

Dear friends,

We find ourselves once more on shifting sands with regards to local and national guidelines. The three tiers of Medium, High and Very High came into force yesterday (Wednesday) and it remains very likely that we will soon be moved up a tier to Very High. This does not impact the ability of churches to open for worship, but it must sharpen our focus as it marks not just a rise in people falling ill with the virus but also people potentially losing jobs and livelihoods. The hope that can be found in Jesus must therefore continue be our driving force and always on our lips.

Today's briefing will cover the following topics:

- #Homegrown conference
- Sunday worship
- Positive tests in congregations
- Remembrance
- Contact if self-isolating

#Homegrown conference

A huge thanks to all who were involved in the HomeGrown Conference over the last two days. To have been led, moved and challenged so fantastically by people in our own Diocese really highlighted the gifts that God has blessed us with here in the Diocese of Blackburn. Recordings of all the live sessions can [still be viewed here](#), on YouTube and the keynote addresses [can be read here](#).

Watch this space for the full, unedited version of the road trip! And tune in to BBC Radio Lancashire this Sunday morning. They will be using clips from the road trip across their faith-based breakfast programme (between 7am-10am). Listen live or catch-up after, [via this page on BBC Sounds](#).

Sunday Worship

Blackburn continues to punch above its weight in terms of involvement in the national Church of England Sunday Service and this week Rev Sarah Gill, Vicar of Blackburn St Stephen and St James will lead the service with Bishop Jill preaching. You will be able to [find that here](#).

The Cathedral continues to produce its online Sunday service and you will be able to find that on their [YouTube page here](#).

A number of churches around the Diocese are streaming their services as well and these can be found on their own social media pages.

Positive Tests in Congregations

Thank you to all those who have told us about people who have attended church and have then tested positive for the virus. This has been very useful information and if you know of such an instance but have not yet sent it to the coronavirus email address please do so.

So far roughly 5% of churches have told us of a positive test from someone who was at a church service. One church has closed for a 72 hour period as a precaution but has had no further issues.

We wanted to give you this data because it shows that, whilst there has been a marked rise in such instances recently, none of these have yet led to a cluster of cases let alone a local spike. This tells us that the precautions which we have in place are essential and are working. Thank you! Please keep assessing risk and mitigating it where possible.

It also speaks to the possible rise in pastoral issues in the near to medium future and we want to encourage you to take particular care of our Church Key Workers. Our Churchwardens, cleaners, the welcome team and so on. These are the folk most likely to come into contact with people as they come to church and need our thanks and support at this time.

CofE guidance

We expect some further guidance from the Church of England and advise that you keep an eye out [on their website here](#). At the moment funerals can still have 30 'guests' present, weddings 15 and baptisms 6 (unless in a main service).

Remembrance

We have been asked to ensure that any act of remembrance which is planned to take place beyond the bounds of the usual Remembrance Sunday church service on church property does so in consultation with the relevant district authority.

A drop in the number of acts of remembrance in town centres or around war memorials may lead to increased attendance at services of remembrance held on church premises, particularly if they happen over 11am on Remembrance Sunday. Please make sure your booking systems and contingency plans are robust for that day.

The government have released new guidance for local authorities on acts of remembrance which can be found [here](#). Please note the relevant section for churches is at the bottom of the page.

Self isolating

Thank you for those clergy who have told us when they have been self-isolating either with symptoms or await a test. We have noticed a drop in numbers reporting to us recently, which we hope to be a good thing, but thought we would remind you that it is still very useful to know so that we can pray for you and monitor any areas which may need specific support.

The Coronavirus Email Address

If you have questions or problems, please get in touch: coronavirus@blackburn.anglican.org

Please email if you are off work or shielding.

**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.**

Yours,

The Coronavirus Task Group