

Dear Friends,

As you will have noticed, Coronavirus briefings, which once appeared daily are now as uncommon as fuel tankers! That is because there have been few developments and not much news to pass on to you. But we are still here and available to answer your queries.

It is an odd time. On the one hand most people seem to have resumed normal lives as if the pandemic were over. On the other hand infection rates remain stubbornly high (especially in Ribble Valley, Lancaster and Wyre) and still the figures show that several hundred people a week are dying of Covid-19. Now is not the time to allow complacency to creep in, and we remain grateful to our parishes who have almost all acted with great wisdom in staying safe and great courage in continuing to offer worship to God and service to their communities.

Making Local Arrangements

As we know there are no restrictions on how worship is offered with decisions about issues such as social distancing, face mask wearing and the common cup all made locally. This of course makes for a complex pattern of practice across the diocese and continues to place pressure on clergy and lay leaders who are making the decisions.

There is no easy answer to this, and parishes must continue to make judgements based on context. We heard recently about a Parish that decided to close for one Sunday because of a huge spike in local rates and a number of (unrelated) infections within the congregation. This was a wise move in their situation. Please remember to send a note to Bishop Julian if you feel the need to do similarly.

Please also remember that the Coronavirus Task Group email address is still live and Archdeacons and Area Deans are available if you need to talk things through with someone beyond the Parish.

Self-Testing

As infection rates in the North West remain stubbornly high, we would strongly recommend that clergy continue to test themselves regularly with a lateral flow test. For obvious reasons it is especially wise to do this on Saturday night or first thing Sunday morning.

Church of England Guidance

The latest advice from the Church of England is [here](#). There is some advice about Remembrance Sunday but it doesn't tell us very much!

#HopePod Podcasts

These are a series of podcasts inspired by our three Unlock themes: Lament, Mission, Thanksgiving. The first can be viewed [here](#) and is on the theme of welcome.

Online Worship this Week

This Sunday is the first day of [Prisons Week](#), a time in which we are asked to pray for prisoners, prison staff and chaplains and victims of crime. There is a multi-lingual service for prisons week on the Diocesan YouTube Channel [here](#). It is led by the Revd Sarah Gill with Bishop Philip preaching.

And a reminder that Blackburn Cathedral continue to make an act of worship available every Sunday from 9am. You can view this on the [Cathedral YouTube Channel](#) or on [Facebook](#).

Coronavirus Email Address

If you have questions or problems and can't find answers on the [advice compendium](#) please email: coronavirus@blackburn.anglican.org.

A prayer

We are not people of fear:
we are people of courage.
We are not people who protect our own safety:
we are people who protect our neighbours' safety.
We are not people of greed:
we are people of generosity.
We are your people God,
giving and loving,
wherever we are,
whatever it costs
For as long as it takes
wherever you call us.

Amen.

Yours,
Coronavirus Task Group