

Dear Friends,

Most of us will be rejoicing that there is now clear path ahead for all our churches to be open for public worship by Holy Week and no doubt many of you will be turning your attention to how to celebrate the great events of our salvation.

It is good that we can now start to look more at what we *can* do after spending so long considering what we *cannot* do, but as we do so it is really important that we don't start to think that it's all over and become too relaxed. In particular it is critical that people disperse quickly after services and don't arrive too far in advance. It is clear that this was by far the greatest concern of the Directors of Public Health.

In the same way, the attendance limits at occasional offices are the law and we could be fined for breaking them! Even if a wedding isn't planned until July or August, couples need to know that there is no guarantee that limitless numbers of guests will be able to attend as the dates for relaxing the rules are aspirational.

These are very difficult pastoral conversations to have and a Holy Week free of singing and with socially distanced congregations will be equally strange. But nothing can take away from us the hope we find in the cross.

### **Weekly Message**

The Weekly Message is back with Archdeacon David addressing the subject 'Seeing things Differently.' This can be viewed [here on the Diocesan YouTube channel](#).

### **Sunday Worship**

This week sees the next of our popular Multi-lingual Services with Bishop Jill preaching in an act of worship led by The Rev Sarah Gill. You can see this on Sunday [here on the Diocesan YouTube channel](#).

### **National Day of Reflection**

March 23 will be the anniversary of the first lockdown and so the charity Marie Curie is inviting people to a Day of Reflection, remembering especially those who have lost their lives and those who are bereaved because of the pandemic. Churches are urged:

- To encourage keeping a minute's silence at 12 noon on March 23 or where appropriate to ring church bells at that time.
- To mark the occasion and offer prayer either in worship that day or on the previous Sunday, March 21.

Information and about the day and a toolkit can be found here [on the Marie Curie website](#). There are also resources for churches on the Church Support website [which is here](#).

## Public Worship

You will have seen from Monday's briefing that the Directors of Public Health are changing their advice on public worship with effect from March 8 and as a result Bishop Julian has lifted the blanket permission to suspend public worship from March 14.

We should be encouraged that those who make the decisions about our public health and safety clearly now think that it is possible for congregations to worship safely in their buildings once more and, as we considered their previous advice to close for public worship carefully, we must now consider this advice and act safely but with some confidence.

There may be some church buildings which have been unused for some time. If so please remember to run taps, flush toilets and ventilate the building for a couple of hours before allowing people back in.

## Lent and Holy Week

Our Diocesan Lenten activities continue [and can be found here](#).

Meanwhile, now we know that public worship will be back, many churches will now be turning their thoughts to Holy Week. There is very clear [guidance from the Church of England here](#). Please note in particular:

- Outdoor processions are not permitted and those indoors are not recommended
- The Washing of Feet on Maundy Thursday should not take place this year
- The Veneration of the Cross on Good Friday should be replaced with a devotion that does not involve physical touch
- Those who will distribute communion on Good Friday should use a separate vessel for the hosts than that which they used for distribution on Maundy Thursday

## DBE News

**Easter Explorers** is another wonderful new resource from our ever-imaginative DBE team. [You can find it here](#).

Perfect for children and families, it offers crafts, games and story to enable people to go on a journey from Palm Sunday to Easter Day.

**Fathom** is a resource that guides young people through the processes of change. It is easily adaptable to work both online and face to face. It's an ideal resource for young people who are struggling with how much things keep changing and can help them to process the past year too. [It can be found here](#).

The **Youth Work State of Mind** podcast encourages those who work with young people. [It can be heard here](#) and from that link you can subscribe with your preferred service.

## Vaccination Programme

The provision made in Lancashire for faith leaders to receive the vaccine as a priority group has now been removed, presumably following HM Government's decision to stick to a national age-banded mechanism. Clergy who have not yet been vaccinated can be in touch with their GP clinic or wait until they receive notice in the normal course of things.

## **Marriage Registration**

Arrangements for the registrations of marriages are changing from May 4. The Bishop's Chaplain is working with a group of local Registrars to arrange a collection of resources including videos and zoom seminars to brief people on the changes. Please look out for more information coming soon directly from Sam and the Registry.

## **APCMs**

Our advice is to hold these in late as May as you can. This will increase the likelihood of a safe physical gathering being possible. If anything changes and they cannot happen in person at the end of May you will be contacted by the Diocesan team.

## **Coronavirus Email Address**

If you have questions or problems please email: [coronavirus@blackburn.anglican.org](mailto: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,

The Coronavirus Task Group