

Dear Friends,

As the data on infection rates continues to go the wrong way, we are realising quite how long we will be living with the pandemic and its effects. In addition we know that many of you will have had precious half-term holiday plans kiboshed by the imposition of tier 3 restrictions. Do try to make sure that you have some time to relax over the next few days. And please, if you are worried about your wellbeing or if things are starting to get on top of you, tell someone or email us.

With all the doom and gloom we thought you'd like a bumper briefing with lots of cheerful ideas and helpful resources. Today you can read about:

- New C of E Advice including Baptism
- Reporting cases
- Sunday Worship
- The Weekly Message
- 'Comfort and Joy'
- Webinars
- Preparing and Praying
- Lots of news and resources for children and young people from the Board of Education

New C of E Advice including Baptism

The Church of England's coronavirus guidance has been updated to bring it into line with the three tier system.

A significant change for parishes involves baptism where the rules seem to change more regularly than a set of traffic lights. It has now been determined that they constitute an 'act of worship' rather than a 'life event'. This means that there is no hard and fast rule on numbers who can attend. This is now set by your own risk assessment.

[The new guidelines are here.](#) Please read the advice with a degree of caution as much of it presumes that the reader is in a tier 1 area (who says the C of E has a southern bias?)

Sunday Worship

Our Diocesan Service this Sunday comes from St James Church in Shireshead and will be led by Canon Peter Ballard. It goes out from 9am on Sunday [and can be viewed here.](#)

Also from 9am on Sunday worship will be broadcast from our Cathedral. You can see it on the Cathedral website [which is here.](#)

Weekly Message

Our message this week comes the Archdeacon David, reflecting on the theme 'To pray is to work'. You will be able to see it soon [here](#), where you can catch up on previous messages if you missed any.

Reporting cases

We are grateful to those who are reporting cases amongst those who have attended your church in the previous 14 days. We have so far had 19 reports, but no evidence of transmission within a church which is a good sign of the quality of the work that you are doing to make worship safe.

Please do keep reporting to: coronavirus@blackburn.anglican.org.

'Comfort and Joy' campaign: updates and webinar

The national digital campaign for The Church of England has the title this year of 'Comfort and Joy'. The main page for the campaign on the national CofE website has been further updated. Keep checking back for more updates [you will find it here](#).

Meanwhile, as part of the build-up to Comfort and Joy, the national digital communications team is running a special webinar on October 27 and again on November 4. On the webinar you can find out how best to engage with the campaign resources. [This is the direct link for registering](#).

More upcoming webinars and online events

There is still time to register for the national Digital Labs Conference which takes place tomorrow and Saturday. You don't have to be an experienced tech person. At time of writing we understand there are fewer than 100 tickets left so be quick if you want a last minute place! [You can register here](#).

Closer to home, the 'Christmas is coming' seminar from the [#homegrown](#) conference is being run again on Wednesday 28 October at 2pm. If you wish to book a place, please email: beingwitnesses@blackburn.anglican.org

And don't forget that all the YouTube livestream sessions from the #HomeGrown conference are still available to view in their entirety, now as recordings, [on the Diocesan YouTube channel](#).

Preparing and Praying

Father Neil Kelley from St Laurence's Chorley writes ...

“Many people in our church communities will be living with a sense of sadness, frustration and guilt as our usual preparations to celebrate Christmas will look very different. Either because events are cancelled, or services scaled down, or perhaps because people need to stay at home to protect their health, many people will not be enjoying the usual build-up to Christmas.

However, EVERYONE can be involved and included in the most important part of preparing for Christmas – Prayer! Why not form a prayer team in your church of people who will underpin all Christmas activities and preparations by praying for the planning, especially the fine detail? With a different prayer intention each day, our communities would be carried along on a wave of prayer enabling us to reach out effectively with the message of God’s love revealed in Jesus.

Look out for prayer pointers and resources which will be available nearer the time for those who would appreciate them, or you may wish to produce your own tailor-made scheme. If you do, we would love to hear from you about your plans, email: beingwitnesses@blackburn.anglican.org to tell us.

News from the Blackburn Diocesan Board for Education...

For children (from Sarah Earnshaw)

You can now listen to Series 2 of 'Bible Podlets,' our Bible Study and Discussion Podcast for adults to lead with primary aged children. This series is about 'Unlikely Heroes' in the Bible and each episode has fun games/activities, an engaging Bible reading in the form of a news story and deep discussion with places to pause and talk together about the topic. Discussion notes to go with each episode are available to download for free from the Board of Education website for parents to use at home, or to aid larger group participation. If there are churches that are looking for ways to gather their children's groups but aren't sure how to do this in a COVID-safe way, this would be an ideal tool as they can be socially distanced whilst they listen to the podcast and the leader can facilitate the activities and discussions which require no physical contact and next to no preparation:

<https://www.bdeducation.org.uk/podcasts/bible-podlets/>

For young people (from Ben Green)

But First Pray

'But First Pray' is our new prayer initiative that seeks to do just that; pray first, hear what God is calling us to do, then follow that and act. We long to see children and young people encountering the love of God for themselves and we believe that the place of revival for this generation starts with prayer.

Launched on Tuesday 20 October – [you can view this on Youtube](#) or Facebook (@BDBEupdates)

Then every Thursday (starting on the 22 October) visit our social media for weekly prayer posts to inspire and encourage us in our prayers for our children and young people. Also, keep your eyes on our social media for when we are arranging to prayer walk in different parts of the diocese.

Online Youth Mental Health First Aid

8.45am-12.15pm on Monday 23, Tuesday 24, Monday 30 November and Tuesday 1 December 2020. Cost £40 which includes all material and MHFA manual.

MHFA courses teach you the skills and confidence to spot the signs of mental health issues in a young person, offer them Mental Health First Aid and guide them towards the support they need.

Our Youth MHFA Two Day (delivered across two days or four mornings) course qualifies you as a Mental Health First Aider. This course has moved **online** for the foreseeable future in order to follow current guidelines and to keep our participants safe. However, we realise more than ever the importance of looking after our Young people and their mental health. For more information, [please follow this link](#).

Youth Work State Of Mind Instagram Account:
(<https://www.instagram.com/youthworkstateofmind/>)

In recent months we have launched a second Instagram account. Our original account, Clayton Central, is focused on connecting with a young person audience, whilst 'Youth Work State of Mind' seeks to create a space for community, equipping, connection and updates for those ministering with 11-18 year olds.

Watch Instagram in the coming months for more info about the Youth Work State of Mind Podcast and Youth Work State of Mind Power Hour!

And save the date: Abide Online

Abide, our youth event for young people is going online! It will take place on the evening of Friday 5 and all day on Saturday 6 February 2021. Save the date and we will provide more information nearer the time.

Follow The Board of Education on social media...

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/youthworkstateofmind/> & <https://www.instagram.com/claytoncentral/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/BDBofE>

Advice and help

All the most recent briefings issued by the Task Group are added to the main coronavirus landing page on the Diocesan website. This page also links in turn to further advice and help elsewhere on the website, including our compendium page. Please take a moment to review information on the website if you have a query (as it may already be answered there) before emailing.

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 or if you know of a case of someone in your congregation who has attended church within the past 14 days.

**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