

Dear Friends,

The current situation regarding the progress of the pandemic seems to depend on what you read, or indeed what articles you read on a single website! In some places we are doing really well as a nation and on the verge of 'getting back to normal.' In others we are heading fast for the third wave and hospitals will soon once again be under intolerable strain.

This continuing roller-coaster will place pressures on clergy and church leaders. The future and any plans we make seem to be constantly fluid, and it is no wonder that so many of you are complaining of weariness. Moreover the latest guidance for Lancashire (please see below) will make things even harder.

We can be reassured though that the general direction of travel is good with the vaccination programme making a big difference. Should it be necessary to delay the next stage of the roadmap, that will be dispiriting but the delay probably won't be for long. Meanwhile it is so important to keep worshipping, keep praying and keep witnessing.

### **New Local Guidelines**

It was announced on Tuesday that the whole of Lancashire (except Blackpool) is to be an 'area of enhanced response.' This means that the advice given to residents of Burnley and Blackburn two weeks ago is now applicable to most of the Diocese. In particular:

- Extra external interventions will be introduced to increase the rate of vaccinations and the availability of testing
- 2 metre social distancing should be maintained
- Travel in and out of the area should be minimised
- Gatherings and social engagements should take place outdoors wherever possible

It should be noted that this is guidance and does not constitute a return to the local restrictions of last Summer. It does not make any difference to how and when we offer public worship and does not cover work commitments.

The guidance does however carry the warning that the Delta variant is more transmissible and that as a result greater caution should be exercised in the way we interact from day to day.

The new guidance can be read [here](#).

One of the ways the local government are hoping to combat the spread of the virus is to encourage greater vaccination uptake. Those who have been called for a vaccine (either their first or second) are encouraged to book their slot as soon as possible, and local 'pop up' vaccination centres are appearing across the Diocese for anyone to join the queue and get their first vaccine. We can point our congregations and our communities to these things.

If anyone is, for any reason, unsure about the vaccine, please seek advice from a trusted source such as your GP or NHS 119.

## **Use of Church Facilities for Vaccinations**

A number of churches have been approached by the NHS to ask if their facilities can be used to set up temporary vaccination centres.

The Task Group has been in touch with the Directors of Public Health to make an offer of such facilities on the grounds that we have access to buildings in every community in Lancashire.

Please reflect on what facilities you may have available should our offer be taken up. And if you are approached directly, please drop us a line on the Coronavirus email address.

## **Positive Tests in Congregations**

Two parishes have approached us recently about positive tests amongst congregation members so it seems timely to repeat the procedure:

- If anyone has been in close physical contact of the person with the positive test or alternatively if anyone has been at a distance of 1 metre for a period of more than 15 minutes, they should contact Test and Trace and self-isolate until they have received advice.
- With regards to seating: Those sat at a distance of 1 metre will most likely be counted as a close contact, even if other mitigation exists such as face masks or facing the same way. It is unlikely that those who maintain a distance of 2 metres will be asked to self-isolate, based on previous instances.
- Other members of the congregation and those who have maintained social distance do not need to do anything unless they are contacted by Test and Trace.
- It is important to follow the direction of the Test and Trace service. Some families, especially those on low income, may need support in doing this.

## **Online Worship this Sunday**

An Act of Worship from Blackburn Cathedral will be available every Sunday from 9am. You can view this on the [Cathedral YouTube Channel](#) or on [Facebook](#).

A Church Near You also enables people to find a livestreamed service in a local church. Just use [this link](#) and enter a postcode.

## **Coronavirus Email Address**

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

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.

**Amen.**