

Dear Friends,

From May 13 we are called to prayer. Between Ascension to Pentecost, coinciding with those days when Mary and the disciples prayed in the Upper Room for the gift of the Spirit, we will be keeping 'Thy Kingdom Come' a period of time in which to offer prayer that people in our lives might come to faith in Jesus Christ.

Thy Kingdom Comes seems especially important this year as we pray also for those who, during these long months of lockdown, have lapsed from the practice of their faith. And as we look to the Summer months and the steady relaxation of the rules that have restricted church life, we will be ever more dependent on prayer to find the confidence we will need to proclaim the Good News with joy.

More generally, speculation about 'what next' seems unlimited. But nothing is yet confirmed and we are still waiting to see what June 21 will mean for our churches. A spike in cases of the Indian variant in Blackburn with Darwen is also a cause for concern. So let's pray also for patience!

Unlock

Bishop Julian and the Leadership Team have written an important letter about how we are going to steer ourselves out of the Lockdown as a Diocese, based on the story of Paul and Silas in Acts chapter 16. It can be read [here](#). Please do read it as this is something we must all do together as a Diocese.

Attendance at Funerals

The Government announced this week that the limit of those permitted to attend funerals will be changed from May 17. Rather than 30 you will be permitted to have as many mourners present as the risk assessment of the building allows.

It would be good to be very clear and consistent about what that number is so that it can be passed on to funeral directors and families. It may be worth putting up a sign somewhere within or just outside the church building to indicate the maximum number of mourners based on your risk assessment. With numbers increasing there will also be greater complexity in terms of test and trace so please ensure that QR codes are still displayed. No change will yet be made to the number permitted to attend weddings which remains at 15.

Sunday Worship

The regular online Diocesan Sunday Service this week comes from the Church of the Ascension in Torrisholme and is led by Fr Damian Porter. It will be livestreamed at 9am on their Facebook site which is [here](#). The service will also be mirrored live to the [Diocesan YouTube channel](#) and will remain on the channel as a recording after the live broadcast to watch later if you prefer.

Blackburn Cathedral continues to broadcast an act of worship every Sunday. This can be seen on the [Cathedral website](#).

Thy Kingdom Come May 13 – 23

Thy Kingdom Come will be launched with a special all age service on May 12 from 4pm which can be viewed on the [Diocesan YouTube channel](#).

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

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 Fr Mark Williams, Vicar of a Rural benefice in the Ribble Valley:

During lockdown the two churches of Grindleton and Gisburn in the Bowland Benefice have had to adapt, as everyone has, to the changing regulations.

One of the quite distinctive changes was a non eucharistic service once a month in each church. So that Holy Communion was still a weekly option, a celebration was introduced on a Thursday twice a month when the nearest Sunday had been Morning Service. To make this distinctive from what may have been Sunday Worship, it was decided after a request from a PCC member, to make the service from the Book of Common Prayer.

A small but enthusiastic congregation has gathered on Thursdays in either Gisburn on the first Thursday or Grindleton on the second. One of the more remarkable things has been, because service sheets should be kept to a minimum, the congregation have dusted off their old Prayer Books and brought them along.

Confirmation presents, not used for years, or even Christening gifts have been brought. It has been a wonderful experience to use such words, familiar to the very stones they resound around. A true reminder that whatever 'plague or pestilence' may visit us, the words of ancient liturgies are still faithful.

Coronavirus Email Address

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