

To all clergy, Readers and church wardens for benefices in vacancy

Supporting Funeral Ministry: Diocese-wide Co-ordination for Cover

In the coming weeks and months our funeral ministry and care for the bereaved will continue to be vital. We also know that this ministry is likely to come under increasing strain. There has already been a significant reduction in the numbers of clergy and Readers available to offer funeral ministry due to age restrictions, self-isolation or illness. The pattern for funerals may also change if further measures are taken to restrict the spread of Covid-19.

Plans have therefore been prepared to help us, as a diocese, co-ordinate our funeral ministry and support each other as effectively as possible. These are based both on our experience of running the Funeral Project in Gloucester City and Forest South deaneries, and on-going planning being done with the county Resilience Forum.

From 2nd April 2020 there will be a central phone number to call for funeral cover in those situations where the local church is unable to provide a minister.

The number to call is: 07928 809780

When you call the number we will take the details of the funeral and then find a minister to cover the service for you. We are introducing this support so that funeral cover can be shared as evenly as possible across the diocese as a whole.

To help enable this we have organised a list including non-parochial ministers (for example Cathedral and Mission and Ministry Department clergy and Readers) who are willing to help. If a cover minister has to withdraw we will find someone else to take the service. To help make sure this ministry is shared as evenly as possible, there may be times when we also need to approach parish-based clergy and Readers for help. We will of course make sure that local churches are informed of who is providing funeral ministry on their behalf.

For churches already covered by the Funeral Project, the existing system will continue to operate in Gloucester City, Forest South and parts of Severn Vale deaneries as it does now. **Please continue to use the existing Project phone number.**

Other plans have been drawn up for as and when the ability to provide funerals becomes more difficult. The situation is being closely monitored and we are in regularly contact with emergency planners.

Thank you again for all you are doing in providing this vital ministry as we seek to reflect the compassion of Christ.

Andrew

Canon Dr Andrew Braddock
Director of Mission and Ministry
Diocese of Gloucester