

Circuit Pastoral Newsletter from Rev'd Liz Harris, July 2020

Hello friends!

It's my turn to write the monthly Circuit Pastoral Letter, which will hopefully reach everyone in our congregations, and others in our communities. Greetings from all of the Circuit Leadership Team.

An end to lockdown?

I imagine that, like me, you've wondered what might be in store for people, workplaces, churches, and so on when we finally get back to some of our usual routines, as we embrace the 'new normal'.

Recently, we've had a number of Government announcements lifting some restrictions, but we can already see that this is merely the beginning of the end of lockdown, and there's still a long way to go – we cannot simply step into life as it was before the pandemic. When we see images on the news of crowds on beaches, drunken gatherings, clashes with authorities, and people disregarding advice about social distancing and hygiene, it can easily add to our anxiety about coming out of lockdown.

And living in such a beautiful area, many people are anxious about the local challenges that may emerge as Summer visitors begin to arrive in Cornwall. What does God say to us in this?

Cast all your anxiety on God, because he cares for you (1 Peter 5 verse 7)

A cautious approach

As Christians who love to worship God together, we are currently experiencing the tension between wanting to gather in familiar places, and wanting to protect ourselves and others by remaining safely at home.

The Government has said that places of worship can re-open from July 4th (with certain restrictions) but this is permissive, not prescriptive; in other words, places of worship *can* re-open, but don't have to.

Here in F&G Methodist Circuit, the CLT are following the guidance of Government and of the Methodist Church in Britain, and taking a cautious approach. Our own places of worship will only open when it is safe and manageable to do so. We continue to trust in God - we mustn't rush, and risk putting anyone at risk.

If you'd like to know more, you can find the Methodist Church in Britain updates and guidance here:

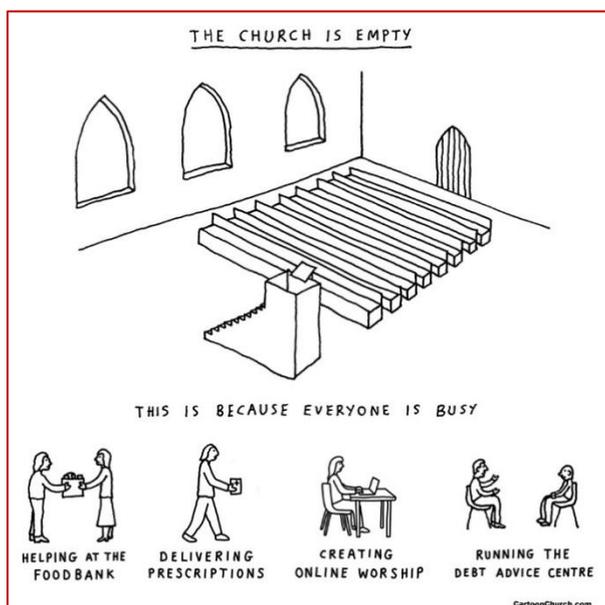
<https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/coronavirus/>

When will my church be open?

Our churches will not all re-open at the same time; we are carefully considering what the 'new-normal' might look like in each congregation and context. No church will open or gather before they are fully prepared, and for some it may prove sensible to wait until later in the year, e.g. if most of the congregation or key people (stewards, key-holders, worship leaders...) are vulnerable. To begin with, things may be quite different from what we're used to, e.g. under current guidelines, congregations will not be permitted to sing, share Bibles/hymn books/leaflets, share communion, and must follow social distancing and strict hygiene measures. If church stewards are considering opening a local church for prayer or other forms of worship (as permitted), they must first discuss it with the Minister/Pastor, who will help with guidance to complete a Risk Assessment, Checklist, and Plan – (these things must be completed before any church re-opens).

In the meantime:

- 'Worship at Home' online services and reflections will continue.
- We are aiming towards holding an open-air Circuit Service at Gwennap Pit in August.
- St Day Methodist Church will open for private prayer on a drop-in basis, 2-4pm on Sundays (After carefully completing a Risk Assessment, Checklist, and Plan in accordance with guidelines. St Day's experience will help to inform other churches as they move towards opening in due course.)
- Please continue to support your local church financially, and in prayer.
- Please pray for Church Stewards prayerfully planning ahead (in discussion with their Minister)
- Please pray for the CLT, and for our Ministers, Local Preachers & Worship Leaders as we begin to think about putting together a Preaching Plan for the Autumn (some of whom are vulnerable because of health/age, and may not be able to serve in the way they did previously).



Challenges and opportunities

Even though we currently don't gather for services, events and meetings, there is much going on; all part of our offering of worship to God – Ministers, Local Preachers, Worship Leaders and Musicians providing online services and reflections (with wonderful contributions from many people, thank you!), funeral services, Church Stewards checking/managing church property, Treasurers managing church finances, pastoral care and support, Circuit Stewards working hard, online meetings (CLT, prayer meeting, the Circuit meeting, stewards' meetings etc.), administration, people working in the community, and so on.

God is present with us always, not just in church buildings, and we are church wherever we are – showing God's love through our words and actions. We keep in touch and support each other through our personal and pastoral

connections, we pray, reflect, and read the Bible at home, we worship together through the 'Worship at Home' resources; the weekly service sheets and online acts of worship, and we can each consider the opportunities before us. Whilst this time has brought us many challenges, it has also offered us some new opportunities. Please prayerfully consider what God may be saying to us about the things that we previously did, and the ways in which we might move forward. In your own local place of worship, what opportunities can you see? (e.g. Are there changes to make? A new time to meet? An opportunity to do things differently? Maybe to re-start some things, but let other things cease...)

Additional information, helpful advice and resources

- ✓ **F&G Circuit YouTube Channel** - here you'll find our online Worship at Home Sunday Services & Wednesday Worship. The videos are also now available on DVD for those who are not online; please contact Chris Trewern if you would like to access these. (We can also loan you a DVD player if required). <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCSZkv-Db2MFXsQEzhra0azw>
- ✓ **F&G Circuit Facebook page** – here you'll find photos and news about life throughout our Circuit. <https://www.facebook.com/Falmouth-and-Gwennap-Methodist-Circuit-126416989738/>
- ✓ **F&G Circuit website** here you'll find links and information about our Circuit. <https://www.fandgmc.org.uk>
- ✓ **The Methodist Church in Britain** - here you can find helpful information and resources, including updates about how the Methodist Church in Britain is responding to Covid 19. <https://www.methodist.org.uk>

Prayer

Compassionate and ever-present God, thank you for being with us throughout the Covid 19 pandemic. As we slowly come out of lockdown and look to the future, we continue to pray for a sense of holy calm. Give us wisdom as we discern the way forward in our Circuit and in individual congregations, compassion for our neighbours, strength to support each other, and faith to trust in you. May we continue to know your presence and your peace, today and always. We pray in the name of your son, Jesus Christ, Amen.

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth should change, though the mountains shake in the heart of the sea; though its waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble with its tumult. (Psalm 46 verse 1-3)

Contact Details

Please feel free to contact us as required:

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