

Dear Friends,

As we start a second weekend of lockdown, thank you for the extraordinary capacity for improvisation you are showing in such hard times. It was very moving to hear the round of applause for keyworkers that broke the silence at 8pm last night. We are very aware that there are many laypeople who receive this email who are under huge pressure because of their frontline roles and if that is you, please be assured of our thoughts and prayers.

Our clergy and some of our licensed lay workers, as Ministers of Religion, are keyworkers and it has been good to hear how you have been rising to the challenge of ministering in fundamentally changed circumstances. And in one sense every single one of us is on the frontline as we support our families, care for the vulnerable or simply stick to government regulations on social distancing. Thank you to you all for the contribution you are making.

One especially heart-warming illustration of imagination in ministry has come from Christchurch Thornton where vision champion, Emily Hilton has been working with her friend Erin Wilshaw to help those who are self-isolating because of their age or health issues. Emily returned to the family home after the premature end of her first year at university and visited an elderly member of the congregation with her mother - before the stricter social distancing measures came into effect.

The positive impact this visit had on the recipient and the need for care in the community of the most vulnerable led the girls to set up an email address which they use to coordinate offers of help from volunteers. These volunteers share best practice on how to safely support the most vulnerable members of the community, which can happen through practical means like picking up a bit of extra shopping when already out, or through calling neighbours on the phone to see how they are. Emily is training to be a midwife so is in an excellent position to help volunteers understand appropriate health and safety measures which can be put in place. Well done Emily and Erin, this is a fantastic example of how the church and its members are on the front foot in helping the most vulnerable and are thinking seriously about how to do this as safely as possible for all concerned.

Thank you for all your examples of how you are doing to help those in your communities. Please continue to do so faithfully and safely.

Please note that there will be no briefing tomorrow unless there are any significant developments. We'll be back on Monday but the email address will be monitored all weekend.

Any question or queries, please email: coronavirus@blackburn.anglican.org. ***Please also email if you are unwell or self-isolating.***

Pastoral Visits. One or two of you have contacted us with the impression that all pastoral visits are to be halted because of the pandemic. Please note that this is not the case. The important thing to ask is whether any visit is essential, and there are some instances where it would be. There is good and helpful advice [here](#).

A Cross in the Window. Bishop Julian has spoken about the Diocese's current impromptu campaign to encourage people to put crosses in their windows from Palm Sunday and through Holy Week. You can [read about our campaign here](#) including a link in the story to a little video to watch and share with family, friends, neighbours and other connections. Once

your cross is in the window, take a picture and upload it to social media if you can, using the handles @cofelancs and #holyweekcross and you can also tag @churchofengland

This Sunday. From 9am on the [Diocesan YouTube channel](#), Bishop Julian will lead a short service from Bishop's House for Palm Sunday. More services are also being recorded for uploading to YouTube during Holy Week, including one featuring all three of our Bishops for Easter Sunday. There are also service sheets for services at home all week [available on this page](#) alongside many other prayer resources for Holy Week from the Diocese and also the national church.

Worship Online. Parishes across the Diocese are continuing to reach out to their congregations through the latest technology; for services filmed at home, but also to keep in touch with people in other ways. Visit this page on A Church Near You for parishes [active online right now](#).

And for those not online... In relation to parishes which have larger numbers of (often) elderly people who may not be online and/or parishes without ready access to technology for various reasons we are keen to hear how you are keeping in touch with your people too. An example is St Laurence's Church in Chorley; via Royal Mail they are sending prayers, readings and other updates to those they know are not online. Email coronavirus@blackburn.anglican.org with your ideas so we can share them with other parishes via future daily briefings.

Easter Messages. Every year, at Easter and Christmas, our Bishops record video messages for parishes and the people of Lancashire and this Easter will be no different. More early next week but expect the usual video messages to watch and share on social media with text versions on the website to read and download.

And finally...

As he entered Jerusalem the authorities tried to persuade Jesus to silence the crowds from their cries of Hosanna. But he refused and said that, if they were silenced, the stones would cry out. Even with our buildings locked and our congregations dispersed, let us not be silenced from shouting out Hosanna, for amidst the confusion and anxiety of the current age, Jesus has come to save us.

***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