

Dear Friends,

The first lockdown began in Lent. If we had been told back then that at the start of Lent 2021 we would still be living under such tight restrictions we would have been horrified. The Prime Minister was speaking this week about the need for patience, and there is no doubting the truth of that appeal.

In the midst of the pressures, we would urge you though to make space for Lent and to use the opportunity of this holy season as time of preparation. Later this year we will need to relaunch much of Christian life in our county and seek ways to rebuild congregations, grow relationships with the new fringe many churches have developed and speak the Gospel into a radically changed nation. Using these Lenten days to grow as Christian disciples can only be beneficial in strengthening us for that task.

The Weekly Message

Bishop Philip has recorded the Weekly Message which is all about keeping a joyful Lent. It can be seen [here on the Diocesan YouTube Channel](#).

Worship this Sunday

- On the First Sunday of Lent, our journey around the Diocese takes us this week to the far north of Lancashire and the villages of Slyne with Hest where worship will be led by the Revd Susan Seed. It will be available from Sunday [here on the Diocesan YouTube channel](#).
- In addition to our weekly service on YouTube, there is more from our Diocese, this time on BBC1 this Sunday. St Cuthbert's in Preston is appearing in two forthcoming editions of 'Lent Worship' (which is in addition to the usual Songs of Praise) on Sundays during Lent. February 21 is the first service and then later on Sunday, March 14, both programmes start at 11am. [Full details here](#) including a link to watch on BBC iPlayer afterwards if you miss the main broadcast.

Lent in the Diocese of Blackburn

There are plenty of ideas and resources for Lent 2021 which can all be seen in a special Lent section [here on the Diocesan Website](#). Please note in particular:

- **Looking out in Lent.** The Diocesan Lent Course begins on February 24th and runs each Wednesday on Zoom at 7.30pm. We will be using the Gospel of St Mark to explore the Five Marks of Mission in a way that will help us to reflect on ministry as we move out of the health crisis that has had such an impact on our lives. [Book your place here](#).
- **How Deep the Father's Love.** Bishop Philip will lead a Quiet Morning for Lent on Saturday March 27th from 9.30am until 1pm. Each half hour will be dedicated to one of the Seven Last Words from the Cross which means people can leave and join on the half hour as they wish. To book please email louise.hunter@blackburn.anglican.org

Public Worship

With infection levels at their lowest for some time and the vaccination programme rolling out well, many churches are deciding that now is a safe time to re-open for public worship. If you choose to do so:

- Please continue to stick tightly to guidance especially around face covering, social distancing and speedy dispersal after services.
- It would be good if you could drop a line to Bishop's House with the date that you are re-opening for public worship as we need to keep a record of those who have taken advantage of Bishops Julian's temporary permission to suspend the relevant canon.

Upcoming Webinars

- Jimmy Dale (National Youth Evangelism Officer) will be in conversation with a series of youth workers and practitioners from Southwark, Salisbury and Blackburn Dioceses, exploring how they have been continuing to reach young people during the pandemic. This will be held on Wednesday 24 February at 11.30 am. [Webinar registration details are here.](#)
- The Rev Anne Beverley is involved in a panel session discussing digital evangelism on TikTok on Friday 12 March at 11am. [Registration details can be found here.](#)

Vaccinations

Licensed clergy should all have received an email from the Bishop's Chaplain, Sam Cheesman, about vaccinations. If you have not please contact him at: Chaplain@bishopofblackburn.org.uk

A reminder to all that a vaccination does not make you invulnerable and it is still unclear if people who are vaccinated can carry and spread the virus. Please continue to observe good practice even after a first vaccination.

The importance of this has been sadly brought home this week by the forced resignation of the Mayor of Blackburn who was seen attending a wedding reception. In these fevered times community leaders are very much in the public eye and are especially vulnerable to criticism for any laxity in adhering to the regulations.

Christian Aid Appeal – Giving Thanks for our Vaccines

Christian Aid is offering people the opportunity to give thanks for the vaccine with a donation to help protect those who don't have access to it. All donations will support Christian Aid's response to the coronavirus pandemic in affected communities around the world to support Hygiene Kits, PPE, Toilet and handwashing stations.

For more information please [follow this link.](#)

Self-Isolation

This week 1.7 million additional people have been told to shield because of their risk of Covid. It would be good if any licensed clergy who are now told to shield could send an email to the address below:

Coronavirus Email Address

If you have questions or problems please email: coronavirus@blackburn.anglican.org

Gracious God,
as we remember before you the thousands
who have died,
surround us and all who mourn with your
strong compassion.

Be gentle with us in our grief,
protect us from despair,
and give us grace to persevere
and face the future with hope
in Jesus Christ our risen Lord.

Amen.

Yours

Coronavirus Task Group