

Date 16th June 2020

Dear friends

Opening of Circuit Churches

As you will be aware, the Government is now allowing religious buildings to open for individual. The Methodist Church's advice remains that churches stay closed and for individual prayer to be done at home, or wherever you feel most comfortable.

The Government have stated: - *'Places of worship still have discretion over when they consider it safe to open and may decide to remain closed or reopen at a slower pace if they wish'* and we would like to stress that no-one should feel under any pressure to open buildings for individual prayer.

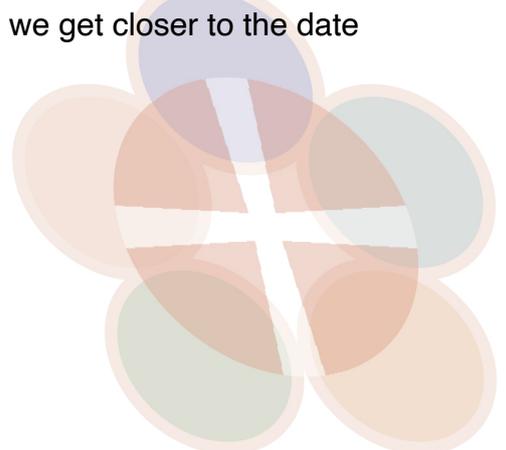
The Methodist Church will be making a decision at the end of June as to when we can open our churches for collective worship. In our Circuit, some congregations are keen to get back as soon as possible, others are feeling much more cautious and some are scared to meet together. As a Circuit, we have lost members to this dreadful virus, and we have also experienced a larger number of deaths than this time last year. May we hold our churches and the grieving families in prayer and may our loved one's rest in peace and rise in glory.



In terms of opening, the Managing Trustees of each church will need to consider their own context and make a decision based on their own situation. This will need to be done in consultation with myself. I have formed the 'Covid 19 Co-ordination group' which will liaise with each church Property Team as we get closer to the date to open. *At this stage, we do not have a date for opening.*

If you are keen to forward plan, each Church will need:

- Lots of hand sanitiser



- An agreed 'safe number' of chairs at a 2m distance (those living in the same households can of course be in a 'bubble').
- Paper towels (not material towels)
- A completed Risk Assessment
- A completed 'Re-opening check list'

These are attached to this document for your information.

We won't be able to 'sing' or use service books, so services will be a lot shorter than usual. We also won't be able to share refreshments afterwards.

The Circuit Plan for *June – August* quarter will be available from next week. It has been re-designed and is to be used as a tool for prayer. I hope that you like it (although I appreciate none of us really like change)! The same amount of paper is used; it is easier to read and has a dash of colour. You will also see that the list of churches has been divided into staffing sections so you can see with ease the staffing patterns that are used. Any feedback gratefully received.

The Plan does show the preachers for July and August – Please note - these are PROVISIONAL and until we get the go ahead, not 'set in stone'.

Most importantly we need to be careful to not rush back to the 'old normal'. This is an opportunity to think more widely about how we 'do' and 'be' church for a post-coronavirus society.

Please continue to hold our Circuit in prayer. Let us trust in the LORD, learn from these times and move forward with courage and confidence in Him who is by our side.

Yours Sincerely

Revd. Jo A. Siddall
Superintendent