

Dear Friends,

The Methodist Church have just updated their website with the following:

"It is with sadness that we recommend that worship services in Methodist Churches are suspended for the time being in line with Government guidance. We would encourage people who lead services to think about how worship might be offered in different ways, including online and using [worship at home sheets](#).

During this incredibly difficult time when people might want to spend time in prayer in their Methodist Church. Local trustees should consider whether it is possible to open up their churches to enable people to come and pray or sit quietly, perhaps offering prayer stations as a point of reflection with precautions around physical distancing."

We need to take this seriously in order to care for each other. I am therefore making the decision that worship will be cancelled in all Methodist churches from today. This should also apply to St Francis and United, and to the united services at Landford, but there may be additional / different advice that also needs to be taken into account.

The means that Methodist preachers and ministers will not be leading the services planned on the Plan from tomorrow. Ministers and Stewards / Church Leadership Teams will be considering how to respond to this desert experience locally. When the Circuit website is available again, worship resources will be uploaded so all preachers are encouraged to consider how to contribute. We'll do some more thinking about this as soon as we can.

In the meantime, churches which are large enough to make physical distancing possible, and where no one is being put at risk, can consider whether it is possible to open up the church to enable people to pray. I would be grateful if the ministers could lead this discussion - via email / phone. However, no one should feel compelled to do this. It is dependent on you having appropriate physical space and the people to staff it. There is new safeguarding advice on the Methodist website and this should be adhered to.

Please do refer to the Methodist website for further information since I've only given you the headlines.

<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/coronavirus-guidance/#e2>

And finally, one of the things we can do at this time, is to pray. I offer you a prayer / poem that we used at the Quiet Afternoon at the beginning of Lent. It seems appropriate for now. It is by Ruth Burgess and called "An invitation to Lent"

The desert waits,
ready for those who come,
who come obedient to the Spirit's leading;
or who are driven,
because they will not come any other way.
The desert always waits,

ready to let us know who we are—
the place of self-discovery.

And whilst we fear, and rightly,
the loneliness and emptiness and harshness,
we forget the angels,
whom we cannot see for our blindness,
but who come when God decides
that we need their help;
when we are ready
for what they can give us.
May you sense God's angels with you.

With good wishes

Sue

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