

A letter from the circuit

As we approach the end of the national lockdown, we are hearing that the whole of Kent will be placed in Tier 3 from 2 December. In keeping with advice previously received from the District (see attachment), the Circuit Minister, Staff, and Stewards are recommending that **no circuit churches should reopen for worship in the immediate future.**

We are aware that many of our churches have put long and thoughtful preparations into place to be able to provide in-person worship on their venue in recent months, but the escalating spread of the COVID virus in our midst means that we must at this point make the health, safety, and well-being of our congregations, our preachers, and our church stewards our first and foremost concern.

We are also aware that the Advent/Christmas season is upon us, and this is a time when many will especially want to be engaging in church services. The circuit continues to make a variety of meaningful worship opportunities available online and in written form for our congregations. We hope that you and your congregations and communities will continue to make good use of these resources. The circuit website <https://www.nkmethodists.org.uk/> is the best place to find the listings of all the various events and opportunities.

Please continue to keep the circuit leadership in your prayers as we will continue to keep each church congregation in ours. If you have further questions about your local situation, feel free to contact your minister or Tony or me. We would ask, though, that you do not attempt to pressure your minister into making 'local' decisions that contradict the overall recommendations. Our collective safety and well-being depends *each* of us having a generous regard for *all* of us.

On a more positive note: yesterday our Circuit Staff and Stewards experimented with a different way of doing our annual Staff and Stewards Christmas Dinner. Instead of physically gathering at a restaurant as we have for many years, we each ordered takeaway meals -- or ate leftovers! -- at our own homes while enjoying a 'zoom' lunch session with each other. We stuck with our tradition of wearing our Christmas Jumpers. Another of our traditions has been changing seats at the table for each course of the meal so that we can chat with different people throughout the course of the meal. For our virtual meal, we adapted this by using different 'break-out rooms' (a 'zoom' feature) every 15-20 minutes. We all had great fun and agreed we'll remember this occasion for many years to come! *We'll be interested in hearing how YOU are able to adapt your Christmas traditions during this very different year.* This year we have a vivid reminder that God first came to us in Jesus through very unusual circumstances: we must all keep our eyes and ears and hearts open for how God will come to us this Christmas.

Peace and joy and love and abundant blessings to each of you, even in the midst of a pandemic lockdown!

Bonni-Belle