

29 March 2020

Dear brothers and sisters,

It already seems an age ago, but on Monday evening we were told that we should only leave our homes for:

- shopping for basic necessities
- one form of exercise a day
- any medical need, to provide care or to help a vulnerable person
- travelling to and from work, but only where absolutely necessary.

And not including the people you live with, all gatherings of more than two people in public should be stopped.

We are all people who like to be with people, to talk, to listen and to do things together. It's natural and human nature. It is important for us to live in community with one another. What do we do now?

Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them" (Matthew 18:20). Matthew's Gospel was originally written for a small community, living in a hostile environment that took its life together seriously. Does this sound familiar?

We can't meet together face-to-face at the moment, but when we gather in Jesus' name over the phone or the web then Jesus is still there among us.

We have huge changes in our daily life and routine. And they are taking place very quickly. In the book of Exodus, a similar thing happened to the Israelites. After the final plague, the Pharaoh called Moses and Aaron and told the Israelites to pack their bags and leave Egypt immediately (Exodus 12:31-32). It was then that their journey to the Promised Land began.

But God didn't say, "I'll meet you when you reached the Promised Land." Rather God travelled alongside them as a cloud in the day and a pillar of fire at night. And as they travelled God shaped them into a new community.

As we live through these challenging times, God isn't saying. "I'll see you again when it is all over." God is with us as we travel through them – in our homes, in the hospitals, with those caring for us, with each and every one of us. God is with us in our self-isolation, in our two and threes, anxieties and fears, and in our grief and in our sorrow.

In fact, John Wesley's final words were, "the best of all is, God is with us" – in all and through all. And amongst everything else, on that we can depend.

With all my love and prayers

Rev Ken

One of the comments I had last week was that it was all words, so I've had a go at recording the mini-sermon and a prayer and uploaded it to YouTube. It is very much a first attempt but you can find it at <https://youtu.be/9DNFgkaLAWs>.



Bible readings for next Sunday 5 April: Matthew 21:1-11, Psalm 118:1-2, 19-29

A new routine

Many of us had a daily or weekly routine. Although we cannot follow them now, we can use them to develop a prayer pattern. At the times you usually do things or meet people, spend a moment to think and pray for them.

Praying and worshipping together

There's a saying that a church that prays together stays together. We may not be together in one place, but we can still pray together.

Phone (020 8756 0567) or email (ken.kingston@methodist.org.uk) me your prayers and we can share them and continue to pray together.

You call us to speak to you in prayer – even when the places we would usually go to are not available.

Help us to know your Spirit's presence wherever we pray.

Today we especially pray for those who are living in fear – give them your strength.

For those who still have not yet realised the urgency of the situation

– protect them, and all of us from harm.

And today I especially want to pray for

In the name of Jesus. Amen

Worshipping together

We can still join in worship together using BBC television and radio.

Sunday 29 March

8.00am	BBC London (94.9FM)	Worship from Methodist Central Hall, Westminster, London
8.10am	Radio 4 (93.5FM)	Worship with Revd Jennifer Smith, minister at Wesley's Chapel, London
10.45am	BBC 1	Worship from Bangor, North Wales
1.15pm	BBC 1	Songs of Praise - Stephen Cottrell (next Archbishop of York) shares stories of hope

If you have access to the internet try:

10.30am Contemporary worship from Swan Bank Methodist Church in Burslem, Stoke-on-Trent - www.youtube.com/user/SwanBank

11.00am Worship live from Wesley's Chapel - www.youtube.com/channel/UCUAUqhmhevz5sqhh72LIMxA

And at any time, you can join in a different style of worship, *Sthie* ("at home") from the Isle of Man - www.youtube.com/watch?v=T8BiFjCTeGA
