



Mission News

A roadmap - Being church in a post pandemic world

Surely not another roadmap? Not another plan? Anything but more initiatives to pile onto already exhausted churches!

The beginning of the end of the third national coronavirus lockdown seems tentatively to be arriving. Most children are back at school. The outdoor rule of six is promised in just a couple weeks. Some of us are looking forward to a new era of gathering, as of an Easter garden, upper room or Pentecost. Others dread the risk assessments, the half-life of masked songless sanitised worship, the anxiety of mixing. The dread of Calvary, tumult of Holy Week and isolation of Gethsemane overwhelm us and block out the distant hope of all things made new.

And yet we are still called to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ *for such a time as this*.

As the footsteps of the risen Christ tread our covid-scarred neighbourhoods, what does His instruction to *learn, change and join in* with God-at-work mean for us as Methodist people, churches and circuits? Even as we ache and grieve, God has called us, placed us, and equipped us.

Over the coming months I will lay out a suggested roadmap for churches (and disciples) of all shapes, sizes and flavours. A path to being church in and for a post pandemic but covid-changed world. Being people of gospel hope from a place of lament. If you are game for this holy adventure, let me know what you discover.

Stage One – Get Listening

We don't start with the answers. We don't need to know what is good for our community. We don't need to do things. We must first listen.

Spend the next few weeks listening – listen to your family, your friends, your colleagues, your neighbours, your communities, your networks.

Listen to how people are feeling, what they fear, what they hope for, what brings them joy, what takes their mood down. Listen for the voice of God. Be conversational, of course, but what you hear matters more than what you say.

Start with one of these, or one of your own:

- [Chat with your neighbour](#). What is the mood on your street?
- [Ask your local councillor](#). What does our neighbourhood need?
- [Consult the cloud](#). Join your neighbourhood Facebook group. Ask “what gives you hope right now?”
- [Organise a prayer walk](#). (When permitted) walk as you talk with 5 others
- [Look for the lonely](#). Act on an impulse to write to, phone or message someone
- [Mark the moment](#). How do people feel about 29th March?

Listen to as many people as you can, especially people beyond church – this may be many, or just a few. Reflect on what they say or do not say. Hold them in prayer before God. Do any passages of scripture, songs, or hymns seem relevant? Note down anything that feels important. Are there any patterns. How does what you have heard make you feel? Share what you are hearing (respecting things said in confidence) with people from your discipleship group or church.

And that is Stage One of our roadmap to being church in a post pandemic world. **Get listening.** Nothing more. And the more you listen the more you will hear. And the more prepared you will be for Stage Two.

We recommit daily, using the words of our Methodist Way of Life “We will look and listen for God in Scripture, and the world.”

Neil Harland, Mission Development Support