

Worship, Ministry and Mission During the Coronavirus Shutdown

Dear All

The current outbreak of coronavirus will leave many people feeling as though the life they are used to has been turned inside out. Even in this environment, however, Jesus continues to call us to a life of Christian discipleship. Our worship of God, our support for each another and our service to neighbours are in many ways more critical now than they were two weeks ago. They witness powerfully to our faith in the good news of God's undying love for the world. So, we have work to do in this strange new world.

Since ***all local churches are all closed for the time being*** – for worship, for church meetings and for most external organisations – Circuit Staff have established a plan for ministry and mission over coming weeks:

Communication

We are trying hard to keep you all well-informed in your faith life and connected with the church community to which you belong. If you have access to computers or smartphones, the circuit has webpages and Facebook pages that you may already be familiar with. We will also make available a ***weekly contact sheet to all of you who do not have online access*** to the above. Staff members will ring you in the next few days to find out how you prefer to receive information.

Pastoral

When staff ring, we will also ask you questions about how isolated you are and how best we keep you connected to people. ***Much of our pastoral work will need to be done by telephone.*** Ministers will sit at the heart of the system of pastoral care, but everyone will be able to play a part in “watching over one another in love.” Within the next week or so you will receive a letter indicating who you can expect to ring you, but also giving details of people you could sensibly check on as well (if you are happy to do that).

Worship and Prayer

Our weekly contact sheet, as above, will contain ***prayers and readings for Sunday and a refectio***/sermon to read through. For users of social media, we will also provide ***video sermons*** (Ex-president Roger Walton is, for instance, preaching for us this coming Sunday). On Facebook, Alan is coordinating ***daily reflections*** with Local Preachers. Emma and Andrew are leading on creating ***Prayer Trees*** outside all our churches for community prayers. ***If we are permitted to undertake open air worship on Easter Sunday***, we will arrange that while maintaining safe space between people.

Mission

Emma and Andrew are exploring whether we can create outdoor spaces for families to bring their children to play safely, with a keen eye to hygiene. We will continue to support schools in whatever way we can as they remain open for the children of key workers. Stephen Barnett continues to coordinate work at St Andrew's as a collection and distribution point for the Barnsley Foodbank. We also need to try and ensure that we set food aside for the ***Foodbanks*** in Wakefield and Huddersfield, which may become inundated with referrals. We will do our best to work with local agencies as they offer support to people with particular needs. We should ***pray for the Denby Dale Centre*** and its staff, who do a fantastic job working with isolated people already. We should ***pray for Paul Bridges' work at the Methodist Mission in Huddersfield.*** Please ALL keep an eye out for your neighbours – some may look more resilient than you but even your smile from the window may convey a small encouragement in difficult times.

Keep safe! Keep caring! Keep praying!

Revd Philip Bee

Worship and Prayer for Sunday 22nd March 2020

Prayer

Light of the World,

Draw close to me in dark times. Help me to know your presence with me as I pray. May I feel the company of others who pray with me this morning wherever they are. Let us together lift our hearts to you in praise and thanksgiving for all the blessings that surround us each day. Make me alive to the promptings of your Spirit as I read your Word and reflect on it in my heart. In Jesus' name. Amen.

The Word: Please read **1 Samuel 16: 1-13** and **John 9: 1-41**

(If you have access, please view the online sermon given by Revd Dr Roger Walton on these passages.)

The gospel reading is part of a series of four in which Jesus has long conversations with characters he meets. Each character responds differently to Jesus as the *Light of the World*. In Lent 1, we met Nicodemus, a Pharisee who steps out of the shadows into the Light in the middle of the night. He is intrigued by Jesus, but does not become a believer, so steps back into darkness. In Lent 2, by contrast, we meet a Samaritan Woman who comes across Jesus by a well at noon, when the sun is at its highest. Her world is illuminated by the Light, she sees who Jesus is and becomes a believer. And now, in Lent 3, we see a man born blind, who has his own eyes opened to the Light for the first time ever. Unlike the religious authorities of his day, he sees clearly who Jesus is and has his life transformed accordingly. Roger's sermon encourages us see other people differently in the Light of Christ. In the present context, this is critically important. Think for a moment about your neighbours: the one you think complains too frequently; the one you tend to avoid; the one you have perhaps written off. This may be exactly the time when you need to see them differently – to try to see them as God does; to see them through heaven's eyes; and to remember that the Light of Christ is to illumine the lives of all those you encounter each day.

Prayers for Others

Loving God

I name to you those friends and family whom I love, asking your blessing on them. *Silence*

I name to you the neighbours who surround my life, praying your love between us. *Silence*

I thank you for my Church, remembering those who walk the way of faith with me. *Silence*

I pray for a world that presently lives in fear of the coronavirus. Tighten the bonds of fellowship that unite us as human beings. Give strength to our health professionals as they seek to care for those who are ill.

In Jesus' name. Amen.

Other Access Points

Video Sermons

Access will be via our website <http://ddandcwmethodist.org.uk/resources/>

Circuit Facebook @DDCWmethodist Upload 10.30 Sundays

Local facebook @StAndrewsMethodistURC Upload 10.30 Sundays

Other Meth. Resources

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/our-faith/worship/singing-the-faith-plus/seasons-and-themes/worship-during-the-coronavirus-pandemic/>

TV/Radio

Songs of praise each Sunday

Thought for the day Radio 2 and 4