

Living well through the next six months

Living with COVID-19 will be hard for everyone this winter. The Prime Minister has asked us all to observe the Rule of Six. There are lessons and challenges that Christians can draw from this number to help us live well in these times.

> SIX MONTHS IS THE NEW HORIZON

Focus on Easter and lean back into the great themes of the church year.

> SIX DAYS TO WORK AND A SABBATH TO REST

Reclaim the gift of one day each week for rest and re-creation.

> SIX PEOPLE TO JOURNEY WITH

Rediscover church as small groups of people supporting one another.

> SIX WAYS TO BE SALT AND LIGHT

Identify the people and community organisations you can support.

> SIX PERCENT TO YOUR CHURCH

If your income is stable, increase your giving to sustain the local church.

> SIX PEOPLE TO PRAY FOR

Pray for people you know to discover the riches of our faith.

"...neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord."

Romans 8.37-39

Six months is the new horizon

We need a new horizon for our hope and our lives. The spring will bring better news, so set your horizon on Easter and lean back into the great themes of the church year.

Our journey through COVID-19 will be a marathon, not a sprint. From Harvest through to the beginning of Holy Week, there is much to pray for, dwell on and celebrate.

Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar
The beauty of creation and care for the earth	Mortality and hope of resurrection	God's kingdom and the coming of Jesus	Christ the light shining in the darkness	The gift of our baptism; everyday faith	Our salvation: the cross and resurrection

We may not be able to do everything we want to do when we gather as the Church on Sundays, but common worship, both online and physical, remains vital for the Church and for our communities. The Diocese will continue to offer **Church at Home** throughout the next six months, including Christmas Day, and will seek to support the mission and ministry of local churches in every way possible.

Six days to work and a sabbath to rest

We're in a demanding season, so it's vital to watch over ourselves and to rest. Plan your sabbath and keep it. Rediscover the gift of one day each week for re-creation.

Days off and holidays are vital for clergy, churchwardens and volunteers, many of whom are working incredibly hard with extraordinary dedication and skill. Be sure to encourage one another and to spread the load wherever you can.



We all need to set a pace which will be sustainable

No-one can do everything, we are fallible and will fall and stumble often. If cover is needed for clergy outside the benefice, then the Area Deans will do their very best to facilitate this. Remember that this is God's Church and God's mission. Thankfully the final responsibility does not rest with us, but daily we offer what we can.

Six people to journey with

This is a time for us all to rediscover church as a small group of people who support one another; pray together; care for each other, serve together and explore everyday faith together.

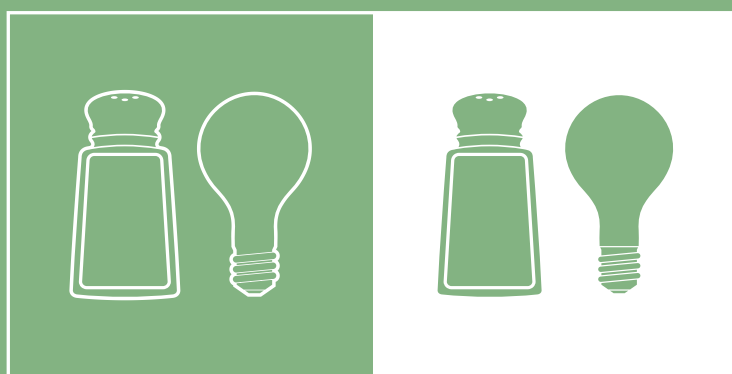
All churches can rediscover small communities in ways which go with the grain of your tradition through dividing up your parish list into small groups for pastoral care; through meeting for the offices online; through traditional housegroups, discipleship or interest groups and in a range of other ways. Many seasons of deep renewal in the church have begun with the renewal of small communities. Where church rediscovers what it means to be a small community, there is great blessing in that.



Six ways to be salt and light

It will be a demanding winter for the communities we serve; they need us to be salt and light. Now is the time to identify the people and community organisations you can support.

What plans will be needed to strengthen foodbanks and night shelters? How will you serve those who may be isolated over Christmas? How can you encourage and support schools and teachers and health workers? Who is on the margins, and who is in danger of being forgotten? Parishes are already responding in hugely significant ways to the growing needs of the communities around us. What else can you offer? Like the child bringing five loaves and two fish to Jesus, God takes whatever we can give and uses it to make an immense difference to the lives of those around us.



Six percent to your church

We need a miracle of giving to sustain the church through this period. If your income is stable, can you give 1% more through the whole of next year and until church finances recover?

Lots of people are facing a difficult, financially challenging six months, and this is the case for church finances too. There is a significant loss of income from lettings and fairs and cash collections. The Church of England recommendation is to give five percent of our income to and through the local church. If your income is falling or uncertain you may, of course, need to reduce what you give. But if your income is stable, can you increase your giving to 6% in response to what God is giving you?



Six people to pray for

People are searching for faith and meaning in these times. We mustn't be silent witnesses to the wonders of our faith when there is so much strength and healing in the Christian Way.

Are there six people you can pray for, invite into community and encourage to discover more of Christian faith during this season? Can you accompany them to baptism next Easter? Can every local church find ways of teaching and sharing faith online in Lent next year? Let us see what God will do.

