

The Rt Revd Dr Michael Ipgrave

Bishop's House, 22 The Close, Lichfield WS13 7LG
T: 01543 306001. E: bishop.michael@lichfield.anglican.org



**THE BISHOP
OF LICHFIELD**

To: Clergy and Lay Ministers in the Diocese of Lichfield

1st April 2020

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

HOLY WEEK AND EASTER, 2020

As we prepare to celebrate a Holy Week and Easter unlike any that we have experienced before, I am writing to thank you for all that you are doing to sustain the praying and worshipping life of our churches, and to give you some more information and guidance about arrangements over the next few days and beyond.

I am very appreciative of the commitment that you have to maintain a rhythm of prayer and worship, both for yourselves and also on behalf of others. It has been so encouraging to see how many of our churches have been facing outwards to support the vulnerable, the lonely and the isolated, and to build up a sense of community even when we are physically separated. But we know that we can only continue to face outwards in mission and service if at the same time we are turned towards God, the source of our hope and our life; at no time is this more important than in the coming celebration of Our Lord's passion, death and resurrection.

I am therefore glad to commend to you the attached note on 'Holy Week and Easter in 2020' prepared for the Church of England nationally by a group of bishops. It includes several ideas for keeping Holy Week at home, living out the great story of our redemption in domestic settings; at the same time, it underlines the importance of us all doing what we can to stay together as worshipping communities, both locally and across the diocese, despite our physical separation.

In the Diocese of Lichfield:

1. Together with Bishop Clive and Bishop Sarah, I invite you to renew your ordination vows or ministerial commitment at **11am on Maundy Thursday, April 9th**. This online occasion will take the place this Holy Week of our usual Chrism Eucharist. This year, the oils will not be blessed or consecrated, and the renewal will not take place within the context of a Eucharist. We are hoping that it may be possible to organise our coming together in a way which allows for some interaction online; more details on joining this will be sent to you next week. In the meantime, please do keep this time clear as an opportunity to join with your bishops and your fellow ministers in reaffirming our shared commitment to the ministry of the Gospel.



2. Over the next few days, I will be sending by post to all licensed and PtO clergy and lay ministers, and to all churchwardens, a card with Easter greetings, which includes the traditional paschal prayer acclaiming Jesus Christ as Lord of all time and eternity. I hope that you will receive this as a reminder of the unchanging truth of Jesus' resurrection which is at the heart of our faith, and in which alone we find confidence and hope.

3. I invite you and your people to join me online at **daybreak, 5.15am on Easter Day, Sunday 12th April**, to celebrate the Resurrection, lighting a candle at home while joining in the paschal prayer, followed by a simple celebration of Holy Communion livestreamed. It would be wonderful if many of us are able in this way to be distantly present together to greet the Risen Lord.

4. During the coming weeks, I strongly encourage you to see your home as taking for now the place of the church building. It is a proper place for those of you who are priests to celebrate the Eucharist; for those who need to keep the Sacrament available for ministry to the sick, the home is an appropriate place for reservation, provided this is done in a way which is seemly and reverent.

5. During the period for which the current restrictions apply, I give permission to any priest to preside at a celebration of the Eucharist at which other participants are not physically present.

6. We are likely to be entering a prolonged period during which normal ministerial activity will not be possible, and movement beyond our homes will continue to be restricted. While this creates sadness and frustration for us, it may also prove to be a time in which God is calling us inward to spend more time in prayer, study and learning. I plan to write after Easter to describe some ways in which I hope that we in this diocese can take hold of this opportunity to renew and deepen our understanding of the faith.

7. I urge you to keep a close eye on our diocesan website, and particularly on its pages of coronavirus-related advice and resources. We are providing a twice-weekly update and regular guidance, and have also established a daily pattern of prayer at 1pm, Mondays to Fridays.

Bishop Clive and Bishop Sarah join me in wishing you, in these worst of times, every joy in this best of seasons. You and yours are in our prayers, and we ask you to pray for us your bishops too.

Yours in the risen Christ,

Michael Hutchins