

# woodgreenchurch

## Being Church during the Coronavirus Crisis

18<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Woodgreen Church Family,

We wanted to update you about the measures we're taking as a church in light of the latest guidance from the government aimed at combatting the spread of the Coronavirus. Last night we met as church leaders to talk and pray together. As a result we've agreed a number of changes to the way we will need to do church over the next few weeks.

**For the time being we've decided to suspend all our regular church activities. This decision is in line with the recommendation of the governing authorities God has established over us and who we are to submit to when their actions are for the public good (Romans 13:1-3).**

The government guidance has been very clear: everyone is being told to avoid social gatherings and unnecessary social contact. In Parliament on Monday Matt Hancock – the Health Secretary – confirmed that this guidance applies directly to churches. Yesterday the network of churches we belong to – the Fellowship of Independent Evangelical Churches – also advised all its 600 churches to immediately cease all gatherings. The reason behind this is to protect those who are elderly or vulnerable and also to mitigate the impact on the NHS.

Jesus told his disciples they were to love one another (John 13:34). He also said the second greatest commandment is that we are to love our neighbour as ourselves (Matthew 22:39). In the current crisis we believe the right way we can show love to one another and to our neighbour is by closing down all our church services, meetings, ministries and activities. This includes all our seniors ministries, our youth groups, our toddler groups and our Growth Groups. And yes, this also includes our Sunday morning and evening services.

However this does not mean that our church is closing down! It simply means that instead of face-to-face gatherings, we will need to use new and innovative ways to worship together, relate to each other, care for one another, and share the gospel with others. This crisis is an opportunity for us to grow in our love for God and for one another and for those around us who don't yet know Jesus.

Over the next few weeks we will need to learn to use the telephone more to stay in touch with one another and pray together. We will also utilise online tools and social media platforms to meet together and worship together. We will also be putting in place systems of pastoral care so we can look out for each other and support those who are needy and vulnerable. We will also want to build bridges with our neighbours and show our faith in Jesus through expressions of practical love. We've already started to put some plans in place to do all of these things and we will communicate these with you in the coming days. If you've received this letter directly you are on our email list but please also keep your eye on our facebook page and twitter and Instagram feeds.

For now:

- You should have received an email from Jess – our Pastoral Care Worker – about a Care Team we are putting in place to help those who are self-isolating and who do not have family support to help with their practical needs. Contact her if you can help with this: [jess@woodgreenchurch.co.uk](mailto:jess@woodgreenchurch.co.uk)
- We will also be sending out details of a Woodgreen labelled ‘help card’ in Church Matters this week that you can post through your neighbour’s doors to build bridges and show practical love.
- If you are a regular with us at Woodgreen, a church leader will be in regular telephone contact with you, to pray with you and encourage you from God’s word. We love you and want to do all we can to support you and pastor you from God’s Word during this uncertain time.
- We will also be encouraging Growth Group leaders to consider ways of helping those in their groups stay in touch with one another and even meet together using telephone conferencing, skype or zoom. If you are currently not part of a Growth Group but would like to be linked to one please contact Duncan: [duncan@woodgreenchurch.co.uk](mailto:duncan@woodgreenchurch.co.uk)
- We are also putting plans in place to broadcast a morning service at 10.30am every Sunday while we are unable to physically meet together. We will give you more details about this in the next few days. For now, please plan to join us at 10.30am online for a 45 minute service which will include all the normal things we do on Sundays - including something specifically for children. For the next three Sundays we will be looking at three ‘Psalms for Troubled Times’.

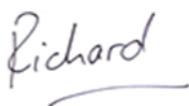
In Hebrews 10:23-25 the writer of Hebrews says this:

*‘Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on towards love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another – and all the more as you see the Day approaching.’*

These are uncertain times and it is natural to be anxious or fearful. However as believers we can have an unswerving faith because we have an unfailing Father. Whatever the next few weeks hold we can draw comfort and strength from the truth that *‘he who promised is faithful’*.

We do not know when we will next be able to meet together physically, but let’s do all we can to keep in touch with one another so that we can encourage each other and spur one another on. Let’s seek to use this season of distance from others to draw closer to our Father. And let’s also pray that God would use us to point others to Jesus, so that they can find the hope and comfort he gives and that makes all the difference at a time like this.

With much love in Christ,



Richard  
(On behalf of the elders)