



Rev Ben Clowes
47 Leadhall Lane
Harrogate
North Yorkshire
HG2 9NJ

Tel: 01423 870977
Email: revbclowes@gmail.com
Mobile: 07974 044141

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Dear friends

I write on a day of tumult in American politics as we all await the results from that side of the Atlantic and a day of potential tumult in England as the Government is expecting a rebellion from some of its own MPs as they vote on taking England into Lockdown from 00.01 tomorrow morning.

Last Saturday many of us waited a number of hours to listen to the Government press conference to hear what changes would be made and from when. The understanding we have at present is that from tomorrow we are in lockdown and that post-lockdown we will return into one of the three tiers, although it is unclear which tier Harrogate Borough Council would be in. What is clear among the brief advice we have at present is that part of the legislation will require places of worship to close and cease acts of worship however we can be open for private prayer.

The circuit staff have agreed that the Nidd Valley Circuit churches are now officially closed. The Methodist advice on private prayer is that we can continue to offer this space if it is our normal routine to do so. I am not aware that any of our churches is normally open in this capacity so, at least in the first instance, we do not expect to be offering this anywhere. Some of our buildings will remain open for education settings and support groups although we are seeking more clarity on what defines a 'support group' and what doesn't.

Please do bear with us as we seek clarification on different issues and await both Government and Methodist advice. In the meanwhile as a circuit team we are continuing to resource the weekly online service which this Sunday will include an act of remembrance which we hope the technology will allow us to get to be as near to 11am as we can. Please do note that as this Sunday is a special day the online service will be a little longer than usual. We also will continue to issue the brilliant weekly service sheets for those at home who cannot access the internet and to resource the Dial-a-thought line and change the message every Thursday (01423 648644). We have also agreed as a Staff Team that as from tomorrow (Thursday 5th November) until lockdown is lifted Morning Prayer will return to 6 mornings a week (Monday to Saturday).

You are in our thoughts and prayers at this difficult time and if you know of someone who won't receive this message via the internet, please find a way to get a copy to them. You could even phone them and read the message out. Please do also let one of the staff team know if there is anyone who the staff team can support at this difficult time. And please do pray for us as a circuit team as we seek to navigate the difficulties of this time.

Yours in Christ