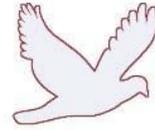




Borders Mission Circuit

Part of the Methodist Church of Great Britain



The **Methodist Church** 

12th July 2020

Dear Borders Mission Circuit Members and Worshippers

No doubt you have all now heard the government's statement that as from 5th July places of worship may open for 'worship'. For some this has simply been heard as 'now we can open'. Whilst naturally many are eager to get back to meeting on our premises again, we are mindful that just as there will be those keen to be back together there will also be others that, for a number of reasons will not feel the same yet.

We thought it would be helpful to write to you explaining some of what needs to be done before we can consider our next steps in this process. Therefore, we are not yet able to enter our church buildings. We want to assure you that as a staff team we long to be able to worship together again in our buildings and share communion together, but we want to ensure that everything happens safely.

The latest connexional guidance encourages us to think missionally before we consider re-opening any of our buildings. For this reason, we would appreciate you spending a few minutes completing the attached questionnaire and returning it to Patrick Dawson, our Circuit Administrator by Friday 31st July. It can be completed online through SurveyMonkey if that is easier for you <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/JRW7VT8>. The results of the questionnaire will mean that the Circuit Leadership Team can work strategically across the circuit as we gradually plan for reopening our buildings. Therefore, the more people from our churches who can complete the survey the better to ensure the Circuit Leadership Team get as full a picture as possible of the needs and thoughts of our congregations.

There are a number of documents on the Methodist Church website you will need to refer for guidance and instruction on reopening (<https://www.methodist.org.uk/for-churches/property/coronavirus-guidance-for-property/>). If you cannot access these then please request them from your Minister or Patrick Dawson. The documents that churches need to be looking at are:

- 1) Reopening our buildings for worship (last updated 6th July 2020)
<https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/17943/opening-churches-for-worship.pdf>
- 2) Reopening of building checklist (last updated 26th June 2020)
<https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/17891/re-opening-of-building-checklist.pdf>
- 3) Every church must complete a Covid-19 Risk Assessment (last updated 6th July)
<https://www.methodist.org.uk/media/17948/covid-19-risk-assessment.pdf>

You will also need to refer to the Government guidance for the safe use of places of worship during the pandemic <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-guidance-for-the-safe-use-of-places-of-worship-during-the-pandemic-from-4-july>

All these documents give guidance on what will be required of churches reopening. If you do not think there is anyone in your church that can carry out these tests, then do be in touch with Patrick Dawson as soon as possible. As our buildings have been shut for three months it is essential time is spent ensuring they are ready to be opened again. A Legionella test must occur even where regular flushes of the systems have taken place throughout the closure.

Once all the tests have been completed Church Councils will need to be held to discuss reopening and a vote taken and minuted for insurance purposes. Managing trustees need to understand the responsibilities that lie with them regarding reopening. The information provided, by both The Government and The Methodist Church, helps us to understand what is required to reopen, for example we will require volunteers to be prepared to open and close and to ensure all surfaces etc. are cleaned before and after people have been in, ensuring social distancing guidelines are adhered to. Once the risk assessment has been completed, your Church Council has met, your risk assessment must be submitted to the Circuit Leadership Team in order that we can co-ordinate reopening.

We all need to be aware that worship will not be the same as before the Covid-19 pandemic started. We are not allowed to sing and may well have to wear masks as church will be considered a public space. We are conscious that many of our congregations have lost loved ones during this crisis and will be waiting for thanksgiving services once restrictions are lifted further and we continue to hold them all in our prayers.

It is likely that when churches are open it will be for a shortened service, the chairs will be 2 metres apart, there will be no singing, you will have to wait outside the building until you are directed to your seat and asked to stay there, there will be no fellowship before or after the service and no refreshments, we will have to limit numbers depending on the size and suitability of our churches.

You will be aware that this situation is fluid and is changing sometimes daily as more information becomes available. The current local lockdown in Leicester serves as a reminder to us all that Covid-19 is still being passed on and although there are certain categories of people who are more vulnerable to the disease it is not discriminatory and could affect any one of us.

The Circuit Staff Team have tried throughout the pandemic to ensure that there are a variety of worship opportunities and ways of pastorally connecting the Methodist people of the Borders Mission Circuit. We intend to continue doing those things that people are appreciating in this time of transition.

If you have questions or concerns with regards to all of this please do get in touch with your minister or with Patrick Dawson and we will be more than happy to chat them through with you.

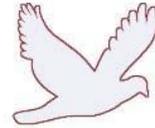
God bless

Rev Loraine, Rev Ann, Rev Nicola, Deacon Sam and Rev Peter



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Borders Mission Circuit Questionnaire

1. Do you consent to completing this survey for the purposes of understanding the needs of the congregations of the Borders Mission Circuit churches, online and in person?

- Yes, I consent
- No, I do not consent.

2. Which of the Borders Mission Circuit churches did you attend for worship at least once per month pre-lockdown?

3. What have you learned during lockdown that excites you about worship?

4. What have you learned about evangelism and building relationships with new people during lockdown?

5. What has lockdown taught you about the foundations of mission for your local church and the mission of the Borders Mission Circuit?

6. What have you not grieved for or missed during lockdown with regards to church life? What might you decide not to pick up again?

7. How have you perceived God's presence during lockdown?

8. When the buildings of the Borders Mission Circuit gradually reopen for worship, what are you most likely to do? (Select one)

- I will start attending services in a church in the Borders Mission Circuit at the first opportunity
- I will continue to self-isolate / shield for an extended period and will return when I feel safe
- I will attend church elsewhere
- None of the above

9. If services cannot be in your own church building every week for a time how far would you travel to go to another church?

- I will only go to my own church
- I will travel up to twenty minutes away from my home to attend another church in the Borders Mission Circuit
- I will travel up to twenty minutes away from my home to attend a church of another denomination
- I am unable to get to another church

10. How do you feel about returning to church? What fills you with joy? What concerns you?

11. If you are not going to return to church soon, or again, how can we help you pastorally, how can we help you to continue growing as a disciple of Jesus Christ?

12. What have you valued from the pastoral care demonstrated in your church during lockdown?

13. Each week the Borders Mission Circuit have been circulating a Minister's Message. If you have received these, please let us know what you have found helpful.

14. Each week Rev Ann Anderson has circulated a weekly service sheet to the churches in her pastoral care. If you have received this, please let us know what you have found helpful.

15. The Borders Mission Circuit have been offering Zoom Worship on Sunday mornings at 10.30 and the services are later uploaded to YouTube. If you have accessed these services, please let us know what you have found helpful.

16. If you have not accessed the Borders Mission Circuit online in any form please tick the box(es) that apply to you.

- I am waiting for Church to resume in person
- I did not know about the online Church services
- My internet is unreliable
- I do not have my own computer/tablet/smart phone/smart TV
- I do not like using the internet
- I do not know how to use the internet
- I do not feel confident phoning into zoom through my landline
- I am not interested in any online services from the Borders Mission Circuit
- Not applicable

17. Is there anything else we can reasonably do to support you?