West Sussex Area Ministry, United Reformed Church (Billingshurst, Petworth and Pulborough)

Dear Friends 18th March 2020

We find ourselves in strange times… anxious and confusing times for many of us. I am writing with news of how our churches are responding, and assurance that we will be staying in touch and supporting everybody as far as we possibly can.

I am sorry to say that for now we have had to suspend worship and other church activities within our church buildings, but as we all know, the real church is not the building but the community of people who worship together and try to support one another. So our priority now must be each other and the wider community of people around us.

I have spoken with the Elders from each congregation and agreed some things to do, starting immediately, to keep us all in contact with each other, to share news and concerns, and to help us to worship in our own homes. The Elders and I will try to keep in touch with everyone by phone, and of course you are more than welcome to phone any of us for a chat. I would encourage you to call your friends too - a familiar voice on the phone is always good. I am hoping to produce a weekly ‘Bulletin’ with news of the church family, the Bible readings, and a reflection on the theme for each Sunday. All sorts of things may be added to this as we go on, and hopefully it will be possible to deliver it through the letter boxes of those who don’t have email access. We don’t want to bother any of you, so please just let us know if you would prefer not to receive phone calls or emails. On the other hand, if you are in need, please let us know and we will see if there is anything we can do to help.

There are various opportunities to worship with others via TV, radio and online - the BBC is talking about doing more religious broadcasts, so watch out for those. I will provide details of online resources in a few days time.

I wanted to let you all know the sad news from Pulborough that we have unexpectedly lost two very dear members of our church family - John Fooks and Audrey Gray both died at the beginning of this week (not from the virus), and will be very much missed. Tributes and details of funeral arrangements to follow in due course. I will personally miss them both very much.

Blessings

Anne Lewitt

p.s. Joyce has asked me to let Pulborough people know, but it is relevant to all, that as our income drops without weekly offertories, it would be helpful if those people who are regular envelope givers AND gift-aiders could set up weekly standing orders to the church bank account for the time being. Further details from your Church Treasurer if needed.