

Dear Friends,

The news that the roadmap out of lockdown has been delayed and that existing restrictions will remain in place until at least July 19 was predictable but is still dispiriting. We are aware of growing frustration around the Diocese, especially around the measures we continue to have to implement around worship, with patience clearly starting to wear thin.

Our own region has been especially badly hit by the Delta variant which lies behind this delay with very high rates in some of our more urban areas. Other parts of the county, of course, have extremely low rates which will doubtless be adding to people's sense of frustration. All we can do is reiterate the same old messages – continued patience and gentle reminders that we are all in this together.

Delay to the National Roadmap

The existing regulations are now in place until July 19. A statement from the Bishop of London who chairs the Church of England's Recovery Group can be found [here](#).

Weddings

One of the few only steps taken to relax the restrictions concerns weddings.

The attendance limit of 30 at weddings has now been amended. Attendance now is restricted to the number who can attend worship according to your own local risk assessment, ensuring social distancing.

Singing

We know that this is a source of ongoing frustration, especially as we watch football fans singing their hearts out in stadia and pubs!

There is still no change to the guidance, so congregational singing is not permitted and amateur choirs are limited to six. The National Recovery Group remains in constant dialogue with Government over this so please do not think that nothing is being done.

Self-Isolation

With infection rates increasing especially amongst the young, a growing number of our clergy are being asked to isolate.

- If you are asked to self-isolate, please drop us a line at the Coronavirus email address.
- Remember that all parishes should be in local networks to enable cover and mutual support in the case of self-isolation or infection.

Social Cohesion

The initial name given by the media to the delta variant combined to its prevalence in particular parts of East Lancashire has led to pressures on social cohesion and a tendency in some places to blame others for the roadmap delay. This is something that as Churches we need to resist, not least because infection rates are roughly similar amongst different demographics in the worst affected areas. The association is with poverty and over-crowded housing, not ethnicity.

A request for assistance

Pennystone Court Care Home in Blackpool needs volunteers to help with lateral flow testing and are asking if people in any of our churches can help. The commitment is a minimum of just two hours a week with some online training and an assessment in-house before you would begin the work. If you think you can support the home in this way contact Gloria Birdsall, Chaplain, whose number can be obtained by emailing the coronavirus email address given below.

Online Worship this Sunday

An Act of Worship from Blackburn Cathedral will be available every Sunday from 9am. You can view this on the [Cathedral YouTube Channel](#) or on [Facebook](#).

You can visit the A Church Near You website to find other online services.

Coronavirus Email Address

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

Keep us, good Lord,
under the shadow of your mercy
in this time of uncertainty and distress.
Sustain and support the anxious and fearful,
and lift up all who are brought low;
that we may rejoice in your comfort
knowing that nothing can separate us from your love
in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Amen.

Yours,
Coronavirus Task Group