

***District Statement – in response to the lockdown for England announced on 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021***

As the new, faster spreading Covid variant seems to be so much more easily transmissible, the government has decided that people in England must, except for a few permitted reasons, stay at home. The government guidance summarises the position as follows: *“You must stay at home. The single most important action we can all take is to stay at home to protect the NHS and save lives.”* This decision has come after the UK reported a record 58,784 cases on Monday 4<sup>th</sup> January 2021, as well as a further 407 deaths within 28 days of a positive test.

Professor Andrew Hayward - a member of the government's Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (Sage) - told BBC Radio 4's Today programme the lockdown measures, "will save tens of thousands of lives".

But he also said "the virus is different" and "it may be that the lockdown measures that we have are not enough."

"This lockdown period we need to do more than just stay at home, wait for the vaccine, we need to be actively bearing down on it," he said.

It is clear that there are significant risks in every encounter that we have with other people and in every place that we visit, and we must make every effort to minimise those risks for our own sakes, and for the sake of others, particularly the elderly and more vulnerable members of our communities. Consequently, we must avoid face-to-face encounters as much as possible, and restrict visits to different places to the absolute minimum.

Of course, the opportunity to gather with others for worship is valued, but we must do everything in our power to reduce the spread of the virus, a virus that will disproportionately and fatally affect the poorest and most vulnerable people in our midst.

Therefore, following consultation with the Resourcing Mission Group (the DPC) and the District Superintendents, the Liverpool District believes that it would be most sensible not to gather for communal worship or private prayer in our buildings at the moment.

The District particularly wishes to encourage, support, and affirm all Managing Trustees who are making brave and painful decisions not to gather in person for communal worship at this time; recognising that, while communal worship is legally permitted, that does not mean it is the right thing to do.

With prayers for us all.



Sheryl Anderson  
Chair of the Liverpool Methodist District

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