

17th March 2020

This letter is being sent to CLT, senior stewards (where applicable) and secretaries of pastoral committee (where applicable). It is intended to be distributed as widely as possible.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

RE: Covid 19

This afternoon an update was put on the Methodist Church website which recommends services are no longer held for the time being:

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

Therefore, I write to confirm that with immediate effect we will not be meeting for public worship across the circuit for the time being. I have found this decision difficult to make but comes after conversations with Revd. Neil Stubbens, Mrs. Margaret Langton and Revd. Dr. Sheryl Anderson.

I am not saying we must stop worshipping, only that we are no longer meeting. There is available a weekly service sheet for people to use at home and I will make this available for anyone who wishes to use it.

Having heard the press conference yesterday led by the Prime Minister I feel only essential meetings should take place. I interpret essential as just that, essential. This means that our buildings are no longer available for groups both internal and external except where the meeting is essential, examples of this would be feeding the hungry. I am happy to assist managing trustees decide whether a particular group is essential or not.

I am asking pastoral visitors to contact those under their care to let them know there are no services in church, but also to ask if they would like to receive a weekly worship sheet and whether they would like to receive this via email or post. These details will then need to be passed to either Bernard or I. Bernard (who will be now based at home) will send out on a weekly basis the service sheets. We may find we have more regular contact with those who are housebound than we did before this crisis. I'd also like to ask pastoral visitors to let either Neil and I know when those in their care become ill as Neil and I will keep in touch via phone calls, emails and cards. If the person goes into hospital, I would encourage them to make use of the hospital chaplaincy service.

I have not included every scenario for every church and I am happy to discuss the implications of what is detailed in this letter should that be necessary. I can be contacted at home on 01942 665654, mobile 07376 248147 or email luke.smith@methodist.org.uk.

Clearly this is a lot to take in and means a huge change in the way we do things. Be assured that you are in my prayers in these uncertain times.

God Bless,

Luke Smith

Revd. Luke Smith

Superintendent