

Dear Friends,

Today we have a single theme briefing ...

KEEPING HOLY WEEK 2020

For most churches, Holy Week is one the highlights of the year as we live the events of the dying and rising of Christ and renew our faith and hope in the resurrection. In particular to be deprived of the opportunity of gathering with our people on Easter Day will be a cause of deep grief to priests and lay leaders of our churches as well as to the congregations we serve, and it is important to acknowledge the deep pain this will cause us.

Some priests have suggested an Easter Day style celebration on the day when we are permitted to commence public worship afresh which is a good idea, but we need to judge carefully the mood of the nation before making firm plans.

It is important first to think how you will be keeping Holy Week in your own home, for the call upon clergy and lay leaders in these difficult times is to offer prayer and worship on behalf of our people. Try to find ways to mark each day, and many of you will want to livestream acts of worship, especially around the Great Three Days.

We also need to think about ways in which we can resource our people so that they can observe Holy Week themselves. We have heard of a huge range of imaginative ideas being explored in our parishes and many of you are producing resources and packs.

Here are some Diocesan and national resources which may be of help to you:

A CROSS IN THE WINDOW

We want to start a little campaign to encourage as many homes as possible to make a cross on Palm Sunday and place it in the window of their home. This will be a sign to those who pass by that in the saving work of Christ there is healing, life and salvation.

Initially the cross could be simple and fairly plain, made of paper, card, wood – allow people to be as imaginative as they like. However, when Easter comes some people may like to decorate it with colours, flowers etc as a sign of our trust in the joy of the resurrection.

More on the Covid-19 [prayer and resources page](#) on the Diocesan website (including a link for ideas and inspiration) and watch and share [this little video](#) about the idea too to encourage others to participate.

DIOCESAN RESOURCES

Worship videos

Via the medium of the Diocesan YouTube channel (link below) **Bishop Julian** will be leading:

- Worship for Palm Sunday (released at **9am** and available thereafter)
- Good Friday Meditation (released at **2pm** on Good Friday)
- Worship for Easter morning with all three Bishops (released at **9am**)

In addition, on Maundy Thursday, he will lead a short service in which clergy can renew the promises of Ordination together. This will be released at **11am**. All these services will be recorded in advance and will be available from the times stated on [the Diocesan YouTube Channel](#).

Before the lockdown, **Bishop Philip** also made three recordings at St Laurence Church in Chorley:

- Maundy Thursday Eucharist of the Lord's Supper
- Good Friday Liturgy of the Day (with reading of St John's Passion)
- Easter Morning Eucharist with Renewal of Baptismal Promises

These will also be available on the [St Laurence YouTube channel](#) on the relevant days.

Across the Diocese we are aware that many of our parishes are adapting to the effects of the coronavirus outbreak on the ability to worship by using technology in different and innovative ways to reach people where they are. There is a story about this [on the Diocesan website](#) featuring some of our churches, including our Cathedral. We know all this has been a huge shift in the normal pattern of church life of course, especially as we approach Holy Week. For churches using livestreaming, video or other technology solutions for reaching congregations you can use the interactive map on [A Church Near You here](#).

Prayer Resources for use at home

On the Diocesan Website Covid-19 [prayer and resources page](#) you will find:

- A Guide to Keeping Holy Week at home
- Worship at home on Palm Sunday
- Worship at home on Good Friday
- Worship at home on Easter Day

In addition (and located on the same website page) Ruth Hassall our Director of Discipleship, has gathered some wonderful sets of meditations that can be used to mark Holy Week, including one she has written herself.

Resources from the Board of Education

For Children

Barefoot Easter Walk_ A sensory barefoot walk taking you on a journey from Palm Sunday to Good Friday which would be great for families to do at home. And you could also find more ideas for adapting at home with **multi-sensory Easter** resources.

Outdoor Easter_ Two activity sheets for families to download and use together to help them understand and celebrate Easter.

Weekly@ Easter Sessions for 2020_– These were designed for churches but there's lots of things in there that could be adapted for use at home, including Easter prayer stations and ideas for under 5s.

There is also the regular Weekly@ materials with adaptations for families on the Diocesan Board of Education social media pages; links at the top of the [Board of Education website](#).

For Young People

Pick n Mix Easter_ A youth work resource which helps you to build a session for your specific group, or individual young person. A video showing how this can be adapted for home is on the Facebook page currently.

Stable to the Tomb – 14 videos of 14 incredible people's stories of how they came to faith and how they walk each day out with Jesus. The videos are free to download as is the accompanying sessions plans to help you unpack the story you have watched.

Videos:

- [January Stable to the Tomb videos](#)
- [February Stable to the Tomb videos](#)
- [March Stable to the Tomb videos](#)
- [April Stable to the Tomb videos](#)
- Session Plans for the videos are [here](#).

NATIONAL RESOURCES

The Archbishop of Canterbury will be posting reflections on Facebook on Palm Sunday, Maundy Thursday, Good Friday, Holy Saturday and Easter Day.

The BBC will broadcast a Eucharist of Easter Day with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Dover. Other services on the BBC during Holy Week will also take place on radio and well as TV. Keep an eye on the TV and radio schedules.

The Society of St Wilfrid and St Hilda will be releasing four professionally made Holy Week videos for Palm Sunday (released at 8am) Maundy Thursday (Released at at 3pm), Good Friday (released at 12 noon) and Easter Day (released at 8am). The videos will be made [available here](#).

National resources for the young

Rhema Theatre Company are launching their 'Easter Tales' which are normally £50 but being offered for free up until 17th April: <https://talesfromthemiraclebook.co.uk/>

ROOTS are currently offering free resources for families to use at home, including things for Holy Week and Easter: <https://www.rootsontheweb.com/>

The Reflectionary is also a good source of resources to follow the lectionary with all ages. In this time of crisis, it now provides 'Together, Apart' for households of all ages and all sizes to use: <https://reflectionary.org/>

Finally...

As he entered Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the Pharisees demanded that Jesus silence the crowds who were shouting, 'Hosanna!' He answered, 'I tell you, if these were silent, the stones would shout out!' (*Luke 19, 40*).

May it be the same for us this Easter. Our churches may be locked, our public praise may be for a while silenced, our Christian family may be dispersed rather than gathered. But nothing can stop us celebrating the salvation we find in the dying and rising of Jesus Christ. Even apart from each other, let us shout out Hosanna! Alleluia! For Jesus has set us free.

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

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,

Bishop Philip and the Coronavirus Task Group