

# The Methodist Church: Coronavirus Guidance

The Methodist Church is monitoring the situation around COVID-19 which at the moment is considered a moderate risk by the UK's Chief Medical Officer. The Methodist Church has issued the following updated guidance to ensure the risks are reduced, recommending practical precautions to prevent the spread of infection. Should advice from the UK government change these guidelines will be updated, but please look regularly at the websites listed below for the latest information.

Good hand hygiene is vital in reducing the spread of the virus. Wash hands with soap and water often or use hand sanitiser gel. This is particularly important for servers at Holy Communion.

## Should I go to Church?

If you're feeling ill and/or displaying the symptoms of a cold, please consider staying away from the service. If you are leading the service and are unwell, please don't struggle through but stay at home and get well. Remember Church doesn't stop because we don't meet and there are other ways of joining in with worship. Even if you would normally go to church with a cold, the words of 1 Corinthians 8:11 may be useful here: "Think of your weaker (brother/sister)"

## Welcoming people into Church

Welcomers might consider refraining from using a handshake to welcome people into the service. A notice explaining this might be of value. If welcomers do shake hands hand gel should be available to both parties.

## Leading Worship and Holy Communion

During Lent the Methodist Worship Book does not invite people to share the peace. Ministers may wish to use alternatives to sharing the peace with handshakes. For instance using the British Sign Language version of the peace. [Watch a video here that shows how to do this.](#)

Those administering Communion must wash their hands or use hand sanitiser immediately prior to distribution. If the Common Cup (chalice) is used for Communion, only the Minister should receive the wine, and communicants receive Communion in one kind only - the bread. The practice of 'intinction' (dipping the bread into the wine) should be avoided as this may spread the virus.

If individual glasses are used for wine, the communicant should pick up their own glass rather than servers handing it to them.

Bread should not be passed around via the 'tearing and sharing' method but should be prepared by a single user who has thoroughly washed their hands before cutting the bread up in to small pieces and ideally who wears disposable gloves.

It is probably a good time to remind Communion Stewards that communion wine once poured out should never be returned to the bottle to be reused later. Any remaining elements should be reverently consumed or put to ground.

Ministers should refrain from shaking hands with people as they leave.

## **Pastoral concerns**

Churches may want to consider carrying out pastoral 'visits' by phone. In any case it may be worth calling the person you are due to visit to check they are comfortable with you being there. Now is a good time to be thinking proactively about who is the Church might need extra help should they decide or be required to self-isolate. Is there the need to create a plan for shopping for more vulnerable members of the community for example?

Remember that many people are anxious and a reassuring phone call and an offer to pray might be very much appreciated.

## **Lent Lunches**

Many churches hold Lent Lunches please be aware that hand hygiene at these gatherings should be even more stringent than usual at this time. It might be useful to have hand sanitiser available for all to use.

## **Church plan**

Superintendents will need to consider what might happen if someone is unable to lead worship: will churches close? Will you issue a Local arrangement outline? Now is the time to do some contingency planning. If you don't make the decision others will, potentially without being fully informed!

Keep the premises well cleaned before and after use paying particular attention to surfaces and door handles.

Consider using a projector to avoid using passing around hymn books and notice sheets.

If you're a minister, consider what your plan might be if someone in your congregation is diagnosed with the virus.

The latest Government advice is here:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-information-for-the-public#diagnosis-and-analysis>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/wuhan-novel-coronavirus-self-isolation-for-patients-undergoing-testing/advice-sheet-home-isolation>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-to-employers-and-businesses-about-covid-19/guidance-for-employers-and-businesses-on-covid-19>

## **Praying for our sisters and brothers around the world**

Remember that the Methodist Church is wider than Britain We are learning from our sisters and brothers around the world who are dealing with a difficult and uncertain situation and we would ask that you hold them in prayer, particularly those in affected areas.

Revd Paul Wood, Interim Director of the Ministries Team, said: “As we deal with the practicalities of protecting people from coronavirus we continue to remember Our Calling to care for the other whilst always being mindful that is that our call is always to respond to the good news in Jesus. We are a people of hope we need to declare and model good news in these difficult times.”

Head of Mission, Jude Levermore said: “Our Calling is to respond in love and service to the needs of our communities. The aim of this advice is to help us do this even while the extent of the issue is still unclear. We are grateful to our sisters and brothers around the world who hold us in prayer as we hold them. We should not be afraid “*For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*” [2 Timothy 1:7](#).

*God of all hope we call on you today.*

*We pray for those who are living in fear:*

*Fear of illness, fear for loved ones, fear of other's reactions to them.*

*May your Spirit give us a sense of calmness and peace.*

*We pray for your church in this time of uncertainty.*

*For those people who are worried about attending worship.*

*For those needing to make decisions in order to care for other*

*For those who will feel more isolated by not being able to attend.*

*Grant us your wisdom.*

*Holy God, we remember that you have promised that*

*Nothing will separate us from your love – demonstrated to us in Jesus Christ.*

*Help us turn our eyes, hearts and minds to you.*

*Amen*

The symptoms of coronavirus infection are a cough, a high temperature and shortness of breath. Those with such symptoms who have returned from China, Thailand, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Iran or Italy in the last 14 days, or who have been in contact with someone confirmed as having the coronavirus, should call 111 for further advice.

If you have any questions regarding the Methodist Church and coronavirus, please email [enquiries@methodistchurch.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@methodistchurch.org.uk)

## **More information**

[\*\*Guidance on avoiding the spread of the virus on the NHS website\*\*](#)

[\*\*Full details of the coronavirus outbreak from Public Health England.\*\*](#)

[\*\*Download an NHS handwashing poster to print out\*\*](#) (Pdf)

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With best wishes

Helen

Reverend Helen Cameron  
Chair of the Northampton District  
The Methodist Church