

18 March 2020

To: Members and adherents of Digswell Village Church, Ludwick Way Methodist Church, Birchwood Methodist Church, and Oxlease Methodist Church

Greetings to you all

Extraordinary Times

As we are hearing so often these days, we are living in extraordinary times. The government has introduced measures the like of which haven't been seen since the Second World War. Indeed, CoVid-19 (the illness produced by the coronavirus) is the worst respiratory illness since the flu epidemic one hundred years ago, following the First World War. Our daily lives have changed dramatically in just a week or so and we are now having to follow extraordinary guidelines which, up until now, have changed quickly.

The Methodist Church and the Church of England, along with most other churches, yesterday published their latest advice regarding CoVid-19 and the coronavirus. The most drastic measure in the advice is the **suspension of public worship services** and the **cancellation of all meetings and other activities** that involve the gathering together of people. These measures will continue until the government decides that the public health emergency has ended, which will, in all likelihood, be in several months' time. So, we are in this for the long-haul. As some have said, it will be a marathon, not a sprint. This means that, as churches, we will need to work diligently to ensure that not only do we and our own folk stay safe during this time, but that we can continue to be an effective witness in our communities through the love and care we show for each other and our neighbours.

Worshipping At Home

Just because we will not be meeting for public worship does not mean that we cease to be church. We will continue to be a praying, worshipping community even though we are not meeting in a church building. However, because of the suspension of public worship services, we want to provide other ways in which we can worship and nourish our spiritual lives. To this end, Deacon Linda and I will be distributing resources each week that can be used as an aid for worshipping at home. These will be made available by email, with printed copies delivered to those who do not have email. For those with access to the internet there are many other resources available that can be found with a quick internet search. These include hymns, scripture readings, prayers, reflections, and video and audio tracks. A number of Methodist churches normally live-stream their Sunday services, and Wesley's Chapel in London will continue to live-stream their services, albeit without a physical congregation. For those with internet access, their live-stream can be found [here](#). Their service times are:

Wednesday	12.45pm
Thursday	12.45pm
Sunday	9.45am and 11.00am

It is hoped by the Methodist Church and the Church of England that a number of churches will be able to open their buildings for a time on Sundays, so that small numbers of people may be able to pray or sit quietly for a while. Having suitable music playing quietly, having candles available for people to light, and having subdued lighting will help to create a peaceful, reflective mood. If churches do open, government advice regarding social distancing and personal hygiene must be followed, i.e. avoid physical contact such as shaking hands, maintain at least a 2 metre separation between people, cover a cough with a tissue or cough into the inside of your elbow, continue regular hand washing, ensure surfaces that are touched often are regularly cleaned, and do not distribute hymn

book etc. which can harbour the virus.

Pastoral Support for Each Other

For many people the suspension of public worship services will be keenly felt. The disruption to regular weekly routines, the loss of regular contact with their church friends, and a sense of spiritual loss, added to the isolation that other government measures will bring, e.g. self-isolation while experiencing symptoms of CoVid-19 or self-isolation through being among those who are particularly at risk, means that, over time, many people may feel low or experience depression. Others may be fearful of what is happening around them, or fearful for their own health. It is important, then, that we maintain contact with one another. Our pastoral visitors will be ensuring that they keep in regular contact with those people on their lists, but if we are confined to our homes then we can all play a part in making sure that all our folk feel cared for and supported. A telephone call or an email to check up on friends and neighbours would always be welcome, I'm sure. A reassuring call to someone who may be feeling anxious or isolated can be a great source of comfort and encouragement. I believe that it's the love and care we show for one another that distinguishes us as Christians. To quote a popular Christian song from a few years ago, "They'll know we are Christians by our love."

If you know of anyone in our church communities who is in particular need, whatever that may be, please contact your senior steward, Rev'd Bruce Anderson, or Deacon Linda Kinchenton. *Contact details are included below.*

We can also make use of the time we have at home by praying for one another and for our family and friends. I know from my own experiences of the past year the value of prayer and the comfort and strength that can be gained from it, and from knowing that others were praying for me.

Church Finances and Offerings

Just like any household, the church will still have bills to pay even when we are not gathering for public worship. For example, our buildings still need heating and maintenance. So, please continue to support your church financially, as are able. If you do not already do so, consider using a bank standing order to make payment, no matter how much you give. It is safe and secure, and all information is kept confidentially. Contact your church treasurer for more information.

Please do not leave offering envelopes or cash in the church if you visit for any reason.

Finally, please do not be afraid to call or ask for anything. We are here to help, to pray with you, and to support you in any way we can.

May God bless each one of us as we make our way through these uncertain times.

Rev'd Bruce Anderson
Home: 01438 510391
Mobile: 07540 095653
bruce.anderson@methodist.org.uk

Deacon Linda Kinchenton
Home: 01707 271840
Mobile: 07707 661531
deaconlinda@live.co.uk

Senior Steward contact details:

Digswell Village Church	Diana Holt	01438 714780	diana.holt@mail.com
Ludwick Way	Tony Stubbs	01707 375137	anthonystubbs21@yahoo.co.uk
Birchwood	Brenda Collins	01707 883545	reg.brendacollins@ntlworld.com
Oxlease	Richard Seddon	01707 882350	richard.seddon@ntlworld.com