

Dear brothers and sisters

It would be hard to escape the sense of relief and anticipation which will have met the recent announcements from the Prime Minister relating to the gradual ending of restrictions. Though still some way off, light at the end of a long tunnel is still a wonderful thing to see.

There must not, however, now be a rush to the exit. Churches have been leaders in the community with regards to how to be open for business in a safe and meaningful way, and we must continue to be so. Please avoid pushing boundaries and continue to be vigilant for any risks which still exist, particularly with the newer variants of the virus.

A most unhappy reminder of this is that we announce, with great sadness, the death of Rev Barry Eaton, Chaplain at Preston Prison - the first priest in full-time stipendiary service to die as a result of contracting Covid-19. We pray for Ida and the family at this most difficult time. For Barry and for all those who have died in faith: eternal rest grant unto them, O Lord, and let light perpetual shine upon them.

In today's update we will discuss a number of matters related to a wider reopening for public worship, but we await further details as the relevant legislation and the Church of England's guidance comes in the weeks ahead. If you have any questions about what the most recent advice is on any topic please do check our [advice compendium](#) which has been updated regularly and will continue to be as new advice comes in.

Public Worship

The local Directors of Public Health plan to write to all faith leaders in the coming days and we will be in touch as soon as possible after this lands, with more information as to how it might impact us.

Holy Week and Easter

We hope to be able to provide more advice in future weeks about these key times in the Christian calendar. In the meantime, the Church of England have provided a [useful document](#) to help you think through some of the questions which you might have.

Singing

There has been no change to the advice around singing. The RSCM offers the clearest and most up to date advice and they have updated their guidance this week based on current legislation. You can find it [here](#).

Outdoor services

At present worship services must happen at a location usually used for worship. If outdoor services are arranged they should happen on church grounds, or the grounds of the location where your congregation worships. You may still wish to be in touch with the local council and show them your risk assessment for the service.

Many of you will have seen a recent news report about a church which held a service in a local car park and was fined £10,000 for doing so. This was the third most read article on the BBC website that day. Whilst we do not know all details of that instance, it would be good to avoid both the fine and the publicity.

Schools

Both primary and secondary schools have been open to children of key workers and vulnerable children throughout the lockdown. However, the 8 March will bring a big change with the full return of all staff and pupils full time. Head Teachers will particularly need our prayers and support at this time.

Public Health England

A suite of resources has been made available by Public Health England to assist people in their thinking about how we emerge from this lockdown with regards to our mental health. It can be found [here](#).

Worship this Sunday

The Diocesan Service this Sunday comes from St Cuthbert's, Fulwood and can be found on the [Diocesan YouTube Page](#).

Coronavirus Email Address

If you have questions or concerns 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.

Yours

Coronavirus Task Group