



WEOLEY HILL UNITED REFORMED CHURCH

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Dear Friends,

Greetings and I hope this letter finds you well, even if our lives, as the lives of many around the world, have been suddenly turned upside down by this coronavirus or Covid-19.

In these extraordinary times, which we do not know how long they may last, I would like to assure you that we will continue to look after each other, care for each other and reach out in love to those who are most affected by the coronavirus. Even when we have to practise social distancing or are in self-isolation, in spirit we will remain close, sharing our faith and hope that we do not face the challenges alone. We are the church, which is not a building but a people, united in good times and in difficult times, trusting that God will be with us to carry us through these anxious and unsettling times.

As your Elder has conveyed to you, unfortunately we have to suspend our worship services and all our church meetings/activities for the time being, as long as the corona crisis continues. However, we want to try to keep in touch with each other as much as we can by various means and also find ways to continue share in prayer and devotion. So what we are planning/suggesting:

- 1) Your Elder will phone you or email you to find out how you are doing and if you need any help. And you can phone your Elder or me any time you need to have a chat, need a prayer or any practical help. We do not want you to feel isolated.
- 2) The newsletter (or a newsheet) will be prepared which will be sent by email or through the post to all members and friends. We can prepare more regular newsheets to keep in touch. Do send in copy to Cheryl (or let your Elder or me know) if you have any news to share! You can also think of a poem, a prayer, a story or even a recipe that you want to share!
- 3) You can sign up for URC daily devotionals at <https://devotions.urc.org.uk/> A weekly service will also be made available with several well-known URC ministers leading the worship. If you are not online but would like to receive a paper copy of the worship let Cheryl or me know.
- 4) As suggested by Bournville URC, we can all pray at the same time in our homes on a Sunday morning, then we still feel we are together. The Bournville congregation will pray at 10.45am. We, the Weoley Hill congregation, could pray at 11am, keeping each other and all who we feel concerned about or we want to give thanks for in our thoughts and prayers.
- 5) I will also prepare some seasonal meditations and prayers that I will send out to you. Perhaps I will also find a Bible quiz to challenge you!

If you have any suggestions what else we can do to support and encourage each other, let me know! And let me end with a reflection from an Irish priest, Fr Richard Hendrick, which I received today in my email "inbox" and would like to share with you.

Lockdown

Yes, there is fear.

Yes, there is isolation.

Yes, there is panic buying.

Yes, there is sickness.

Yes, there is even death.

*But, they say that in Wuhan after so many years of noise
you can hear the birds again.*

*They say that after just a few weeks of quiet
the sky is no longer thick with fumes,
but blue and grey and clear.*

*They say that in the streets of Assisi
people are singing to each other
across the empty squares,
keeping their windows open
so that those who are alone
may hear the sounds of family around them.*

*They say that a hotel in the West of Ireland
is offering free meals and delivery to the housebound.*

All over the world people are slowing down and reflecting.

All over the world people are looking at their neighbours in a new way.

*All over the world people are waking up to a new reality
to how big we really are.*

To how little control we really have.

To what really matters.

To Love.

So we pray and we remember that

Yes there is fear.

But there does not have to be hate.

Yes there is isolation.

But there does not have to be loneliness.

Yes there is panic buying.

But there does not have to be meanness.

Yes there is sickness.

But there does not have to be disease of the soul

Yes there is even death.

But there can always be a rebirth of love.

Wake to the choices you make as to how to live now.

Today, breathe.

Listen, behind the factory noises of your panic

The birds are singing again

The sky is clearing,

Spring is coming,

And we are always encompassed by Love.

Open the windows of your soul

And though you may not be able

to touch across the empty square,

Sing.

Keeping you all in my thoughts and prayers. With all best wishes, *Leonora*