

Dear Friends,

Deep within the human psyche lies the need to justify ourselves. So in the midst of lockdown, when a great deal of routine ministry is suspended, it can be tempting to generate endless activity and make countless plans.

But it is Jesus who justifies us. It would be wonderful if lockdown provided us with the space to remember that we don't need to earn his approval through the depth and perceived quality of our ministry. He loves you anyway!

Many churches are now busily making plans for Advent and Christmas. This is right and good and much to be encouraged because the nation will desperately need to hear the message of hope in the midst of the darkness of this winter.

But, as yet, we have no clear guidance and no idea what regulations will be governing our lives in December. We don't even know if we'll be allowed out carol-singing! This means that any plans you make will be subject to cancellation or last-minute amendment.

So, don't invest all your emotional energy into what you are planning or you risk crushing disappointment when things have to be changed. Focus instead on the deep truth of Christmas – that Jesus enters into the lives of those who have no capacity to justify themselves to set them free through an act of reckless grace

Sunday Worship

- We continue to tour round the Diocese for our Sunday morning Diocesan Service. This week we will be joining the people of St Leonard's, Padiham for a service led by Canon Mark Jones. It can be viewed from 9am on Sunday on the [Diocesan YouTube Channel](#).
- And as usual the Cathedral will be broadcasting a service from 9am. Simply tune in to the [Cathedral webpage](#).

Weekly Message

This week's message has been recorded by Bishop Jill. Please go to the [Diocese YouTube Channel](#) to watch.

Pastoral Visiting - Updated Church of England Guidance

There is a helpful update on the Church of England website on pastoral visiting. There have been a number of questions about this to the coronavirus email but the advice makes it clear that pastoral visiting is work and thus permissible during the lockdown. There is clear advice about how to conduct visits safely. [You can find all this advice here.](#)

Advent and Christmas

We do not yet have guidance on Advent and Christmas because it is not possible to write it until we know what Government regulations will follow on after the lockdown.

Meanwhile many people are feeling overwhelmed by the sheer number of ideas out there, all excellent. Don't try and do everything! Pick one or two things that best suit your context and do them well.

If you want to discuss this with others, don't forget the closed Facebook Group with helpful discussions about Christmas and advent ideas, where the discussion is rich and varied.

Please email joy.rushton@blackburn.anglican.org to gain entry.

A Diocesan resource for Advent

'A Child Shall Lead Them' is a beautifully produced booklet with reflections for each day on the Book of Isaiah. It includes contributions from all three Bishops and a wide range of other voices from across the diocese.

If you would like copies, please email Siobhan.trickett@blackburn.anglican.org. Up to twenty copies can be mailed out. If you would like more you will need to make arrange to collect them from Clayton House, Walker Business Park, Blackburn, BB1 2QE.

From the DBE: Collective Worship for Advent and Christmas

The Board of Education team with Bishop Philip has made four acts of Collective Worship, three on Advent themes and a Christmas Special. Each lasts around ten minutes and includes teaching and prayer. These are aimed at Primary Schools but will have other uses, for example children's groups, Sunday schools, all-age services or in the home. There is also an accompanying resource booklet written by Lisa Horobin.

The videos are available [here on the DBE website](#) or on the [Diocesan YouTube Channel](#). The booklet will be available to download for free [here on the DBE website](#) from 30th November.

Advent Carol Service from Blackburn Cathedral

The Cathedral will be broadcasting an Advent Carol Service with the boys', girls' and young people's choirs at 4pm on Advent Sunday, November 30th. You will be able to view it by linking from the [Cathedral webpage](#).

Free Musical Resources for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany

The Church of England has put together a collection of over 70 pieces of music for Advent, Christmas and Epiphany. These include hymns, carols, worship songs, organ voluntaries and children's music for you to download. You will find these on A Church Near You website [here](#), where the tracks and videos are free for you to use in your services this winter.

'Call to Pray and Give' Continues

Our Diocesan Call to Pray and Give initiative continues all this week and into next week.

As part of this you can join in with prayer every evening on Zoom at 7pm alongside people from across the Diocese and led by a member of the Bishop's Leadership Team. We ask that our prayers might inspire people to make a one off sacrificial gift to their Parish so that the ministry of the church can continue through this crisis.

We have also prepared a wide range of resources, including some great video reflections and even a podcast.

All ages are catered for - including videos and other downloadable resources for children and young people. You'll find everything for Call to Pray and Give gathered on one handy webpage, including details of how to book for evening prayer. [Access it all here.](#)

Free Church Fundraising Toolkit

The Ecclesiastical Insurance Group has launched a new addition to its fundraising hub called 'Fundraising in a Box.' This includes:

- Step-by-step guides to help you navigate the uniquely complex world of church fundraising
- Clear guidance and steps to make your churches fundraising journey easier and more successful
- Support for you and your church volunteers whether experienced in fundraising or learning on the go.

The toolkit 'Fundraising in a Box' can be pre ordered [by visiting this website](#). Once ordered, the toolkit will be posted to the churches within the next couple of months.

'Independent Faith Engagement Review'

There's a new chance to have your say on how the Government engages with faith communities. A survey-based review, which predates the Covid-19 pandemic in its planning but will surely be influenced hugely by it, is being undertaken by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. It will inform how government engages with faith groups during the Covid-19 recovery phase and beyond. The survey, which takes about 20 minutes to complete, has been welcomed by Bishop Sarah Mullally, who is chairing the Church of England's Recovery Group. Learn more and follow [\[cofe.io/FaithEngagementReview\]](https://cofe.io/FaithEngagementReview) this link to take the survey.

STOP PRESS! Canon Professor Jenn Strawbridge on St Mark's Gospel!

As advertised in the Parish Update last week, our Canon Theologian, Jenn Strawbridge, will be leading an online Advent Study Afternoon on 'Advent, the Apocalypse and the Gospel of Mark' on Tuesday November 24th at 2.30pm. There are still some spaces available. This is organised by the Cathedral, so please email Pauline.rowe@blackburncathedral.co.uk for more details and to book a place.

Coronavirus Email Address

Don't forget that if you have questions or problems you can get in touch with the Tak Group by emailing: coronavirus@blackburn.anglican.org. It is important that clergy who are self-isolating send us a note to this address.

Loving God,

at this time of crisis

when so many are suffering,

we pray for our nation and our world.

Give our leaders wisdom,

our Health Service strength,

our people hope.

Lead us through these parched and difficult days

to the fresh springs of joy and comfort

that we find in Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen**