

Dear Friends,

There have been some pretty gloomy headlines in recent days as the rate of coronavirus infection increases. All of this makes life harder for our clergy and church leaders. We are very aware of the dilemma that many of you find yourselves with some of your people behaving as if the pandemic were history and others still cautious and wanting to reintroduce measures. What we would say is:

- Remember the dignity and importance of what we are doing in worship. It changes us and it changes the world. More than anything else we need to be gathering as Christians to pray.
- Keep a steady hand on the tiller! Don't be tempted to react to every headline or constantly change your procedures in response to yesterday's data.
- Carry on with sensible measures such as ensuring that spaces are well ventilated and that hand sanitiser is available.
- But do be ready for tighter measures if the Government is forced to bring in Plan B. This will mean mandatory face mask wearing and perhaps a return of social distancing. But be reassured that it is vanishingly unlikely that we will have to stop in-person worship again.

The Local Situation

The infection rate remains high across the county but is now showing signs of stabilising or even slightly decreasing. The parts of the county most impacted at the present time are those that until now have avoided the worst of the pandemic – Wyre, Fylde, Chorley and Ribble Valley. A significant contributing factor is children picking up the virus in school and then passing it on to parents. However the hospitalisation rate remains fairly low.

Booster Vaccines

The relatively low uptake of booster vaccines would appear to be one of the contributory factors in the recent increase in rates.

- Most clergy had their second vaccine in the first week of May which means that you will reach the six months mark at the start of November. You should receive a reminder asking you to book a booster vaccine. If you do not you can book one [here](#). Please do make the time to go for a booster vaccine.
- Please also gently encourage members of your congregations who have not yet had their booster vaccine to do so.

Christmas

After 18 months of broken patterns of church life, Christmas this year will provide a wonderful opportunity for evangelism and to gather people together to celebrate the Incarnation, and doubtless many of you are already drawing up plans. It may be worth considering the following:

- **Outdoor Worship.** Events such as outdoor carol singing and Walking Nativities have proved very popular across the county and mean that people can attend worship with reduced risk of infection.
- **Plan B against Plan B!** It would be worth having in your back pocket a Plan B in case social distancing is reintroduced. For example one church we have heard about has drawn up plans

to repeat their Christmas Eve Carol Service later in the day in case numbers in the community centre have to be limited.

Wellbeing

For the past 18 months there has been no such thing as routine! As we see from above, everything has to be planned and re-planned, often numerous times, which quickly becomes exhausting. Added to this, many churches are facing financial pressures as well as other anxieties.

Please make sure you plan a post-Christmas break and have it in the diary now. And if you are worried about the level of pressure you are facing, please do tell someone soon.

Coronavirus Email Address

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

A prayer

We are not people of fear:
we are people of courage.
We are not people who protect our own safety:
we are people who protect our neighbours' safety.
We are not people of greed:
we are people of generosity.
We are your people God,
giving and loving,
wherever we are,
whatever it costs
For as long as it takes
wherever you call us.

Amen.

Yours,

Coronavirus Task Group