

Pastoral Letter #24 v2 | 5th January 2022

Dear Friends,

In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered. All went to their own towns to be registered. Joseph also went from the town of Nazareth in Galilee to Judea, to the city of David called Bethlehem. Luke 2: 1, 3-4a (NRSVA)

Rumours in Nazareth?

I wonder how Nazareth heard about the decree to be registered. Was it expected? Had it been rumoured about by the Nazorean press? Was the Nazorean Times the first to break the story? Did the news come to Nazareth with immediate clarity, or was there uncertainty, disbelief and confusion?

As we journey into 2022 we are once again in a space of uncertainty. What will the next weeks and months look like? Will we - or won't we - face more 'restrictions' in our navigating this pandemic? Will vaccinations and boosters be enough to hold back Omicron? Much like Nazareth may have been, uncertainty and confusion seem once again to be crowding around us.

Confidence, Clarity & Collaboration

The mutation of Omicron has once again heightened that uncertainty. For the moment our government have confirmed they are not making any changes, but encourage caution and that changes could still be necessary.

Therefore, I want to take this opportunity to do what I can to nurture confidence and clarity amongst us about how we might navigate the coming weeks. Of course, this is all subject to any changes in official guidance or legislation.

Things are different than they were...

We once again have never been this way before. Unlike the start of 2021, we have vaccines, as well as lateral flow tests which help warn of individual infectiousness.

And things are different among us too. Over the last 18 months we have developed robust risk assessments and practices based on official guidance and learning from our experience. Despite having some covid cases linked to our buildings and/or congregations during 2021, the mitigations we have in place have contributed towards there not being a local outbreak.

To your credit, you have shown your love for your neighbour by following the guidance of our oversight teams and stewards. Thank you for all you have done already to care for one another and nurture trust among us.

Approaching the coming weeks...

We are once again in a position where we must redouble our efforts to care for one another and continue to entrust each other.

We will **maintain posted worship material**, as well as the option for worship at home by joining the onsite congregation at Felpham online/by phone.

We **do not** expect places of worship to be asked to close buildings and no such conversations have been held at a local level at this stage. At the moment the only scenario where there is potential for this to become necessary would be as a result of reacting to local leaders self-isolating or a local outbreak connected to the building.

Subject to any changes to official guidance or legislation, **our current approach is to continue with activity, including onsite worship**, so long as:

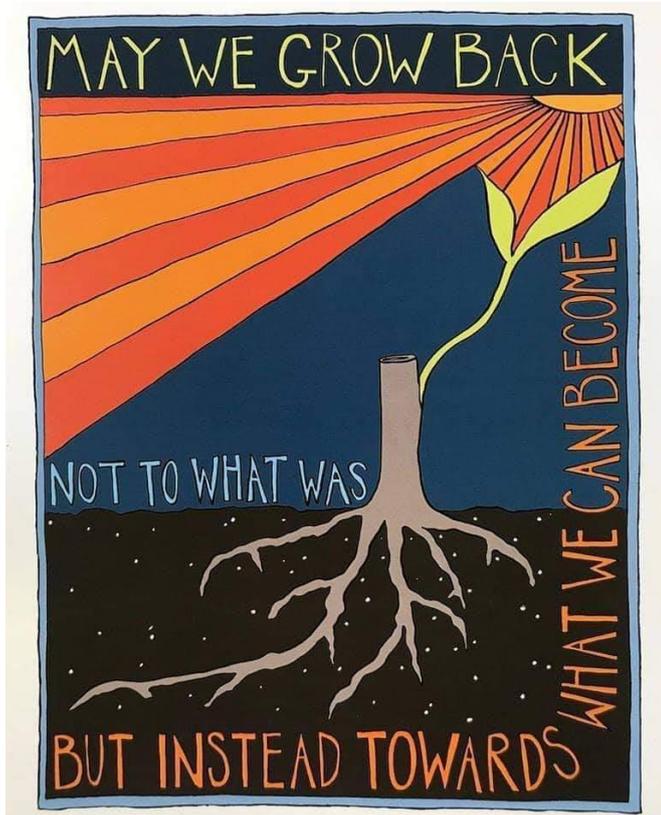
1. It is within the law.
2. We can safely & sensibly do so while adhering to official guidance.
3. We have the necessary team to lead and maintain safety.
4. Activity will not have a detrimental impact on wellbeing.

For our buildings themselves this will continue to be monitored by those whom trustees have delegated covid oversight, collaborating and consulting with others as appropriate.

For **church or 3rd party groups** meeting in our buildings: you yourselves have that responsibility. Our oversight teams, and myself, are always ready and willing to support groups in their own considerations.

As a result of the above approach to maintain activity as much as is safe and sensible, I need to emphasise that this does not mean anyone should feel forced to come into our buildings, or to serve as part of teams facilitating services or events. So long as it is feasible to do so, **we want to entrust you to be able to make your own personal decisions on what feels right for your own wellbeing**. If you are among our teams' facilitating services or events and no longer feel able to do so, know that no-one will judge you for feeling this way. Please indicate this (or if you have need to self-isolate) to whoever oversees the rota/team you are on and alternative arrangements will be made.

As we continue to journey on I pray you know the peace, hope, joy and love of God as we begin this new year together. ***In love and grace, Rev Dan Balsdon***



January News & Updates

Worship Together Booklets

Your Worshipping Together booklet for **January** is enclosed. Please do take time to use Worshipping Together in whatever way works for you to spend time in worship, knowing you are Worshipping together with others across the circuit.

Prayer Guide

Please find enclosed our **Let's Pray Every Day** prayer guide for January.

WhatsApp Prayer Group

If you use WhatsApp please do join our WhatsApp prayer group.

Join the Prayer Group: Send a text or WhatsApp message to 07858 139672.

Submit a Prayer Request: Send a text or WhatsApp msg to 07858 139672, or phone or email Dan: dan.balsdon@methodist.org.uk | 01243 823895
Where possible please have permission from those prayers are requested for.

Rev Dan's Rest Day

Since the pandemic Dan's rest days have been movable feasts – but from now on Dan is trying to resume taking Monday as a rest day. When he needs to work on Monday's, it will move – often to a Friday or Saturday.

Felpham – 9am Communion Services

From 6th Feb we will be resuming our First Sunday of the Month Communion services. All welcome at 9am for a reflective time of worship together.

Worship for January

Below is a summary of services for our section of the circuit for January.

Felpham's 10:30am service will continue to also be available by phone and zoom on the Together Channel (access details below).

January 2022	9th	16th	23rd	30th
Morning Worship @ 10:30am Bognor Regis	Rev Dan Balsdon <i>Communion</i>	Bob Sneddon	Roy Firth	Stephen Waters
Morning Worship @ 10:30am Streamed by zoom and phone + onsite @ Felpham	Margaret Thompson	Liz Bates	Rev Dan Balsdon	Malcolm Lindo
Morning Worship @ 10:30am Westergate	Stephen Waters	Rev Dan Balsdon <i>Communion</i>	Joy Barnes	Katherine Suttie

Zoom Access detail via phone or mobile (audio connection only)

Landline or mobile phone. Call cost will be charged at your standard rate.

Please contact Dan if you need any additional support to access zoom

> **Step 1** Call one of the Dial in by phone numbers.

(it shouldn't matter which number you call. Occasionally one number doesn't work, please hang up and try another number)

📞 **0330 088 5830**

📞 **0203 481 5240**

📞 **0208 080 6592**

📞 **0131 460 1196**

📞 **0203 901 7895**

📞 **0203 481 5237**

📞 **0208 080 6591**

> **Step 2** Enter the **meeting ID** as distributed followed by **#**.

10:30am Together Worship ID: **878 7997 8475**

> **Step 3** (Optional) You will be offered opportunity to add a participant ID, or you can skip this step by pressing **#**

> **Step 4** Enter the **meeting password** as distributed followed by **#**.

10:30am Together Worship password: **47 33 52**