

Dear Friends,

It is good news to see that the R rate in the North West is now the lowest in the country at a range of 0.6 to 0.9. After such a long period when rates have been intractably high, especially in some of our post-industrial towns, this is good news.

Generally however things have plateaued in terms of our management of the pandemic with no further news on issues such as face coverings, social distancing, refreshments after services and (perhaps most frustratingly) the reintroduction of congregational singing. There is a risk that this becomes dispiriting for us and our people as the weeks go on, but all the time we are hearing stories of Parishes using real imagination and vision in ministry through these strange times. Over the next few weeks we will bring you some of these stories.

Sunday Worship

Friday is St George's Day and so our worship this week will come from St George's Church in Chorley as they keep their Feast of Title. It will be led by the Revd Mike Print and will be available from Sunday morning on the [Diocesan YouTube channel](#).

Weekly Message

There isn't one! Instead of a Weekly Message from a Bishop or Archdeacon, there will instead be occasional messages relating to particular developments or initiatives.

Use of Church Buildings by Schools

A number of you have been asking about churches making use of Church buildings for worship or RE. This is possible, but parishes will need to work very closely with schools in risk assessing school visits. Children will need to remain within their bubble groups and churches should be cleaned after the visit.

Covid-19 Testing

Lateral Flow Tests are now available free to every household and can be ordered [here](#). They can also be collected from pharmacies. Some of you have been asking for a steer on when it is wisest for clergy to take a test. Our suggestion would be to take one on Friday (prior to Sunday but with sufficient time to arrange cover should a follow-up PCR test be needed) and again on Tuesday. But obviously this should be adapted to what works best for you.

Air Purifiers – Warning of a Scam

The Heritage team of DCMS have warned us of a letter, circulating under the guise of the 'Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy' (BEIS). It claims that from 3 May 2021 all businesses must have COVID safe air purifiers installed and requesting personal details. **This is a scam.**

If you are concerned or have been a victim of this fraud, please email Action Fraud (<https://www.actionfraud.police.uk/reporting-fraud-and-cyber-crime>) who can advise on next steps.

Church of England Webinars

The Evangelism and Discipleship team at Church House, Westminster have arranged a new set of webinars for later this month as follows:

CofE Vision for the 2020s: A church where mixed ecology is the norm

Archbishop Stephen Cottrell and panel discuss and answer questions on the CofE 2020s Vision and Strategy focussing on the priority to be a church where mixed ecology is the norm. (*National CofE webinar rather than E&D*)

Date: 26 April 12.30pm-1.30pm

[Register / Find Out More](#)

Sport, Fitness and Wellbeing Evangelism and Discipleship

Join Natalie Andrews and a panel to explore how churches, parishes and dioceses are using sport, fitness and wellbeing to engage with those not connected with church.

Date: 26 April 2pm-3pm

[Register / Find Out More](#)

Kingdom Leadership

Exploring what post lockdown leadership might require of us all, whatever our leadership roles. How do we lead in this new time in the face of much volatility and uncertainty and how can we discover a clear vision for the future. Join Dave Male with Prof Andrew Parker, Leadership Consultant and Robin Barden, Director of New Opportunities at Ridley Hall

Date: 29 April 2pm-3pm

[Register / Find Out More](#)

Post Pandemic Youth Evangelism

As we move out of restrictions, what does it look like to move beyond a retention model? Do we prioritise catechesis with existing young people, encourage peer to peer evangelism, develop community-focused outreach, look at a broader online engagement or explore a combination of all of these? Jimmy Dale and panel will explore some of the challenges and opportunities ahead

Date: 4 May 10am-11am

[Register / Find Out More](#)

Connecting with Young Adults – exploring the world of the ‘nones’

Dave Male in conversation with Dr Ruth Perrin, who, based on her research and ministry, will explore how we might learn to understand and connect with the generations so often missing from our churches.

Date: 6 May 2pm-3pm

[Register / Find Out More](#)

Churches Emerging from Lockdown – Lament, Thanksgiving and Mission

Everyone has been affected by the global COVID pandemic in some way and all of us will have been changed as a consequence. For some the changes will be obvious, for others they will be subtle and hard to articulate. As the body of Christ, we need to create safe and supportive spaces where those stories can be given voice.

There is a need to lament not just for the large number of people who have died before their time, but also for the trauma of social isolation, economic uncertainty and the loss of reassuring, familiar routines.

As we begin to find our way out of the restrictions that have been needed to protect the vulnerable, we need to balance looking back with holding onto the lessons we have learnt, as we look forward to restoring, rebuilding and re-imagining church.

Over the next few weeks, the task group will be sharing stories from across the Diocese of ways different parishes have started to engage with **lament, thanksgiving and mission**.

The Revd Andy Meeson describes an initiative at St John's Leyland...

We recently set aside a Saturday for prayer, reflection and fasting under the title 'Recovering our Vision'. The idea was to create a space and opportunity for us as individuals and a church to engage with our experience of the pandemic whilst also looking forward to the future. Our day began with an act of worship (in person & live-streamed) where we offered time for:

- 1. Remembering our experiences of the past year (lamenting those people and things we have lost and giving thanks for the people and things we have appreciated)*
- 2. Reflecting on our experiences (good and bad) and what we have learned through them*
- 3. Recuperating/Recovering by looking forward to those things that will restore us going forward*

We were also reminded of our church vision and together we sought the Lord's guidance as to how we may more fully live that out in this next phase. We then spent the day at home praying through some resources for personal reflection on our pandemic experience and questions such as, 'what in our church needs to be lamented, reviewed, changed, let go, taken up, etc.?' Finally, we came back together on Zoom to share our thoughts and experiences of the day and prayed together.

Of course, this is only the beginning of a longer process but we certainly hope this day has been a catalyst for further prayer, discussion and imagination as we move forward in mission in the future.

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.

Yours,

Coronavirus Task Group