

Dear Friends,

This briefing will arrive as Christians celebrate the Feast of the Ascension. As Jesus returns to be with the Father he both finishes the work of our salvation and promises to be with us to the end of time. So today we rejoice that even in this crisis we have a sure and certain hope in Jesus who has won for us an eternal salvation. And we give thanks that even in the midst of pain and suffering, he is with us and will never let us go.

Despite the joy of a festival day, it's not hard to detect a growing sense of frustration amongst our clergy and church leaders as restrictions continue and as the number of anomalies appears to grow. If we can hug, why can't we share the peace? If events can be full to 50% capacity, why do we need stricter social distancing in acts of worship? If football fans can sing, why can't we?

Please don't think that nothing is being done. The national church is in touch with Government (as are we with the Director of Public Health in Lancashire) to try and establish some clarity about the restrictions we will be operating under after May 17th and June 21st. Please though be patient and stick to the guidance and we will let you know as soon as there is greater clarity.

School Visits to Churches

A number of queries have come into the Coronavirus email address about this. There is no reason at all why school groups should not visit churches and you are advised to work closely with the school in doing this safely. Remember that most classes are in bubbles so there is no need to impose restrictions over and above those implemented by the school. It would be wise to clean the church after a group has left if the church is soon to be used by other people.

Test and Trace

Again a number of people have been asking about this. As lockdown eases it is important to maintain test and trace procedures. The QR code which can be scanned by the NHS app is the best way to do this as it is quick and so avoids queueing at church doors which is becoming a problem in some places. Keeping a paper list of attendees is an alternative. There is no need to do both but each visitor must do either one or the other.

Thy Kingdom Come - May 13 – 23

It won't have escaped your notice that today marks the start of the ten days of 'Thy Kingdom Come'. We are so encouraged by innovations across our churches, chaplaincies and schools. But here are some ways you might like to join the Diocesan family in prayer across Lancashire.

Festival of Prayer and Worship

Join daily services from 11 churches from across our family, every day. Tonight, this is launched by an All Age Service from the Diocesan Board of Education and bishops. These services will appear on the Diocesan YouTube channel at 4pm daily. [Links can be found here.](#)

Pentecost Sunday 23 May at 4pm

Blackburn Cathedral will be hosting our Diocesan Pentecost service at 4pm with Bishops Julian, Philip and Jill. Significantly this marks the *Unlock* launch of the next phase of our Vision 2026. [Please book here](#) to avoid disappointment or join by live feed on the Diocesan YouTube channel.

Daily Prayer at 8am

The Being Witnesses team will be meeting to pray every morning from Ascension day to Pentecost Sunday at 8-8.30 am. If you would like to join us on zoom, please email: beingwitnesses@blackburn.anglican.org for the link.

All other information about Thy Kingdom Come can be found on [this Diocesan website page](#).

Sunday Worship

Instead of a Sunday morning Diocesan service this week, please see above for worship that will be released every day of Thy Kingdom Come.

There will be Sunday morning worship from Blackburn Cathedral from 9am on Sunday. Please go the [Cathedral website](#) to access this.

An example of a church doing things differently during lockdown - Benefice of St Luke's Slyne with Hest and St Wilfrid's Halton with St Saviour's Aughton.

During the lock down an online Minecraft Sunday School was available on St Luke's YouTube page. This was created by the Church Warden of St Luke's, Andrew Worgan with his sons Stephen and Tom. They created a wonderfully detailed 'Minecraft' church, church hall and local area. Each week Andrew gave a welcome from the entrance of one of the Churches (and sometimes all three!) Sunday school teachers were recorded doing the readings and prayers and there was always a 'Lets get crafty' activity with kits being left outside the church and finished crafts displayed in the porch. At the end of each session we caught up with the 'Virtual Vicar' to find out what he had been up to during the week. Revd Susan was a little worried that he might have been trying to take over her job! The online Sunday School was much appreciated by the children, but also by many adults from our congregations.

Unlock – Lament, Thanksgiving and Mission

As we start to unlock church life, we are sharing stories from across the Diocese of ways different parishes have started to engage with **lament, thanksgiving and mission**.

This week we have a story from Rachel Elleray, Headteacher of Rufford Church of England Primary School, on the theme of lament.

At Rufford C.E. Primary School we have invited members of our school, church and local community to join us in an act of reflection and hope.

Everyone has been invited to take a coloured ribbon and tie it onto the school gates to represent our thoughts, prayers and feelings during the COVID-19 pandemic.

They may symbolise remembrance, peace, healing, unity, thanks, friendship, love, hope or anything else each individual wishes.

We intend to plant a tree in the school grounds as a reminder of this time. The week we come out of lockdown we will gather all of the ribbons together and place them in the ground under the tree. Our hope is that the tree will blossom over the years and be filled with all the joys, hope and love which lie beneath it in the ribbons.

These thoughts and prayers will grow into its flowers and branches and with them bring wonder and beauty over the coming years to all who pass by it.

Coronavirus Email Address

If you have questions or problems and can't find answers on the [advice compendium](#) please email: coronavirus@blackburn.anglican.org.

The Collect for Ascension Day

Grant, we pray, almighty God,
that as we believe your only-begotten Son our Lord Jesus Christ
to have ascended into the heavens,
so we in heart and mind may also ascend
and with him continually dwell;
who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.
Amen.

Yours,

Coronavirus Task Group