

Coronavirus Guidance – 17 March 2020

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. (<https://tinyurl.com/wblr5wu>)

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.

Suspending services means that we advise that baptisms will not take place in public worship and if you have a wedding planned in a Methodist Church you should speak to your minister. While funerals may still take place, we would advise that the number of people attending is limited as per the Government's advice.

In terms of Church business, we recommend that all meetings including church councils and circuit meetings should be cancelled. Districts chairs will be in touch about Synods. The next meeting of the Methodist Council has been suspended and we will advise on how essential business will be carried out. We will be issuing further advice on this.

Other community activities:

Foodbanks and night shelters: If your church runs a foodbank or night shelter please take notice of all the advice that has been given by the Government and the NHS. If you are concerned about older volunteers we advise that (in line with the guidance) they should stay at home. The Joint Public Issues Team (JPIT) have produced a simple guide on how you can support foodbanks (<https://tinyurl.com/s9fdcnq>) during the coronavirus pandemic.

Other community events like lunch clubs, after school clubs, playgroups and fellowship groups should be suspended.

Pastoral visits: in these extraordinary times, pastoral support is incredibly important and it's likely it may increase but we would advise that you contact people by phone in the first instance to check they are still happy for you to go in person. If you're visiting a care home or hospital take your guidance from them. You should also be mindful of updated safeguarding guidance which you can find here (<https://tinyurl.com/ug2wr5e>)

For more and updated details visit <https://www.methodist.org.uk/about-us/coronavirus-guidance/>.

Please remember that additional public health guidance is available at <https://www.nhsinform.scot/>.