

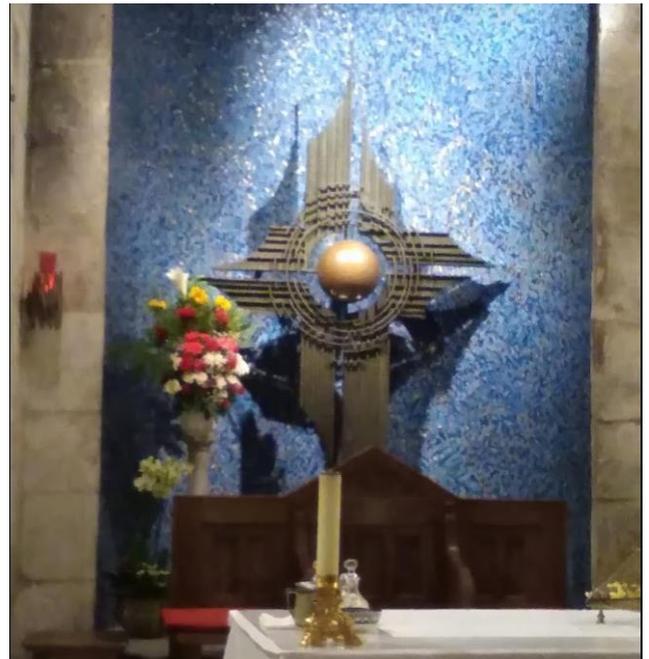
April 2020

Lay Ministry Matters

GREETINGS TO YOU ALL,

When I send out Lay Ministry Mailings, I almost always feel I should apologise about it “having been x number of months since I last wrote, and so much has happened since then”.

This time, it’s just 3 weeks since my last letter, and I have lost count of the number of updates we have had in that time from both the National Church and Bishops court as so much has changed, very rapidly.



Some of you are probably feeling quite overwhelmed by the amount of information you have received, so my apologies to you that I am adding another letter to the mix. But I’m also conscious that it is both easy to miss important points – and easy to feel isolated, especially if you are alone at home and self-isolating.

Since I last wrote, some of you have taken a deep breath and tried out new things: I know some of you have joined Facebook, others have been grappling with how to video, and if you have succeeded in videoing – how to share it with others. Lots of us have experienced Zoom! Still others are more than happy to leave that level of technology to others – not all churches are doing online church, and as the weeks pass the National CofE communications team, and the BBC, are likely to produce far better resources than most of our parishes can hope to do.

When I wrote to you three weeks ago everything felt unreal, but if the parish where I am a Reader is typical of others, three weeks on we probably all know people who are sick and in hospital, and people who have died – whether from COVID19 or from another cause, but either way funerals have become very different to how they were just a couple of months ago.

Those of you who are licensed to conduct funerals (or have the Bishops permission to do so) frequently speak of it as being a privilege to minister to families at such a time in their lives. I know that many of you who are over 70 are finding it hard to come to terms with the fact that you are simply not currently permitted to exercise this ministry, and many who are under 70 have health reasons of your own, or those in your households, which means you must self-isolate. The Archdeacons have created a diocesan database of Funeral Ministers, coded to distinguish between those who are currently able to take funerals, those who will not be able to do so, and those who temporarily can't because they have been in contact with someone who has got ill and need to quarantine.

Many of you who can't conduct funerals have expressed to me your sadness about that - especially during this time when there is such need. There is a huge and growing need for bereavement care, and some funerals are taking place with just the minister and five mourners. Whether or not we have authorisation to conduct funerals, we will all know people who are bereaved, and will not be able to visit them, so have to resort to pastoral care by telephone – which is not something we were trained for or might normally choose.

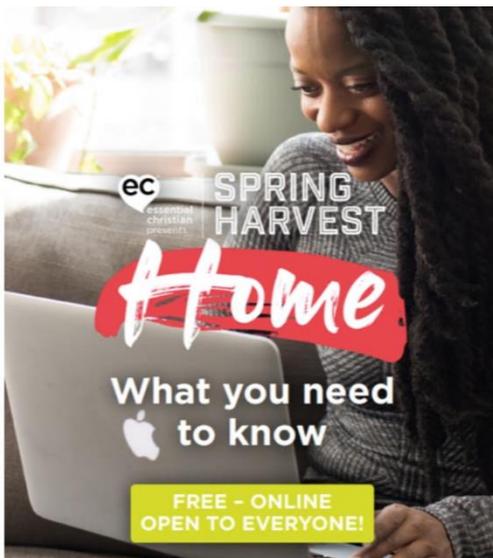
The Transforming Ministry website - <https://transformingministry.co.uk/> has a range of gathered resources which we could all find useful. They are listed as 'support for funeral ministry' and include 'Guidelines for pastoral care during coronavirus' - written primarily for clergy in Blackburn Diocese but helpful to any ministers - another document adapted from Care for the Family about telephone pastoral care after bereavement, and a link to CRUSE's website.

In normal times people who are bereaved sometimes report their neighbours or friends avoiding them because they don't know what to say. Some of us will feel that if we don't know what to say we can at least be there for them. Now we are not able to be there in person, the phone may be a poor substitute, but it is better than no contact at all. Many of us will find ourselves needing to make hard phone calls to those who have been bereaved in our churches or communities, or be the ones who call people who are not bereaved but are anxious or depressed.

I am reminded of this quote which my husband and I sometimes use when doing Marriage Preparation:

Phoning someone may feel an inadequate way to share the love of Jesus, but when we can't see them face to face or listen to them over a cup of tea – this may mean more than we can begin to imagine.

"Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person, they are almost indistinguishable." ~ David Augsburger



Many of us would usually look forward to meeting family over or after the Easter weekend, but this year Bank Holiday Monday will be another day at home. Why not join in this year's Spring Harvest event? Some of you will have been, but years ago, others might have heard friends talk about it but never tried. This year, instead of cancelling altogether, the whole event is being reworked as something to do from home, online, for free!

The theme was already chosen as "Unleashed – the Acts Church today" – so there will be something for everyone in the programme. You can choose whether to fill each day or just choose a couple of events. Spring Harvest is an ecumenical event – and if you look at the list of speakers you will all see some you recognise. This link will take you to the programme and lots more information: <https://springharvest.org/spring-harvest-home/>

It remains for me to wish you all every blessing for this strangest of Easters. As we continue to remember the passion of Jesus, we will hold on to the fact that his death conquered death, and as we celebrate the resurrection in our homes, but missing being gathered church, we will rejoice that CHRIST IS RISEN

With my prayers and best wishes for you all

Kare