

# The Benefice of Blandford Forum and Langton Long Response to COVID-19

Updated 17<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Public acts of worship are suspended until further as advised by  
Archbishops of Canterbury and York.

Firstly, thank you to everyone for your measured and appropriate response to the ongoing  
Coronavirus situation. I would like, before going into detail about our response to offer you  
this prayer and reflection.

## Prayer

God of compassion,  
be close to those who are ill, afraid or in isolation.  
In their loneliness, be their consolation;  
in their anxiety, be their hope;  
in their darkness, be their light;  
through him who suffered alone on the cross,  
but reigns with you in glory,  
Jesus Christ our Lord.  
**Amen.**

## Reflection

I am grateful to Revd Mike Tufnell for the following thoughts which he shared with his  
church community.

‘Please try not to be anxious and please don’t panic. As believers in a powerful, all-loving  
God, we are to redirect any panic to prayer, asking God to protect and preserve life of  
course, but also for a ‘peace that transcends understanding’ (Philippians 4:6-7). That’s  
what we did at this morning’s prayer meeting at church, and I call us all to do. One of the  
most common commands in the bible is ‘Do not be afraid’. We are called ‘not to worry’  
by Jesus (Matt 6:25-27) and to trust in God as he prepared his disciples for his death

(John 14:1). We are to be a non-anxious presence in the world, because we know who is ultimately in charge and in whose loving arms we are in (1 Peter 5:7).

That said, I am not saying to anxious people - or to you if you are worried, "you are overreacting", or "everything is going to be fine" - that would be patronising and naive. The reality now is that it is almost certain that some of us, and many known to us in our wider family, networks and community will contract COVID-19. So the practical questions (as helpfully described in a video towards the bottom of this page, from chief scientific adviser Sir Patrick Vallance: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-51857856>) is how we delay the spread of the virus and reduce the overall number of people who contract the virus - especially the elderly and more medically vulnerable.'

## Our Response

### Pastoral Care

We are working hard in the fast changing and unprecedented situation to ensure that, as a church, we can offer pastoral care to our church community and to the wider community of Blandford Forum and Langton Long.

We are at this moment compiling lists of church members and have a small team ready to contact every member of the church by phone. They will offer to make regular phone calls to 'check in' on each other and, if anyone needs practical help, this will be fed back to the church office, and actioned as soon as possible. This might include shopping, collecting prescriptions, cutting grass etc.

In addition, we are working with various partners within the town to provide for the needs of the wider community. We have been in contact with our local schools and are planning to be able to provide food to families who would normally receive free school meals should the schools shut and continue to work in partnership with the food bank.

If you are aware of a need that is not being met which you think the church could help, with please contact Neil or the church office.

### Service provision and Spiritual food.

The Church of England is constantly updating its advice and guidance to Church leaders, this is dynamic situation and requires a flexible and fast response from all. We will comply with the Church of England's guidance.

In light of the Government guidance around non-essential contact, the Archbishops of Canterbury and York have issued advice that public worship is suspended until further notice. [The Church of England's guidance can be accessed here.](#)

**Churches should be open where possible but with no public worship services taking place.** Prayers can be said by clergy and ministers on behalf of everyone and churches should consider ways of sharing this with the wider community.

One way that we can try to provide some worship and prayer is through the digital world. We plan to live stream Sunday services using Facebook live. This will be a first for us and you. This will be available on our Facebook page. More details of how to access this will be published shortly.

The Church of England already has one of the best digital platforms (websites) in the country and it is responding to the Coronavirus by increasing the amount of digital content they have available.

There are a range of Christian resources already available:

- [#LiveLent: Care for God's Creation - The Church of England's Lent campaign for 2020.](#) With weekly themes shaped around the first Genesis account of creation, it explores the urgent need for humans to value and protect the abundance God has created. This daily audio content is available via the app and daily emails. [Sign up here](#)

The BBC's Daily Service and Sunday Worship radio programmes will be using some of the themes from #LiveLent as part of their broadcasts. [Find out more online.](#)

- [Prayer for the day](#) - each day the Church of England publishes audio and text of the Prayer for the Day
- Smart speakers – daily prayer and #LiveLent audio content can be accessed via our smart speaker apps. [Enable our smart speaker app](#)
- Live streaming services - users can watch live streams of services from a range of churches and we will be improving [AChurchNearYou.com](#) in the days ahead to make this clearer (more details below).
- - [All Hallows by the Tower](#)
  - [Buckingham Parish Church](#)
  - [St Nicholas Church, Canvey Island](#)
  - [St James' Church, Clitheroe](#)
  - [St Mary's Kenton.](#)

In order to not exclude those that do not or cannot access Facebook, email, or our website we happy to delivery copies of sermons, updated information Keynotes, if you can access our digital resource then please do as this will help to focus our time and effort on those in need of support.

## Communication

Due to the fast-changing nature of the situation we will be doing all that we can to keep you updated with relevant news and information from our churches. We will do this by:

- Website. There will be a Coronavirus page on our website, this will be updated regularly and will contain information about our churches and links to national advice and guidance. As previously stated, we will endeavour to keep those not on the internet up to date.
- Facebook. We will copy information from the website to Facebook.
- Email. We will email everyone who regularly receives church emails, e.g. Keynotes. Keep an eye out for emails from us and check your junk box if you do not seem to be receive them.
- Hardcopy. We will print hard copies and put them in the church, parish centre and will deliver them to those whom we know of that can not access any digital content.

## Finally

There will be things we have missed, there will be things that change quicker than we can, we will not get everything right. Please support us and keep us informed of anyone in our church community that needs extra assistance. We hope and pray for God's abundant mercy and goodness to overflow from our churches at this time.

## Contact info

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