

Dear Friends,

At last, some signs of hope. The results of the Pfizer vaccine trial and the plans that are being drawn up to roll out a vaccination programme suggest that a long-term route out of the pandemic may be opening up. And meanwhile a massive expansion in testing in some areas of the country, including Lancashire, should make it easier to restart areas of our lives that have been on hold, seemingly for weeks.

But of course we can't relax yet and neither of these solutions is a silver bullet. Whilst the infection rate in Lancashire is showing signs of coming down and some suggest that the R rate in our region may now be below one, those rates are still high, especially in Blackburn. And yesterday we passed the significant milestone of a Covid-related death rate of 50,000. The human cost of this pandemic is horrific.

The work you have all done to sustain church life in these testing months has been exceptional. Keep going! The real light at the end of this tunnel is not a vaccine or a testing programme, but the one true light which is the Christ whom we serve. If we keep our eyes fixed on that light then all will be well in Him.

### **Sunday Worship**

- For the Diocesan Service, we're going to Wesham this week. Worship (which was recorded before this new lockdown) will be led by the Rev Anne Beverley. You can join in from 9am onwards on the [Diocesan Youtube Channel](#).
- And of course the Cathedral will also be broadcasting a service from 9am. Simply tune in to the [Cathedral webpage](#).

### **Weekly Message**

This week's message has been recorded by Bishop Philip. His theme will be 'It's the hope that kills you.' Please tune in to the [Diocesan YouTube Channel](#) to watch.

### **Important Church of England Guidance**

As usual the Church of England waited until ten minutes after we had sent out last Friday's briefing to update its guidance. They do it on purpose. There is advice on:

**Livestreaming Worship.** This is flexible and helpful so please do have a read and take note.

**Activities with children and young people.** This confirms that activities with the young during this period of lockdown need to be actively supporting families for example by offering childcare for working parents.

**Updated risk template.** This is a really helpful tool especially as many of you are now leaving churches open for private prayer.

The **Question and Answer Section** has also been updated to be in line with the new regulations.

[You can find all this advice here.](#)

## **Public Notices for Faculties**

Public notices are a legal requirement and have to be displayed in connection with petitions for faculties. Due to the present situation, with churches being closed to public worship because of the current lockdown, this process has become ineffective. The Chancellor of the Diocese has issued new directions at this time [which you can read here.](#)

## **Covid-19 survey for faith leaders led by Manchester Metropolitan University**

A research team at this North West university has recently been in touch with your Coronavirus Task Group. They are engaging with Dioceses all around the country as well as other Christian denominations and other faiths. From our discussions, we understand they have embarked on this new national survey to examine the impact of the pandemic on ritual and religious life in Britain.

The survey - 'Social Distance, Digital Congregation: British Ritual Innovation under Covid-19' - or 'BRIC-19' for short, seeks to usefully examine how leaders of British religious communities have adapted to the COVID-19 pandemic and the restrictions it has imposed.

[You can read more about BRIC-19 here](#) and there is a link on the page to take the survey if you wish to do so; plus further down the survey homepage you can also subscribe to get progress updates.

## **And looking Ahead to Advent...**

Two dates for your diary as we prepare for a socially distanced season of Preparation

### **O Wisdom: A Quiet Morning to prepare for Christmas.**

*Friday December 18 9.30am-1.30pm*

Bishop Philip will be leading this quiet morning which will explore the great Advent 'O' Antiphons using words, music, images and guided periods of silence. It will take place on Zoom but you should ensure that the whole morning is clear. To book a place please email [louise.hunter@blackburn.anglican.org](mailto:louise.hunter@blackburn.anglican.org)

### **An Advent Resource – The Four Last Things**

The combination of the new coronavirus, and national lockdown which included (and once again includes) worshipping communities, challenged the faith of even the most robust. Many people admitted to thinking seriously about death and dying in a new way. For even the most committed church-goer, heaven came into sharper focus as loved ones died quickly and without the usual pastoral ministry of the church.

Both the Bible and our liturgy make references to death, judgement, heaven and hell but how do we think of these things? Are these words or concepts we simply accept or do they inform our thinking and our daily living? This Advent resource, produced by St. Laurence's Chorley, seeks to help us understand what have been traditionally referred to as "The Four Last Things" and to think about them again in the light of our experiences this year. This

season of Advent gives us hope as we prepare to welcome the true Light which has come into the world.

The four reflections are given by:

**Death – Jennifer Cooper (Director of Initial Ministerial Education for the Dioceses of Durham and Newcastle)**

**Judgement – Mark Oakley (Dean of St. John’s Cambridge and writer)**

**Heaven – Andrew Moughtin-Mumby (Parish Priest in the Southwark Diocese, Member of General Synod)**

**Hell – Angela Tilby (Writer, broadcaster and theological educator)**

This resource will be produced in two ways: as a stand-alone Quiet Day with four addresses, into which spaces for reflection can be included. And also as a 4-part series, one for each week of Advent. These will be released on the St. Laurence Chorley YouTube Channel in the week before Advent, but if you would like the links sent to you directly please email Fr Neil Kelley on [rector@stlaurencechorley.co.uk](mailto:rector@stlaurencechorley.co.uk)

### **Coronavirus Email Address**

Don't forget that if you have questions or problems you can get in touch with the Task Group by emailing: [coronavirus@blackburn.anglican.org](mailto: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

Yours,

The Coronavirus Task Group