

Dear Friends,

The Bishops and Archdeacons, along with the Dean and Bishop's Chaplain, said Morning Prayer together on Zoom today and we were struck with the irony of the line from the New Testament reading in which the Letter to the Hebrews rebukes those who 'neglect to meet together.' Chance would be a fine thing, was our first thought!

I'm sure that by now each one of us is starting to miss ordinary contact with other people, especially those with whom we normally pray. It is important to remember that when we pray we are lifted out of time and space into another, heavenly realm. The profound communion we find in prayer goes way beyond the confines of physical proximity and constitutes a profound unity with the Lord and so with each other. I hope we can feel that deep and continued communion with each other as we maintain the discipline of prayer in these strange times.

The senior clergy recorded some videos before the recent restrictions on movement were brought in. Bishop Philip features in the one we are sharing today which can be found [here](#).

Today's briefing contains advice on the following:

- This Sunday
- Staying fit and healthy
- Using social media
- Information from the Property Department

You will be pleased to hear that the flow of advice is going to start to slow down slightly. This will give us space to re-organise it on the website so that you can immediately find the area you are looking for.

Advice was sent to clergy only this afternoon on ministering to people who were close to death. To accompany this we have provided some prayers for families which can be used with a dying relative. These can on be found on the website [here](#).

This Sunday

Many of you will be thinking about how you provide some sort of worship or Christian input for your people in Sunday. There seem to us to be three options:

- To send round a resource that people can use to pray in their own homes. A great deal is available for this, and Neil Kelley has provided a weekly resource for this which can be found on the [website](#).
- To livestream from your own home. If you are doing this or if you have been very foresightful and pre-recorded worship for this or subsequent Sundays, please could you send an email to coronavirus@blackburn.anglican.org? You may also wish to register with A Church Near You (see link below).
- To recommend to your people others who are livestreaming. You can find a list [here](#):

Staying fit and healthy in the 'lockdown'

We know that the current measures laid out by the government are to last three weeks, but we do not know what measures will continue after that period ends. One of the things deemed essential enough to continue in this current state of 'lockdown' is a daily opportunity for outdoor exercise. This is because inactivity, particularly during a stressful or difficult time, is not good for the body or the mind, and exercise is one of the best ways to relieve stress, clear minds and even aid good sleep.

This opportunity to exercise will look different for each and every one of us. For some it is a stroll to the end of the street and back, for others it might be a dog walk through the forest, for others still it might be a 10K run before breakfast; each of us know our preference and our limits. Whatever your ability is in this regard the task group would like to encourage you to take up your opportunity to exercise daily, but to do so safely and maintaining social distancing measures.

We are acutely aware that some of you will not be able to leave the house, possibly for some time yet. Taking some time outside in a garden if possible is a good option. Gardening is for many people an excellent way of staying fit.

But there are also many ways to get exercise without even leaving your front room. TV personalities and YouTube stars are falling over themselves to produce videos encouraging us to get active in our own homes; even Mr Motivator has returned to our TV screens! All energy levels are catered for: from a [workout for the whole family](#), to a [dance class with Oti Mabuse](#) for single people or couples, to [chair exercises](#). For Oti's dance class be sure to click on the videos for adults as she is also doing dance classes for children each day.

Thinking about what you eat and when is also important as most of us become less active than usual. We are allowed to shop and are encouraged to shop for a week at a time where possible. Planning your meals, making sure to get lots of fruit and vegetables and not stocking up on too many unhealthy snacks might be a good idea.

Your mental wellbeing is just as important to look after as your physical health. Yesterday we sent out advice on establishing a new routine, but there are other things that you can do to keep a healthy mind. Physical exercise in the fresh air is one of those, but so is making sure you speak to people via phone or video call. The constant news about the impact of the virus around the world can be troubling, so whilst it is good to stay informed, there may be a time where it would be better to switch off and change your focus. Similarly, social media can be good for maintaining connections, but it can also be a terrible source of anxiety, fake news and angst. Think carefully not just about what you choose to read, but also what you write and put out in the public domain.

Maintaining a regular time of prayer and Bible study can help you establish a daily routine and can also remind you that there is someone bigger than even this, and that He wants to meet with us where we are.

Please, if you are starting to become anxious or worried about your health in any way, do contact the group via the coronavirus@blackburn.anglican.org email address or phone someone who has pastoral care over you.

Social media use

It has been good to watch how social media platforms have been used in new and exciting ways to engage with communities. It can, as we know, also be used for harm and we would want to advise against any use of social media which may promote upset, angst or discord at this time. If the powers and authorities make decisions which you disagree with, you should be able to voice your concern, but please remember to always do it in a way that is factually accurate, remembers that they too are under stress and strain, and above all is loving and kind.

Information from the Property Department

(Only of relevance to those occupying DBF managed properties such as vicarages and curate's houses.)

To increase social distancing and limit contact we will be introducing a new protocol to help manage and maintain our repairs and maintenance service.

All reported repairs will now be categorised and prioritised as follows;

1. **Emergency** (such as a severe water leak, major electrical failure (not a power cut), exposed electrical wires, no heating or hot water).
2. **Urgent** (such as blocked drains, water leak which can be contained, minor electrical faults).
3. **Routine** (such as low priority internal and external repairs).
4. **Quinquennial Inspection work.**
5. **Planned improvement and programmed work.**

If you can smell gas or have a concern regarding a gas leak, please contact National Gas Emergencies immediately on 0800 111 999.

To balance our Contractors safety along with our responsibilities to protect our staff, occupants and also to prevent the spread of the virus we will be assessing all reported repairs to gauge the priority of the work and whether we need to instruct our contractors to attend.

Where possible we will ask our Contractors to make contact with the building occupant with a view to providing over the phone advice to resolve the problem. This may work in certain circumstances such as where a boiler may need resetting or where an electrical fuse has tripped out. This may also work as a temporary measure until such a time as an appropriate repair can be carried out.

Where a site visit is required, we will need our Contractors to make direct contact with the building occupant on the day of visit, to check and ensure that the appointment can still go ahead. This will be providing that the Contractor and the building occupants are not showing any signs of the Covid-19 virus.

Where the appointment does take place we will need our Contractors to follow the Governments most current advice for social distancing protocols, such as avoiding contact within two metres, using hand sanitiser and washing of hands for a minimum of 20 seconds with soap and water before entering and upon leaving the appointment.

If the building occupants do not want the appointment to proceed, the appointment can be rearranged accordingly to suit the situation. This information should be conveyed to the Property Department so the information can be logged onto the Property System.

Finally...

Once again, enormous thanks to all of you – clergy and also lay leaders and LLMs – who are working with such courage to keep the show on the road.

Any question or queries or to report self-isolation, 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,

Bishop Philip and the Coronavirus Task Group