

This is our weekly bulletin. The bulletin can be received by anyone who has an e-mail address. To subscribe to this service please send your e-mail address to: northstaffscircuit@hotmail.co.uk. All items for the bulletin need to be in for Wednesday morning.

CIRCUIT OFFICE

THE CIRCUIT OFFICE IS NOW CLOSED. PLEASE CONTACT VIA E-MAIL AS ALL E-MAILS WILL STILL BE REPLIED TO.

Worship 29th March 2020

The Circuit staff have put together a short service based on the lectionary theme for this Sunday. ~

Click on this link <http://www.northstaffordshiremethodists.org.uk/media/>



The Raising of Lazarus (Caravaggio)

**Here are some links to worship services
and resources around the Connexion**

Source: https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/seasons-and-themes/worship-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/?utm_source=Methodist%20Church%20House&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=11430797_Week%20Ahead&dm_i=BVI,6T025,3S5TCF,R8QLA,1

Service Sheets

These short acts of worship have been produced for you if you are unable to attend church. If you are well enough why not spend a few moments with God, knowing that other people are sharing this act of worship with you?

Worship from home service sheet for Sunday 29 March (Pdf version)

Worship from home service sheet for Sunday 29 March (Word doc)

Worship from home service sheet for Sunday 5 April (Pdf version)

Worship from home service sheet for Sunday 5 April (Word doc)

Worship from home service sheet for Sunday 12 April (Pdf version)

Worship from home service sheet for Sunday 12 April (Word doc)

If you are willing to draft a similar act of worship please email Gabriella Mahadeva mahadevag@methodistchurch.org.uk who will send you guidelines and allocate you a particular Sunday.

See additional selected resources below

Roots

During the pandemic ROOTS is offering **free** resources to use at home every week on the ROOTS website. See www.rootsontheweb.com/

Live-streamed services and prayers

Worship services

In an attempt to protect people from the Coronavirus we have asked people not to travel to churches to pre-record or live-stream worship. You can of course live stream from your home.

We are working in collaboration with

Wesley's Chapel London – who will live-stream from the chapel (the Minister lives on the premises)

Sunday 11am www.youtube.com/channel/UCUAUqhmhevz5sqhh72LIMxA

Swan Bank Methodist Church in Burslem, this worship will be studio based – with strict distancing rules being followed

Sundays 10:30

The service will be available at www.youtube.com/user/SwanBank and www.facebook.com/swanbank/

At any time, you can join in a very different worship experience try Sthie ("At home") from the Isle of Man

www.andyfishburne.com/2020/03/15/sthie-at-home-online-worship/

www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8BiFiCTeGA

We hope these options will offer some breadth from our tradition.

Morning Prayers

09:00 Monday-Friday - from Wesley House

Cambridge: www.facebook.com/wesleycambridge.

Resources for following the prayers and readings are available at: www.wesley.cam.ac.uk/prayer-space/.

10:00 Monday-Friday - from

Wesley's Chapel London: www.youtube.com/channel/UCUAUqhmhevz5sqhh72LIMxA

Northumbria Community <https://www.northumbriacommunity.org/offices/morning-prayer/>

A Word in Time Bible Study <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/the-bible/a-word-intime/> Prayer and Worship <https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/>

Regional Pinterest Board has lots of ideas for creative worship and prayer <https://www.pinterest.co.uk/ndmln/>

Radio BBC Radio 4 Sundays 8:10am Sunday Worship

BBC Radio 4 Wednesdays 3:30pm Choral Evensong

Official guidance during the coronavirus pandemic

source: https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/coronavirus/official-guidance/?utm_source=Methodist%20Church%20House&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=11430797_Week%20Ahead&dm_i=BVI,6T025,3S5TCF,R8QLA,1#k

Updated 24 March 10:00

Updated guidance on use of church buildings, baptisms, weddings and funerals.

See FAQs

The Methodist Church has announced the closure of all its church buildings for the foreseeable future. The only exception will be for churches that are offering essential social outreach such as foodbanks, soup kitchens and night shelters, but these must be carried out closely within Government guidelines. The Methodist Church suspended worship services last week with some churches still opening for quiet prayer and reflection. This must now also be suspended. We would encourage people to use our online resources at home which include **downloadable services and links to online worship services**.

The Revd Dr Jonathan Hustler, Secretary of the Conference said: “We are asking people to change their way of ‘going to church’ to help to protect themselves and others. We have put in place measures that will enable Methodists still to be part of the worshipping community, whilst for everyone’s sake staying away from church buildings. There is a range of resources available for people to use at home which we hope will help them to continue their cycle of prayer and worship. The Methodist Church is more than its buildings and if in these unprecedented times we can continue our life as Methodists without using our buildings we will help to reduce the chances of transmission of the virus.”

If you are running a foodbank or soup kitchen we would urge you to seek advice on how and whether to continue operating as safely as possible from central bodies such as the **Trussell Trust** or **IFAN**.

If you’re running a night shelter there is advice available **here** and **here**.

In terms of Church business, all meetings including church councils and circuit meetings should be cancelled. Districts chairs will be in touch about Synods. The next meeting of the Methodist Council has been suspended and work is in hand to make sure that essential business is carried out. We will be issuing further advice on this.

Other community activities

The **Trussell Trust** has also issued guidance on how churches can support volunteer supported charities.

The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) have produced **a simple guide on how you can support foodbanks** during the coronavirus pandemic.

Other community events like lunch clubs, after school clubs, playgroups and fellowship groups should be suspended.

Pastoral concerns

Churches must only consider carrying out pastoral 'visits' by phone. You should refer to the Government guidelines on visiting vulnerable people if you are considering doing this. Remember that many people are anxious and a reassuring phone call and an offer to pray might be very much appreciated.

If you're a minister, consider what your plan might be if someone in your congregation is diagnosed with the virus.

Coronavirus FAQs

Can we hold baptisms, weddings or funerals?

Where a preschool is offering care for children of key workers – is it ok for that group to continue you using our building?

Can support meetings like AA still continue to meet in our buildings?

Blood Donors use our church – is it ok for that group to continue you using our building?

We have been using our church to record worship materials – can this continue?

Can we livestream with a small and well distanced group taking part?

What impact does coronavirus have if I'm employing staff?

What should I do about the church property while it's empty?

I am concerned about church finances – what can I do?

What happens if we lose income because groups who rent space in church buildings can't meet or through a loss of rental income?

What is happening to Methodist Council meetings?

Should my church council / Synod still go ahead?

Is the Methodist Conference still going ahead?

What about candidates for the ministry?

What if we want to keep our church open for people to pray?

What should I do if I am due to take my sabbatical?

How will supervision work while we self-isolate?

I am due to be stationed by the Conference to a new circuit and therefore be on the move in the summer. Will I still be moving in the summer?

How can I contact someone at Methodist Church House?

Can we hold baptisms, wedding and funerals?

Baptisms

There will be no baptisms until further notice because of the closure of churches. In case of an emergency please contact your Minister.

Weddings

In line with Government guidelines weddings will not take place until further notice. Where a wedding is postponed, the Minister will work with the couple to help them find a suitable future date.

If you have any questions please email: mvw@methodistchurch.org.uk

Funerals

- Funerals can, and should continue in the name of the Methodist Church as part of our pastoral response to the coronavirus crisis.
- Methodist Church buildings should only be used in the last resort, and simple graveside/crematorium services are to be preferred.
- If a Methodist Church building is re-opened for a funeral, Church Stewards who are classed as vulnerable should not be present.
- The minister or trained local person under the direction of the Superintendent should make the arrangements by remote media (telephone, skype etc).
- The number of people attending a funeral should be kept to a minimum - with those in attendance observing suitable social distancing as per the government's advice.
- Those over the age of 70 and those with an underlying health condition are strongly discouraged from attending in the present circumstances.
- The service may be broadcast via social media or recorded to be shared later. The minister should explain to people what is happening (especially those not physically present).
- The service should include prayers and a message of Christian hope.

- There is no requirement for a musician to be present.
- Do not use communal hymn books or service books.
- People should avoid social contact, such as hugging.
- There should be no social gathering such as a wake before or after the service.
- Consideration should be given to offering a memorial service when the emergency is over.
- Local councils will have guidance around what is possible or permissible in crematoria and cemeteries.

Where a preschool is offering care for children of key workers – is it ok for that group to continue you using our building?

Safeguarding would exclude anyone else whilst they are on the premises, so if the Local Authority wants it to continue it should, but we should not expect anyone from the Church to unlock or support its meetings (and certainly not the over 70s).

Can support meetings like AA still continue to meet in our buildings?

No, they must stop too as the buildings are closed. The coronavirus situation has resulted in many AA meetings being unavailable as groups follow Government guidelines to minimise social contact. AA have told us that many meetings now exist online and can be found here: <https://www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk/AA-Meetings/Find-a-Meeting/Online>

Blood Donors use our church – is it ok for that group to continue you using our building?

This is a vital service, if the NHS wants it to continue it should, but we should not expect anyone from the church to unlock or support its meetings (and certainly not anyone who is over 70).

We have been using our church to record worship materials – can this continue?

No-one should be going into the church buildings; worship resources can be recorded by individuals at home.

Can we livestream with a small and well distanced group taking part?

This should stop in church buildings. Our website has a list of places who are offering livestreaming and you should use these where possible.

What impact does coronavirus have if I'm employing staff?

There are many questions around employment at this time, and the HR department have produced a detailed document looking at issues such as what your duties are as an employer and if your employee needs time off work to look after children.

They have also produced a Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme for Churches, Circuits and Districts

[Download both documents here](#)

What should I do about the church property while it's empty?

[The Property Team have issued Coronavirus guidance for property here.](#)

[TMCP have also issued their own coronavirus FAQs here.](#)

I am concerned about church finances – what can I do?

During this period of great uncertainty people are concerned about the financial impact on churches and circuits. At this stage we are asking any church that experiences financial difficulty to talk to the leadership team in their Circuit, and any Circuit that is in difficulty to talk to their District. Any concerns that arise at a District level can be taken up with the Connexional Team's Finance department. Contact: Matthew Tattersall: tattersallm@methodistchurch.org.uk

What happens if we lose income because groups who rent space in church buildings can't meet or through a loss of rental income?

It's our understanding that this would not be covered by insurance as coronavirus is not a specified disease.

What is happening to Methodist Council meetings?

This month's Council meeting will not go ahead as planned, and plans are being made to ensure that the essential business is carried out.

Should my church council/Synod still go ahead?

We recommend that all meetings including church councils and circuit meetings should be cancelled. Districts chairs will be in touch about Synods.

Is the Methodist Conference still going ahead?

No decision has been made yet, although we are having regular discussions about this and will heed Government advice when making a decision.

What about candidates for the ministry?

The Candidates Committee will not meet in the way planned from 23 March but all candidates have been contacted about the way in which the candidating process will be completed

Can we keep our church open for people to pray?

All church buildings are to remain closed for the foreseeable future. Where possible you should offer other ways for people to pray and worship online.

What should I do if I am due to take my sabbatical?

In order that the Church's ministry might be at full strength after the crisis prearranged sabbaticals should be taken as arranged and may only be deferred with the permission of the District Sabbaticals Group (SO 744) Any change in the timing of a sabbatical may only take place after consultation as directed in SO744 noting that this will impact on future planning.

Full guidance is found in SO 744 and this must be followed.

How will supervision work while we self-isolate?

Read guidance on Offering supervision while social distancing

Download Receiving supervision while social distancing (Pdf)

I am due to be stationed by the Conference to a new circuit and therefore be on the move in the summer. Will I still be moving in the summer?

This advice is under ongoing review. The current plan is we should follow usual practice; however, we will offer further guidance as the crisis develops

How can I contact someone at Methodist Church House?

The building is now fully closed with the staff working remotely. You can still call reception on 020 7486 5502 or email on enquiries@methodistchurch.org.uk If you have a meeting planned at MCH and you haven't heard from the meeting organiser, please assume it is cancelled and do not travel to MCH.

If you have a question which isn't answered here please email: enquiries@methodistchurch.org.uk

**The Methodist Podcast**

This week's [podcast](#) discusses how the Methodist Church is continuing to respond to the on-going crisis, how families can be supported, we hear an update from the Methodist Church in Italy and how the National Methodist Choir of Great Britain is bringing the world together in song.

Serving neighbours and speaking with friends



During this global crisis, we have a unique opportunity to be Gospel people: to act lovingly, speak graciously, and live humbly for the common good of all people. In addition to taking the necessary precautions, [there](#) are steps you can take to serve neighbours and speak with friends in this time of great anxiety and isolation.

People in exile and people of hope



The Revd Ruth Gee, Assistant Secretary of the Methodist Conference, reflects on how we can offer hope in the desert of fear that coronavirus has brought to communities in this [blog](#).

Church community during the coronavirus pandemic

While we are unable to physically meet or visit there are ways in which we can remain, or even strengthen our church communities. For some reflections on digital church in the coronavirus crisis see www.premierchristianity.com/Blog/Why-God-s-hybrid-Church-is-still-open-for-business

Staying in contact

At a time of lockdown make sure you have ways of keeping in touch with your church community, including those without internet access.

- Do you have contacts for all of the church community on Facebook / Twitter / Instagram?
- Do you have email addresses?
- Do you have phone numbers of those who are not online?

Live-streamed worship

You could arrange collectively to watch a live-streamed service from a church that is regularly doing this. [See details of some live-streams here.](#)

Or you could try live-streaming a service from home.

Live-streamed worship has limitations if it is a one-way 'broadcast'. There are ways in which you can make it more of a 'gathered community' experience.

- Could you invite people to engage via Facebook comments?
- Could people not on Facebook email or phone in their prayers before live streaming a service?
- Start the stream early so people can join and chat like they might before a service
- Use polls to ask questions throughout
- Do a shorter sermon, but have space for questions and comments afterwards
- Send out notes or a written sermon beforehand and have the livestream be a conversation around those topics

Other ideas

Get together online and arrange to try:

- Live stream a morning prayer on Facebook.
- Live stream a pastoral 'chat'
- Schedule a prepared conversation on a theme, or a Bible study.
- Again, remember those who aren't online and think of how they can be included.
- Why not invite people from outside the church community? You could post in local community Facebook groups inviting everybody to 'join us for prayers at 6pm' for instance
- Try holding meetings using a platform like Zoom www.zoom.us

What has worked for your church? Share your stories -
email mediaoffice@methodistchurch.org.uk