

Rev Tim Perkins
Sept 30th 2020

Dear Friends,

Last week I wrote that I would return once more to Psalm 23 as the focus for these pastoral letters. However, I feel that I need to postpone that until next week and to focus instead on some very practical issues.

We find ourselves as a country, and particularly as a region, facing a tightening of local restrictions at a time when most of our churches are just beginning to work towards opening! It is a situation that I know has caused some confusion and much tension so please allow me to try and make clear what our local restrictions do and do not mean for our churches.

As I write the parts of our Circuit which are in Bradford and Leeds authorities are now subject to the following legal restrictions:

- We are not allowed to socialise with people outside of our household or bubble in our own homes or gardens and we are not allowed to visit other people in their own homes or gardens, whether they live in areas within our local restrictions or outside them.
- We are required to wear face coverings in all public indoor venues unless we have a medical exemption or are under 12 years of age.
- In addition we are advised not to socialise with people who are not part of our household or bubble in other public buildings, including places of worship.

What some people have found confusing is the 3rd of those bullet points. They have taken it to mean that we cannot worship in church. That is not the case. Worship is not banned; in fact, all the evidence points towards places of worship being amongst the last public places that may face further restrictions. Your church can be open, and you can attend worship if you choose to. What it means is simply that you should only sit with people who are a part of your household or bubble and that you should refrain from engaging in conversation with people who are not a part of your household or bubble.

Of course, our church buildings being allowed to open and for us to attend for worship does not mean that we must do so. Each local church council is responsible for the decision as to whether to open the church building for worship and each church council should keep that question under review. It may be that in certain places churches that have reopened their buildings for worship, decide it is necessary to close them again. Your Minister and Church Stewards will keep you informed as to the situation at your church. The Methodist Church has stated throughout the last 6 months that its number one priority is to save lives. If we feel at any point that the procedures we have in place to ensure that our churches are Covid safe, are not sufficient, then the situation will be reviewed.

My own observations have been confirmed by other superintendents around the District, that actually, our churches are doing a better job than many other sectors of society at implementing the necessary guidance, and keeping people safe as they worship and participate in other activities within the life of our churches. I am extremely grateful to my colleagues and to those lay leaders at our churches who have taken on the responsibilities for implementing the vast amount of guidance we have received. They are doing a great job and we should all let them know that!

Circuit Superintendent Rev Tim Perkins
20 Far Mead Croft,
Burley In Wharfedale,
Ilkley. LS29 7RR
rev.tim.perkins@btinternet.com
01943 864187


The Methodist Church

However, I am also conscious of the physical and emotional toll that the last six months has taken on many folk, particularly on the Circuit Staff and those who have taken on such important responsibilities as creating and implementing risk assessments. Over the last 6 months, for a variety of reasons, the Staff Team have led a much greater proportion of the acts of worship that have been taking place than usual, and they have done so in ways that they were not trained for. We have all had to learn new technical and health and safety skills. And we now find ourselves at a point where we are having to provide both physical and remote services in many places. The workload has increased and the changed time pressures in the regular week, for having material ready to record or distribute via post has increased pressure and decreased energy levels. I would ask that you be kind, gracious and encouraging to all those involved in ministry and leadership of worship.

I have today agreed with the Circuit Leadership Team that between now and Christmas each Minister will be offered the opportunity to have a weekend free of work commitments and that they will be able to do likewise either for the week between Christmas and New Year or the week following New Year. This is an important decision to protect the wellbeing and mental health of our staff and their families.

It may mean that on an occasional weekend, your church is without a physical service. It may be that some of these gaps can be filled by other preachers in the circuit. However, each week we are also committed to sharing on the circuit website a written service sheet based on the Revised Common Lectionary readings, which friends at Christchurch are producing, and a recorded service being produced by friends at Burley. If there are any gaps in provision, we will ensure that these resources are directly shared with affected churches so that everyone has access to a form of worship. Please see www.wandamethodists.org.uk for further details.

One other form of worship that we are developing across the circuit is a monthly Circuit Service held via the Zoom platform. We trialled this successfully in September and we shall hold another Circuit Service on Sun 11th Oct at 6pm. This service will be our delayed Circuit Farewell Service for Rev Lesley Taylor. Lesley will be joining us from her new home in Harrogate and Rev Rick Ormrod will be joining us from Oswaldtwistle to share God's Word with us. The Zoom invite will be shared in next week's pastoral letter, but I do hope as many of you as possible will be able to share in that service with us.

It also allows me the opportunity to remind you of the collection we are taking up for a leaving gift for Lesley. If you wish to contribute and have not yet done so, you can make a payment via online banking to:

Wharfedale & Aireborough Methodist Circuit

Sort Code: 40-52-40

Acc. No. 00030002

Reference LT Gift

Alternatively, you can write a cheque made out to Wharfedale & Aireborough Methodist Circuit and post it to me at 20 Far Mead Croft, Burley in Wharfedale, Ilkley. LS29 7RR.

Every Blessing,

Rev Tim