

# North Warwickshire Pastorate

Minister: Revd Dr Allan Smith FRSA

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19 March 2020

Dear friends,

As you will be aware by now, we have had to make the decision to suspend our gatherings across all four churches in the Pastorate in response to the advice given by our parent churches and the Government in the face of the Coronavirus epidemic. These are challenging and uncertain times, but we do not have to stop being Church even if we cannot meet together in the normal way.

## **How do we keep being Church?**

Firstly, we can care for each other. Even if we have to isolate ourselves physically we have the technology to stay in contact with each other by phone, email and even video (for those who have smartphones and computers!). We are working on making sure that we are in touch with everyone to see how you are, if you have support and if there is anything that we can do to help. If you are not self-isolating it may be that you can offer to run errands, get a little shopping in or fetch a prescription for those that are – and not just among our church family. But most importantly, talk to each other – most of us have phones and it only takes a few moments to ring a friend or neighbour and ask ‘How are you? Is there anything you need?’

Secondly, we can pray. Prayer doesn’t stop because we cannot meet, if anything we have been gifted with more time to pray now than we normally have. So let’s use the time well. At Nuneaton URC we have started to stop for a few minutes at 12 noon on Thursdays for pray wherever we happen to be (as far as possible) – perhaps this can be a discipline for us all in the coming weeks. Pray for those who are vulnerable, those who are sick, those who work in healthcare, those who provide the services that keep us going through such times as this – from the staff at the supermarkets to the delivery drivers – and those who work to keep us safe, the police, the Fire Service and the ambulance services. Pray for those who will face financial difficulties through the impact of the epidemic and the efforts to contain it.

Thirdly, we can still meet in spirit. There are resources being produced by the National Church to help worship at home, and which we can use while being aware that we are joining with others not present with us. You should receive this week’s service sheets from the Methodist Church and the URC with this letter. In the coming weeks we may even be able to produce our own. But we are also trying something new – we will hold a short service by phone conference on Sunday morning at 10:30 am. This can be accessed from any phone. It will last between 15 and 20 minutes, and is a standard rate call – so it may be included in your call plan (many have free weekend calls) but should be no more than a call to your family (and we are part of the family of God!). It may sound very different from normal, but those who have tried it so far have all found it quite easy.

*All you have to do is:*

- 1) Phone 0330 088 1939 at (or just before) 10:30 on Sunday morning
- 2) when you are asked for an ‘access number’ dial or key in 874474# (don’t forget the ‘#’ at the end)
- 3) you may then be asked to announce yourself – just say your name – and then you will be connected to rest of us

If you are the first person to phone in you will hear some 'hold music' but hopefully not for too long. We may, of course, have some hiccups with this service as it is a new adventure – but it does give us a chance to pray along with each other. There is a way to join in over the internet if you have a suitable computer – email me at [allan.smith@urcnorthwarwickshire.org.uk](mailto:allan.smith@urcnorthwarwickshire.org.uk) for details.

If you are not able to join in the worship by phone then please set aside some time at 10:30 on Sunday morning and worship along with the rest of us in our various ways. There will also be services being broadcast by the BBC on local radio and BBC1 – which offer another way to worship together.

### **Remember this is temporary**

We don't know when we will be able to start gathering in our church buildings again, but we will in time. But a worldwide virus outbreak does not mean that Jesus has fallen off his throne! He remains King and we are a people of hope who constantly look forward to the day when he will bring sorrow and sickness to an end and make all things new.

In the meantime we are called to live our daily lives in a way that demonstrates that he really is our Lord and our Saviour.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written:

'For your sake we face death all day long;  
we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.'

No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

*Romans 8:35-39 (NIVUK)*

**Keep in touch with one another, help how and where you can, and keep praying for each other.**

May God bless and protect us,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Allan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Allan.

**To join our North Warwickshire Pastorate Sunday Morning  
Worship by phone:**

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