

A message from Lynn Green (Baptists Together, General Secretary) with regard to the U.K. Government's advice about the re-opening of churches

As was announced this week, it is hoped that places of worship will be able to re-open in some form or other as part of the Government's third step which is anticipated to operate from the beginning of July.

Baptists Together has been involved in consultations about the recovery plans in a variety of different ways. As part of this our voices are able to be heard and also reflected and amplified by others. The national consultation spaces we are participating in are:

- A Christian Round Table with No. 10 Downing Street represented by the Faith Minister Lord Stephen Greenhalgh and hosted by Colin Bloom (the Government's Faith Engagement Adviser).
- CTBI meetings of "Spiritual Heads" of churches (Archbishops, etc.) and also "Operational Heads" (General Secretaries and other senior leaders)
- CTE General Secretaries group
- National Ecumenical Officers weekly meeting

Furthermore, our voices are also represented by the Joint Public Issues Team, the Evangelical Alliance and The Free Churches Group. The Anglican Bishops also have a key role in speaking to Government on behalf of all the Christian church and have used their connections with Government and the Lord's effectively. Last week the Archbishop of York made a powerful speech to the Lord's about the need for God's justice and righteousness to be the values that underpin and shape our future journey.

Regional Colleagues are also in close contact with their ecumenical counterparts and, again, able to share our perspectives and concerns.

There has been clear messaging to government that churches are not to be seen as leisure venues but that churches are a source of vital spiritual and community support at this time. Working out how we can worship and serve safely is an ongoing concern that we share with many other public places. An update on what is currently advised for the use of our church buildings can be found on our website – www.baptist.org.uk.

I appreciate that these are uncertain and frustrating times, but a critical aspect of our mission and witness at the moment must be the responsible adoption of public health measures designed to control this pandemic and limit its impact in our communities.