

July 2020

Lay Ministry Matters

GREETINGS TO YOU ALL,

I came back from complete furlough on July 1st, and initially for reduced hours, so although I have seen every email that was waiting for me it will take a while to work through them all and respond fully, please be patient, but don't feel you can't contact me or nudge me about something you expected to have heard about by now.

Even on furlough, it was clear from social media that ministry was continuing across the diocese, but in a whole range of different ways, and on behalf of our Archdeacons (and Bishops) I want to thank you for all you have done so far in this very different year, and above all for your prayers. I know that for many of you it has been incredibly frustrating that face to face ministry has been restricted and that at the same time there are understandable anxieties about what ministry will look like in 'the new normal.' Please bear with us all as we try to navigate our way through the next few months.



You will be aware that guidance for the church - like guidance for schools or guidance generally - is fast changing, and doesn't always seem crystal clear. If you are still shielding you will know that you are not in a position to consider coming to church yet, even if yours is a church that has opened the doors.

For others of you who are over 70 (or have a health condition which is not critical) and had to self-isolate, you may now be feeling uncertain as to what you are allowed to do. There is no pressure on anyone to do anything about which they feel uncomfortable or anxious, but several of you who have PTO and are authorised to conduct funerals have already asked if this is an aspect of ministry you can now resume.

We have passed the time where this was not permitted, full stop, and you might have seen the guidelines which apply at <https://www.churchofengland.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/Personal%20Risk%20Factors%20for%20Clergy%2C%20Church%20Workers%20and%20Volunteers%20v1.pdf>

Please note the concluding paragraph - you will need to talk with your incumbent (and perhaps Area Dean), because every individual and every context is different.

It is also very clear that digital church, zoom homegroups and prayer meetings, telephone pastoral care, letter writing etc. will all need to continue, so for some of you there remains plenty to do without leaving home.



Just before I began furlough I sent a message to some of you suggesting that this might be a good time for your Lay Ministry Development Review – thanks to all of you who have done those. Nevertheless, even if you haven't done the formal process, for all of us there has been an opportunity to review our ministries.

In South Gillingham parish where I am a Reader we have asked the ministry team and the congregation the following 4 questions:

1. What have we gained but are happy to lose at the end of lockdown?
2. What have we gained and want to keep?
3. What have we lost and don't want back?
4. What have we lost and want to have back? (Thanks to CPAS for the questions)

Some of you will have gained a better life balance, rediscovered evenings at home relaxing instead of frequent church meetings, or gained new insights as to which aspects of ministry inspire and energise you, and which are something you do because you used to enjoy it, or because nobody else offers, but is perhaps no longer your calling? From my reading of Lay Ministry Reviews it is clear that because we are committed and want to do all we can, and don't like to say "no" when asked to take something on, there is a strong tendency for Lay Ministers to take on too much over time and spread themselves thinly. This may be time to consider whether your priorities should change: doing less but doing it better.

There are also good news stories, as we have learnt new skills, discovered new opportunities and seen the kingdom of God grow while the church buildings were locked. It would be great to share these stories and encourage one another, so please be in touch.

Pastoral visiting and Anna Chaplaincy are especially challenging when elderly people are not able to leave home, but may be feeling very isolated, and some of you will have seen Christine Seth Smith's recent account of Anna Chaplaincy by bicycle.

<https://www.annachaplaincy.org.uk/post/anna-chaplaincy-by-bicycle>

If you want to watch the licensing of this year's cohort of LLMs, the event (which took place over Zoom) is now on Youtube on this link:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hEUEG-xcidc&t=19s>



Please pray for the new LLMs starting their licensed ministries in quite unexpected circumstances. Pray too for the next cohort of Bishop's certificate students who will begin their training this Saturday with their induction session over Zoom. Some of us have to remember a long way back to our very first training session, and opportunity to meet

the others in our cohort, but until this year it has always happened in a real time and place meeting.

Finally, while I was writing this letter, an email dropped into my inbox from Ruth Haldane. If you were at last October's Lay Ministry conference at Christ Church Orpington you will remember Ruth talking about Transforming Ministry – she was our afternoon speaker.

Ruth writes:

I am delighted to say that the first module on online worship is launching this Friday! We have been testing it for the last two weeks, and are now ready to release the module. This module has been written in response to changes following the outbreak of the Covid19 pandemic. Follow this link for an introductory video <https://youtu.be/R4w3boZzXvA>.

In March 2020 the Church changed and it will never be the same again. Overnight online worship became a real issue and a challenge for churches across the world. But the learning curve is steep, the stumbling blocks many and the competition, from other organisations trying to win viewers, immense.

If you are struggling to produce online worship or doing it but know you can do better, then this is the course for you. Three one-hour units take you through both theory and practice. You can join an online community and get help from others wrestling with similar issues.

You will hear from those leading worship online regularly and those who work in professional broadcasting. And there are practical tips galore to make your streaming stand out and make an impact. It's totally free.

All you need to do is register and start the course at your own pace. God is reshaping the Church and it's up to us to catch up and move with him.

This has come from the Central Readers' Council, but is NOT Limited to Readers and LLMs – it is a free resource for all who are involved in leading online worship – or who might be if they felt they knew how. To register and look at the course go to moodle.cofeportal.org (if you don't have a CofE portal account you will be directed to set one up, which is very straightforward, and then you can log in to Moodle and choose the Transforming Ministry section. You only need to set your password up once)

With my prayers and best wishes for you all,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kase". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a long horizontal stroke at the end.