



The **Methodist** Church

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## The Chelmsford Circuit

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### Aug 2020 Letter To Chelmsford Methodist Churches

To all members, friends and associates of the four Chelmsford Methodist Churches

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

I thought I should write to all members and friends of the churches in Chelmsford with an update on what might be happening in the lives of our churches as September approaches.

As August has gone by, and as the country has gradually been unlocked, the church has had to consider what happens in our congregations. Some in leadership in our Churches will have probably have found it easier to keep abreast of developments, but for those who feel that information has been scarce to come by – this letter is especially for you!

All of the Chelmsford Methodist churches (Broomfield, Hall Street, Moulsham Lodge, and Trinity), have been keeping a close eye on what might be best to do in terms of re-opening, as the Government allowed that possibility from 4<sup>th</sup> July onwards. There were discussions at that point in the churches and all decided to refrain from re-opening at that stage. In the beginning of August the situation was reviewed again. I am particularly grateful for the significant numbers of people who have helped these deliberations take place in such a thoughtful and careful manner - stewards, property, lettings and finance teams, and many more including feedback from the congregations.

Part of the reason for the reluctance to re-open too early has been the restrictions that are imposed upon us if we do open up. These things include: no singing, short services, social distancing with face coverings and refraining from close interaction with each. However, as time has gone by there has been a growing sense of needing to resume public worship, even if it entails restrictions that will make the services seem unfamiliar and difficult.

To that end the new Sept-Nov 2020 Methodist Preaching Plan has been made on the assumption that most Churches across the Circuit and all our Churches in Chelmsford will resume Sunday morning services (Hall Street have already started), and in some churches a mid-week fellowship as a second opportunity for fellowship will be offered. Towards the end of Aug there will be a gentle starting back with Moulsham Lodge, Trinity and Broomfield holding one service between the three of them for the first three weeks. If all goes well it is likely that after that we will resume weekly worship. (I am being slightly open-ended in my comments here because we still have some Church

Council meetings in the next few days where these plans will be finalised.) Of course any of these plans might be superseded by a resurgence in the virus, especially if we experience either a new local or national lock-down. It is important to realise that our services in these early months of return may feel quite different and unfamiliar.

All involved in making these decisions are very aware that some might feel this is too soon to re-open, conversely some would have wished to re-open earlier. Either way I think it is particularly important to bear with one another at this time. Please don't assume that if you are ready to come back to Church that everyone else will be feeling the same. There should be no sense of pressure on those who are not planning to come back to do so. Many have very good reasons for being cautious, include health conditions which may not be obvious, apparent or known about.

Partly because of this we are seeking to maintain our online YouTube services each week at 10am. They have been a source of encouragement to many and they not only serve those linked to our Churches, but they have potential for outreach as they are also available to a larger online constituency.

I do hope this letter will be of some re-assurance to you in these uncertain times. It comes with my warmest greetings and best wishes.

With every blessing,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mark" in a cursive style, with a long, sweeping horizontal line underneath.