

From the Vicar, The Reverend Robin Figg

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Dear friends,

As we approach the end of a very difficult year, and work through this second period of lockdown, we are aware of the impact the Covid-19 pandemic has had on all our lives. You will know, personally, or within your family and friendship groups, how this year has challenged our health and well-being and, for many, our financial situation.

The Church in this Benefice has continued its work in supporting people during this time in various ways, including our weekly livestreamed services, special pre-recorded services, public services in our churches when permitted, opening our buildings for individual prayer, online Junior Church, and support to the bereaved and others in need. We have sought to keep in touch with each other through my weekly pastoral letters and many other points of contact across our communities. We have also continued our support of the Morecambe Bay Foodbank and the Lancaster & District Homeless Action Service.

Unfortunately, along with all charitable organisations, the Church has suffered a drop in our income. This has been a result of the restrictions in being able to hold our regular public services, including weddings and baptisms, as well as other regular activities and fundraising events. Across our Benefice, which serves the communities of Warton and Millhead, Borwick and Priest Hutton and the Yealands, we are facing an estimated drop in income of over £30,000 this year.

The three church communities of our Benefice are part of the Diocese of Blackburn. In response to the situation we face together the Bishop of Blackburn has launched a **Call to Pray and Give**. Bishop Julian is asking everyone to consider prayerfully how they can support their local Church at this time of crisis.

Those who share the leadership of God's Church with me here in the Benefice have committed to support this **Call to Pray and Give** and invite you to do so, too. We ask you to pray about what God might be asking you to do in response to the call to give. If your income is keeping up, if your financial situation remains secure, please consider making a special donation to support the mission & ministry of God's Church at this time.

The Church's income each year enables us to care for our church buildings and churchyards, offer regular worship and activities, and supports the cost of having a full-time Vicar. A significant loss of income makes it more difficult to sustain the Church's work and could, eventually, lead to a reduction in the number of clergy across the Diocese.

The **Call to Pray and Give** begins on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> November and ends on Sunday 29<sup>th</sup> November, which is Advent Sunday, the start of the new Church year. It will be possible to make your donation either via our *GiveALittle* online giving page or by cheque. The link to our *GiveALittle* page is given at the bottom of my emails or you can go via our Benefice website at [www.ubwby.org](http://www.ubwby.org); cheques can be sent to the Vicarage. (Please make cheques payable to "PCC of Warton" and address the envelope to The Treasurer. The donations will benefit the Church across the Benefice, but need to be paid into one of our accounts.) On Sunday 6<sup>th</sup> December, when we expect to be having public worship again, we will give thanks for all our gifts during our services and again in my pastoral letter the following week.

During the **Call to Pray and Give** the Diocese will be broadcasting Evening Prayer daily at 7.00pm, led by different members of the Bishop's Leadership Team. Every parish will be prayed for by name over the two weeks. I invite you to join in with these times of prayer as often as you are able. Information about this and other resources to aid your prayer will be shared with you.

With grateful thanks for your support of God's Church and wishing you every blessing,

