



# Ryedale Methodist Circuit Yorkshire N&E District 29/34

**Rev Peter Sheasby**

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Dear Friends,

Not surprisingly with the rate of progress my questions of yesterday are now completely out of date. The Government advice about not frequenting cafes, pubs and restaurants in Parliament was also said to apply to churches and other places of worship.

You can find the latest Methodist guidance at: <https://www.methodist.org.uk/coronavirus/> and on the last page.

## **Therefore, in the Ryedale Circuit**

- a) All church activities, including worship must cease with immediate effect
- b) All lettings should cease, except for community essentials such as Foodbanks
- c) Buildings are therefore to remain closed in all other circumstances. Even to leave churches open for private prayer, whilst that seems a good idea, comes with the risk of virus transfer via the door handles and toilets and so **must not be done**.
- d) We need to think about how we support each other and our neighbours in the community
  - this could include offering assistance with shopping, medical care etc. etc.
  - Even if we cannot offer it directly (because of age, health care or self-isolation)
    - **please do not put yourself in danger in order to assist others**we can link with local networks to give help to those in need.
- e) We can offer prayer, especially thinking of those who personally or in the family might be suffering illness.
- f) Please give out our phone numbers to anyone who needs help:

Rev Peter Sheasby	01653 692173
Rev Ken Gowland	01439 770300
Deacon F & Rev T de Boltz	01751 430750
- g) We will circulate ways of sharing in worship at home on Sundays and in the week.
- h) Note the National Day of Prayer and Action  
The Archbishops of Canterbury and York, along with fellow bishops and other church leaders, are calling for a National Day of Prayer and Action this coming Mothering Sunday (March 22). You could: Light a candle at 7pm and put it in your window;  
ring someone who is isolated and vulnerable;  
buy an extra item and place it in your local food bank  
etc.

We will aim for a weekly email, for as long as necessary, with suggestions for prayer and worship at home. If anyone would like to submit a prayer, please send it to Rev Peter.

We know this might need to go on for months. E-mail: peter.sheasby@methodist.org.uk

A prayer and hymn you could use for private reflection.

*'We have a stronghold and refuge, we do not depend on ourselves alone, for God keeps us so that as the Shepherd song ends: 'Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me, all the days of my life.'*

*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 Tim 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 the future.*

*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 not able to attend worship.*

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

*For those who will feel isolated by not being able to go out to their normal activities.*

*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 keep our eyes, hearts and minds on you. Amen*

Andrew Brown, the District Property Secretary and Local Preacher in the Nidd Valley Circuit, has offered a hymn that he wrote several months ago, but seems relevant to the present situation.

*When life is shaken to its core,  
when clouds and storms arrive,  
we find it difficult to know  
God present in our lives.*

*Yet there's no misery or grief,  
pain, doubt, or emptiness,  
that is not known by the divine  
and filled with tenderness.*

*When we are tempted to give up,  
when life is cold and grey,  
where is the God of hope and joy,  
can peace replace dismay?  
God, in the centre of our pain,  
makes of our dark a tent,  
a holy place of tearfulness  
as life splits and fragments.*

*We need to learn to trust and know  
God in our lives, God here  
hidden within the clouds and storms,  
one with our doubts and fears.  
This is our peace: that in the depths  
of life's adversities  
we find a suffering God, who shares  
all its cruel miseries.*

## Methodist Connexion Coronavirus guidance Update 17 March 15:00

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](#).

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](#) 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](#)