictions, churches across the country were allowed to remain open. Since the 13<sup>th</sup> March our movements have been heavily restricted, and we have been unable to walk in the parks and police checkpoints have been set up everywhere to restrict travel between towns and cities. However, our Prime Minister said he did not want to stand against God, so churches across the country have been allowed to remain open. This is likely due to the Orthodox influence in the country, whereby very few people go to church. Yet for us this has been a blessing at this time and an amazing answer to prayers.



Although many Evangelical Churches decided to close for logistic reasons (for example the worship halls were very small) our Church has been able to remain open. We have continued to do online services as we have been doing for many years, thus enabling most of the congregation to watch from home. Church physically looks very different as the photos will show. We have removed most of the chairs, separated the remaining ones by two metres, and moved all over 60's to a geographically different part of the worship hall. All members of the congregation wear masks at all times in church and are attacked by disinfectant on entry to the building! Furthermore, we are not greeting each other or having fellowship after the services.

The government discouraged people from going to church particularly over Easter. In spite of all this no one became sick in our congregation for which we thank the Lord! No one has lost their job so far in our congregation and Varna has had NO deaths from Covid-19! Very few people have tested positive for Covid-19 in Varna and relatively few in the country. We praise you Jesus!

Our Bulgarian equivalent to the Nightingale Hospital (except without any ventilators) is located in the Sports Hall which is 5 minutes' walk from our house and was home to the National Prayer Day last September (you may remember that George was with others leading this event). Praise the Lord, the make-shift hospital is empty!

We are so thankful to the Lord for the technical set up we already had in place in the church enabling hundreds of Bulgarians both nationally and internationally to watch services over many years. The numbers of viewers have considerably increased during the pandemic. Thank you for being a part of this over the years and with your support in providing the technology to do this.

Please pray with us for all the non-Christians watching services online in Bulgaria and what we



As you know, one way our church reaches out to show Jesus' love to our community is through the soup kitchen. Like many churches, we have seen an increased need in this area of ministry and as a result we have been giving out food parcels to different groups of vulnerable people. One vulnerable group for which specifically we need your prayers are the foster families. We have been supporting this group of foster carers who currently have no foster children and consequently no income during this time. Together with the local government we were "accompanied" to visit the foster carers. The Lord over-ruled in obtaining the documents necessary to get past the police barriers so that we could visit these families. This meant we were able to provide the foster carers with food

The food-parcel project has been a great success, and after personal conversations with a number of these foster carers it emerged that a lot of them are happy to foster children with mild special needs. This is a huge answer to prayers as we have been praying for many years for God to make a way for children with disabilities from the orphanages to be fostered. Please do pray for this to actually happen shortly after the lockdown has finished so that “captives” can be released from the institutions and the orphans (babies and toddlers) with special needs can be looked after

"in their distress"- James 1:27. At this present time in Bulgaria many young children are living in a huge orphanages with no parental care which only adds to their trauma. In the next two weeks I expect to be summoned by Child Protection as an advocate to help place the children with appropriate foster carers.



Another big thank you to the Lord that George has passed all his exams and can now focus on writing his Master’s Dissertation to complete his study. Please pray that when he does sit down to write he knows the Lord’s wisdom - he is doing this for the glory of God. His responsibilities and pressures of the ministry are even more than usual at this present time.

About a week ago George was interviewed for a programme which aired on National Television last Thursday. George had the opportunity to share the faith and hope that is in us and was able to direct people back to the Lord and the word of God. The interviewer asked lots of questions about God and faith. It was on TV during the peak viewing time when lots of people were watching and we believe many people will have heard this message of hope. Praise be to God!

As a physiotherapist, I am continuing my work in the care homes with the orphans that require physiotherapy. Some restrictions have eased here but many remain intact – the parks have been re-opened for exercise only and some people are allowed to go back to work now.

We do not know yet what the summer will hold, but we expect easing of the lockdown.

Praise the Lord our daughter Emma has finished her second-year exams in Child Nursing at The University of Hertfordshire. At the moment Emma is awaiting news on whether she will be able to finish her placements to tie up the academic year. We hope that she will be told soon either way as it would be nice for her to return home for the summer (even if she had to be in quarantine for 14 days on arrival). Our son Daniel and his wife Sarah are both working from home. As Daniel's software engineering work requires communication with colleagues in Germany and Poland, he is used working on projects online through Skype and so he has been able to adapt to working from home relatively easily. Sarah is currently teaching all of her lessons online through Zoom and is waiting to hear whether she will be returning to school after May Half-Term as the schools in England ease the lockdown. Sarah has found the extra time at home quite useful for getting more studying done for her PhD and would appreciate prayers for wisdom and guidance in the next few weeks when she has to submit an initial chapter of her thesis for review.

We remember you in our prayers at this time and pray that the Lord will work in a mighty way to bring many people close to Himself.

With love from Pastor George and Ann



*If you would like to support the ministry of the Varna Baptist Church by giving financially, you can do so by opening the **camera** on your smartphone and **point it at this QR code**, it should direct you to <https://www.give.net/20034842> where you can see more information on how to give.*