

A message to the Guernsey churches

23 January 2020

Dear all,

Covid-19 infection: response from the Guernsey church leaders

The Guernsey church leaders¹ met by Zoom on Saturday afternoon, following the briefing by the States of Guernsey on the discovery of possible community seeding of Covid-19. I am writing to you on their behalf.

Whilst there has been no direction that church buildings should be closed, we suggest that it is appropriate that public worship should cease immediately and until the Civil Contingency Authority lifts the restrictions announced today. The life and worship of our churches will continue in private prayer, in live-streamed services, in our pastoral care of those who are vulnerable, and in other ways in which we can serve our community safely.

In our care and concern for the whole community of these islands, we have announced the following decisions on behalf of the churches we represent and lead:

- All public worship in all our churches will be suspended with immediate effect and until we are advised that it is safe to resume public worship;
- Most church buildings will remain closed, except for access by those preparing for, or officiating at, live-streamed services; and
- Anyone entering a church building will be asked to record their names and contact details, to assist the States' staff in 'track and trace'.

Whilst we cannot direct all churches and Christian fellowships to follow this advice, we hope earnestly that all will do so.

We are grateful for the decision that churches may be used for funeral services, subject to the detailed guidance to be issued by the States of Guernsey.

We encourage everybody who is invited to receive a vaccination to take up the offer, so that the community as a whole can be protected from further infection. We do, however, recognise that some have reservations about the vaccine; we encourage them to talk to their medical practitioner and consult bona-fide resources rather than some of the mis-information being spread on social media.

Finally, we express our warmest thanks to the staff of the States of Guernsey and our political leaders for their prompt response and their unambiguous message today. We offer our prayers for them and for all the people of Guernsey, that, by working together, our islands can once again enjoy the freedom and security that we have valued so much.

With our thanks for our shared fellowship in the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ and our prayers for each of you as you respond to this unexpected change to our common life,

Yours sincerely

Tim Barker

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¹ The Guernsey church leaders are the Very Revd Tim Barker (Dean of Guernsey), the Revd Dr David Coulter (Church of Scotland), Major Jamie Hill (Salvation Army), the Revd Nicole Le Goupillot (Elim Channel Islands Regional Leader), Pastor John Ogier (Baptist churches), Fr Chris Rutledge (Catholic Dean of Guernsey), the Revd Howard Stringer (Superintendent Minister of the Methodist Church in Guernsey)

