



- **18% of the UK population do not use the internet.**

Oxford Internet Institute cited BBC 9/9/19.

- **"Non-users are older, proportionately less well-educated and have lower incomes,"** said Dr Grant Blank.
- **"Virtually everyone is online before age 50,"** Dr Blank told the BBC. After that milestone, he said, there was a **"sharp decline" in use of about 2% a year.**
- **40% of those earning less than £12,500 do not go online.**

**Older, poorer, less well-educated?
Does this correspond to our experience?**



What is at stake? Who is losing out on what?

- Access to on-line worship, fellowship, teaching, information.
- Children and young people losing access to faith, education and fun.
- Accentuates the Church's alienation from the poorest section of English society.



How have people responded?

- **Home visiting.** *[COVID 19 complexity...]*
- **Delivery of resources – pewsheets, liturgies, children’s packs (Messy Church or Christingle in a bag), gifts, baby Jesus...**
- **Phone calls.**
- **WhatsApp groups.**



How else have people responded?

- **Church of England telephone service.**

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-churches/daily-hope-phone-line>

- **Religious TV and Radio.** *Songs of Praise* most popular among female baby-boomers. (28% positive opinion.) “Family-friendly, Refreshing, Relevant, Easy to follow and Uplifting.” YouGov. Audience figures increased during 2020.

- **Printed literature.** EG from the Church Support Hub or CPO.

<https://churchsupporthub.org/funerals/downloads/>

<https://www.cpo.org.uk/>



How else have people responded – little nuggets?

- **It is possible to phone into a ZOOM or another conference call.**

<https://support.zoom.us/hc/en-us/articles/201362663-Joining-a-meeting-by-phone>

<https://whypay.net/>

<https://bryonytaylor.com/2020/06/18/setting-up-phone-church-using-whypayhq-telephone-conferencing/>

- **Non-IT folk bubbling with IT folk.**
- **Out door prayer spaces. Treasure hunts.**
- **Knitted objects – e.g. angels**
- **People are still coming into our church buildings...**



Our experience and ideas??

- **Delivering material to homes has been popular and effective.** Material has included as well as that listed above: pastoral letters, sermons, glowsticks (Light of Christ), scratch owls (wisdom), chocolates, CDs with services and/or music. Nb often with material for a non-Christian spouse too... Eden Books is a vg source of prayer cards. <https://www.eden.co.uk/>
- Planning ahead for Christmas – might we deliver Christmas cards, CDs with Christmas carols, resources for families and children. Nb Folk had bought this and were impressed with it. *It begins in Bethlehem* booklet. <https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/products/bib-000519/>
- Nb producing and delivering these resources had often had a vg impact on the church team.
- One parish has set up a telephone hotline which is well-used by the community when seeking help.
- If resources allow, move from having one person making the pastoral phone calls to a system of “telephone shepherds”.



Our experience and ideas??

- IT buddies really works and often it is the grandchildren who get “gran” on to the live-streamed service and will then stay to watch too...
- A couple of parishes are using TWILIO. It is a dial-in phone service and people then access pre-recorded elements of a service – music, bible readings, sermon, prayers, notices 😊 See: <https://www.switchedonnetwork.com/2020/03/18/coronavirus-create-a-phone-number-which-plays-podcasts-or-sermon-recordings-over-the-phone/>

See also this blog:

<https://bryonytaylor.com/2020/04/21/creating-a-dial-a-sermon-system-for-those-not-online/>

Kate Boardman at Harton and Cleadon Park uses this system and is happy to give advice. She estimates the cost of running this phone-in service as £25 so far this year...

- Sometimes it is as simple as two people saying compline together over the phone at the end of the day...



Our experience and ideas??

- One parish is preparing **stones with a painting/sticker of the Baby Jesus** and hiding them around the parish. The schools are then primed to alert the children to go and look for them; who when they find one, can bring it to church where they will win a prize (Nativity story book – and chocolate) and be given a clear plastic bauble in which to place the model Baby Jesus and hang on their Christmas Tree.
- Another parish is **knitting angels** (it can take as little as 15mins to knit an angel). These angels will then be attached to a prayer card and left around the parish for people to find. They can then take the angel home for their Christmas tree. A sign and instrument of God's blessing.



Our experience and ideas??

- **Simple gifts with prayer cards have been much appreciated.** EG a tin of chocs to a school just before half-term produced a really warm response. (NB several colleagues have noticed how as lockdown has gone on, schools are increasingly keen to work with their local churches, e.g. recorded or live-streamed assemblies, Open the Book, etc..)
- Remember Paul and Emma Barker's "**Blessings Box**" – a box of chocolates and a greeting/prayer card delivered to the pubs in their patch as they were having to shut for lockdown – and how well this was received. Significant increase in community goodwill.
- Colleagues had noticed how **being visible in the community is very important** (but pastoral sensitivity when delivering from a foodbank). Working with the foodbanks had both delivered much crucial support to families or vulnerable older folk but had also hugely increased goodwill with the LAs.
- Some of this work with non-IT folk is good "old school" vicaring. **Being visible in the community with thoughtful kindness and a gentle but explicit Christian message.**