

Church is Changing

'Coronavirus, Church & You' Survey

Researchers at St John's University in York are asking for your help with a survey that will chart where the Church is at the moment.

The Coronavirus Pandemic has obviously had a profound effect on churches. The lockdown has severely restricted ministry in areas such as pastoral care, fellowship groups, and serving the community. On the other hand, for those with online access, worship has taken on new and creative forms over the last few weeks.

Many clergy and ministry teams have risen to the challenge of operating in the virtual environment.

The Revd Professor Andrew Village, who is leading the team alongside the Revd Canon Professor Leslie J Francis, explains:

"As we pass the most severe period of lockdown, it seems a good time to assess how churchgoers have responded to the experience, and what they think the future might hold. How well have people coped with the pandemic? Has it strengthened or weakened their faith? How has it been for clergy and ministry teams trying to work in this new environment? How have those receiving ministry found this novel experience? Will virtual ministry become part of the post-pandemic landscape, and will this be a good move for your church?"

"We have developed a survey over the last few weeks in discussion with bishops, clergy and lay people which we hope will enable you to record your experience of the pandemic, the ministry you have given or received, and what you think will happen to churches in a post-pandemic world.

"In an article to launch the survey in the Church Times, the Bishop of Manchester, David Walker, wrote: "This survey is an attempt to go beyond anecdote... It will capture evidence of both excitement and fears for the future, of where stress levels have changed, and whether personal faith has weakened or grown."

"The initial response has been very encouraging, with about 5000 people taking part in the first 2 weeks. We are keen to add to that number so we can ensure we gather the views of a wide spectrum of people while the lockdown restrictions continue to affect church life.

"This is an online survey, which we estimate it will take you about 20-30 minutes to complete. Most of the questions simply require you to tick boxes, though there are options to specify your particular circumstances, and an opportunity at the end for you to tell us your views in your own words.

"Alongside questions about the pandemic and ministry there are sections which ask about you: these are important because they will allow us to see how the lockdown is affecting different sorts of people in different contexts.

"The survey can be completed on mobile phones, though it is more quickly completed on devices with larger screens such as tablets or computers."

You can access it using this link: <https://tinyurl.com/yqsq9fy2>.

Andrew asks that you forward this link to any churches or churchgoers you feel might want to take part in the survey and support this research.

He hopes to have some initial results within a few weeks and will make these available as widely as possible.