

Dear Friends,

Most of you will now have noticed that the decisions you had to make last week with regard to public worship were difficult but sadly do not put an end to the matter. Our Parish churches being closed for public worship must never become the norm and if you are closed it is important to set regular review dates. Moreover, those who are still open will need to continue to monitor the situation closely so that they can remain confident that the decision they have reached continues to be the right one.

All of this adds to the strains and stresses of public ministry at a time of crisis. Don't forget that members of the Task Group remain on hand via the email address if you want advice or would like to talk things through.

At the same time there are signs that the light at the end of the tunnel is growing brighter. Infection rates in Lancashire are starting to show signs of a downward trend. The vaccination programme seems to have got off to a very impressive start in the county and many of you will have seen coverage of the mass vaccination centre set up in the crypt of our own Cathedral. This is a good time then to start dreaming some dreams for the future, and especially for what you might do in the Summer to kick off church life anew.

Public Worship

Two things to note with regard to this issue:

- We have established a direct line of communication to the Directors of Public Health whose advice was instrumental for most of those who have decided to close. In the first meeting they expressed as their chief concern what they called 'end to end transmission,' in other words not just the process of worship but all the various gathering and interactions that take place surrounding it. Those of you who are still offering worship in church buildings should ensure therefore that people gather and disperse promptly with no unnecessary contact with each other.
- For those churches who are closed for public worship, we will issue some advice on how to review that decision. This will be in the form of questions to consider and will be available next week.

Looking Out in Lent - Diocesan Online Lent Course

'Looking out in Lent' is an online Diocesan Lent Course in which we will use St Mark's Gospel to explore the how we can be a more outward-looking church as we start to move out of this pandemic. There will be five sessions:

Week 1 : 24 February

Looking Out in Lent by: Telling the Good News

Week 2 : 3 March

Looking Out in Lent by: Teaching the Faith

Week 3: 10 March

Looking Out in Lent by: Tending to human need

Week 4: 17 March

Looking Out in Lent by: Transforming society

Week 5: 24 March

Looking Out in Lent by: Treasuring creation

Each will be led by one of the Bishops or Archdeacons. They will broadcast live on the Diocesan YouTube channel at 7.30pm each Wednesday and there will also be a recorded talk from each session to use in any way you wish. Full details will be in next week's Parish Update.

Church of England Guidance on Ash Wednesday, Lent and Holy Week

The Church of England has published some very practical advice on the liturgies of Ash Wednesday and Holy Week with good guidance on matters such as the dispersal of ashes. [It can all be found here.](#)

Blackburn Diocese Lent Resources.

The closed Facebook Group that was set up in order to share Advent and Christmas resources within the Diocese has now been renamed to reflect our current context: Epiphany to Easter 2021 resources.

There are already some suggested resources there for Ash Wednesday and Lent, especially if the start of Lent is "at home". Please check out what's there and feel free to share other ideas of what you are doing to plan for the start of Lent in our lockdown context.

Candlemas 'At Home' Resource

A resource for worship at home for Candlemas – the Feast of the Presentation of the Lord – is now available [on the Diocesan Website](#). We remain grateful to Fr Neil Kelley for producing these.

Culture Recovery Fund

Grants of between £10k and £3m are available for listed places of worship from the Culture Recovery Fund which has now launched its second round. [More details can be found here.](#)

The Weekly Message

Bishop Jill has recorded this week's message which will be available from tomorrow (Friday) [on the Diocesan YouTube channel.](#)

Worship this Sunday

The Diocesan Sunday service this week will be from St John's Leyland. It will be led by Sue Champness (Licensed Lay Minister) and the Revd Andy Meeson will preach. You can watch on Sunday morning from 9am [via this link](#) to the Diocesan YouTube channel.

Mass vaccination centre at our Cathedral

You can read about the initiative [here on our website](#) and Bishop Julian also issued a thankyou message this week to all those involved in making it happen, which you can read [here](#).

And finally..... BBC 'The Big Questions' debate

We also wanted to tell you that Rev Susan Salt, who is a member of your Coronavirus Task Group, should be appearing on the BBC Sunday morning discussion programme 'The Big Questions' this Sunday on BBC1; we await final confirmation. The programme typically covers two topics and the one Susan would be involved in is 'Will Covid Revive Faith?'. The Big Questions airs at 10.30am or it will be available after [on BBC iPlayer here](#).

Coronavirus Email Address

If you have questions or problems please email: coronavirus@blackburn.anglican.org. It is important that clergy who are self-isolating send us a note to this address.

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.

Yours,
The Coronavirus Task Group