

Dear friends,

As Holy Week approaches we will walk once again with Jesus, from the cheering crowds into the valley of the shadow of death and then to the dawn of resurrection life. This is the journey we must always face, every Holy Week. But in this uncanny season of loneliness and helplessness we face it fully, perhaps for many of us more fully than ever before.

Meanwhile the candle continues to burn for you night and day here in the chapel at Bishop's Lodge, and prayers for you all continue to rise from here and from the homes of Bishop Bev, Dean Sue and your Archdeacons. To these prayers are added those of Bob Lewis, our Diocesan Chair of Clergy, and Debra Walker our Chair of Laity.

Alongside all these I know that each one of you reading this will be joining in the offering of intercession for one another - for every parish, school, fresh expression and chaplaincy - as Holy Week unfolds. We are borne up by one another's prayer as we seek to meet the world's need with God's resources.

Over the last couple of weeks we have each settled into a new pattern and a discipline of life. This will certainly change in the future as new circumstances and new guidance emerge. But for now we commit ourselves and our people to **stay at home, protect our NHS and save lives.**

The implications of this for our worship and prayer are profound and unsettling, and I know that you have been working with your communities, preparing them to walk the way of the cross at home. I have been hugely impressed by the range of resources, traditional and digital, that you have produced to help your people through.

As always I suggest that you use Diocesan and national material to supplement, and not to replace, your own offering to your people.

Before Monday we'll let you have the link to our Diocesan "Service of the Word with Renewal of Commitment to Ministry". As I said in my last update I very much hope that you will use this service on Monday or later in Holy Week, to pray for one another and to renew the direction of your own life as a minister of the Gospel.

In addition we will send you details of a series of devotional pieces as Holy Week unfolds. Bishop Bev is producing a set of reflections on the Stations of the Cross, and the Archdeacons are producing reflections for the days of Holy Week also.

Please feel free to share these with your people as appropriate - but there is no need to do so, and in essence these pieces are produced for you. Whether or not you use these particular offerings, I advise you to give yourself space for your own devotion and your own prayer so that the reservoir of your spirit will be filled and can overflow to your community in the coming weeks and months.

Let me end this update by repeating my hope that you will continue to remember the need for rest and refreshment even in this Holy Week. We do not know what will happen in the future, but we are braced for an increase in cases of COVID-19 and sadly for an increase in deaths. We are exercising the disciplines of isolation and distancing, and these will do much to reduce the rate of increase. But the evidence from other countries and other parts of this country is that things may well get worse before they get better. With all this in mind, your own flourishing, resilience and self-care is vital. Only so will you be able to continue fruitfully in ministry as the world continues to change.

Here is a link to a piece - not written for the Church but for the academic community - from a Canadian author. It seems to me to speak wisely about all this, and so I commend it to you. At the heart of what she writes is the truth that we are in this for

the long haul and that we therefore need to be gentle with ourselves and with others. The piece is here: <https://www.chronicle.com/article/Why-You-Should-Ignore-All-That/248366/>

As always I advise you to consult our Coronavirus pages regularly; each page is updated frequently. And please contact Nichola at this office if you have any queries or suggestions of your own.

The national page is here: www.churchofengland.org/coronavirus

And the Diocesan page here: www.liverpool.anglican.org/coronavirus

In conclusion and in summary, dear friends - may our Lord, who loves you so much, give you fruitfulness in your ministry and rest in your soul. Stay safe. God bless you.
+Paul

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