

Our Calling

The calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.

It does this through Worship, Learning and Caring and Evangelism.

18 March 2020

Dear friends

I write to you after a Circuit Leadership Team (CLT) meeting, precipitated by 2 government briefings on the Coronavirus crisis and advice by the Methodist Church Connexional Office.

At about 4pm on the 17th March the Connexional Office updated its guidance, which you can find in the link below:

- <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/coronavirus-guidance/>

In essence we are being advised **“that worship services in Methodist Churches are suspended for the time being in line with Government guidance”**.

In practice this means that, until further notice:

1. There will be no public worship services in our buildings across the Northampton Circuit.
2. All group activities are now postponed including the Lent Bible Studies, Membership Classes, Reflective mornings, Prayer Breakfasts, and Staff Prayer Meetings within the Churches. Other community events like lunch clubs, after school clubs, playgroups and fellowship groups should be suspended.
3. Baptisms will not take place in public worship and if you have a wedding planned in your local church you should speak to your minister.
4. In the event of funerals, we encourage you to make contact with the minister in your group of churches. However, we would advise you to have a small family funeral at the cemetery or crematorium, followed by a celebration of life at a later stage.
5. All meetings (Circuit Meeting, Church Councils, Pastoral Meetings, etc) are postponed. If needed, we will find alternative ways to make decisions (which may include conference calling).

While these measures are in place:

1. You are encouraged to use your time at home for prayer. We encourage you to put aside time each day to pray for the situation. We also encourage you all to make time for prayer at 10:30 on a Sunday morning as an expression of our unity.
2. A service sheet will be issued on a regular basis to all those on email and other resources can be accessed via the circuit website, Facebook group and WhatsApp.
3. You are asked to let the office know of anyone who is not on the internet or email, so that they can receive a postal copy.
4. Pastoral Visitors are asked not to visit the vulnerable, but to keep regular contact via the telephone and to pass any concerns directly to me (Romeo). Pastoral Secretaries are asked to keep in contact with the Ministers about anyone who is ill or in hospital.
5. Ministers with Pastoral Oversight for your Churches will start to work their way through the membership List and will speak to those on the list personally over the next few months.

Northampton Circuit (23/13)

Circuit Office; Wootton Trinity Church; High Street; Wootton; Northampton NN4 6LP
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Registered Charity No: 1135635

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6. In various areas, neighbours are volunteering to help those who cannot get out, by collecting medication, shopping etc – please try to link into these groups for your needs. Listen to Local Radio for updated information about what is on offer for those in isolation and for a bit of company.
7. If we can help you further in any way, then please do not hesitate to contact us. We aim to keep you updated weekly where we are able.

As I write this, I am reminded of Martin Luther's approach during the plague "Black death", which killed 60% of Europe's population: "I shall ask God mercifully to protect us. Then I shall fumigate, help purify the air, administer medicine and take it. I shall avoid places and persons where my presence is not needed in order not to become contaminated and thus perchance inflict and pollute others and so cause their death as a result of my negligence. If God should wish to take me, he will surely find me and I have done what he has expected of me and so I am not responsible for either my own death or the death of others. If my neighbour needs me however, I shall not avoid place or person but will go freely as stated above. See this is such a God-fearing faith because it is neither brash nor foolhardy and does not tempt God." Martin Luther in 'The Annotated Luther', Volume 4: Pastoral Writings.

This is a call to act responsibly, but to continue to find ways in which we can love both God and neighbour. I appeal to you my friends, to strengthen and deepen your faith through regular prayer and reflection on Scripture. But equally important – look after yourself and find ways in which you can share the love of Jesus in your neighbourhood. And remember: God is with us (Isaiah 41 10).

Conversation will not be cancelled.

Relationships will not be cancelled.

Love will not be cancelled.

Songs will not be cancelled.

Reading will not be cancelled.

Self-care will not be cancelled.

Hope will not be cancelled.

May we lean into the good stuff that remains.

Jamie Tworkowski

Your brother in Christ

Romeo.

The Reverend Romeo R Pedro
Superintendent Minister

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