

Advent and Christmas resources launched

Our Advent and Christmas resource hub was launched on our website in November. Created by members of the Serving Christ team, the Advent and Christmas hub is full of ideas, suggestions and resources that churches can tailor to their needs.



The day Jesus was born was a very unusual Christmas. Very few people had prepared for it, those that did may not have understood the significance that it had! While there has not been a Christmas that meets the significance of that first Christmas there have been many other unusual Christmases since and this is one of them.

With Advent and Christmas fast approaching many of us are busy planning without knowing quite what shape the season and celebrations will take. With this in mind, the Serving Christ team have created and sourced a range of resources that can be adapted to fit in with government guidelines around worship services.

There are resources and ideas for everyone – from crafts to make together with the whole family, to books to read alone or as part of a small group, and from liturgy to use in your services to online events to attend – plus more!

Jen Stewart from the Serving Christ Team says;

“We hope that these resources will provide lots of inspiration and ideas you can adapt for your own context and that they will provide opportunities to encounter God personally, and to connect with others and share the story of Jesus with your community. We particularly pray they will be a blessing to and ease the burden of those charged with planning church activities and services.”

The team will be continually adding to the resource hub in the run up to Advent and Christmas.

You can find the resource hub on our new website.



Prayer Diary

December 2020

With Christ born again in our hearts today ...

At eight o'clock this Christmas morning I will be standing at the altar in the crypt under St. Michael's Cathedral, where my predecessor Provost Dick Howard stood exactly eighty years before – saying the same words from the Book of Common Prayer. Sharing the same hope.

Many of you will know the words he used later that day, speaking live on the BBC world service:

Early this Christmas morning, here under these ruins, in the lovely little stone chapel built six hundred years ago, we began the day with our Christmas communion, worshipping the Christ, believe me, as joyfully as ever before. What we want to tell the world is this: that with Christ born again in our hearts today, we are trying, hard as it may be, to banish all thoughts of revenge. . . . We are going to try to make a kinder, simpler, a more Christ Child-like sort of world in the days beyond this strife.

These days of pandemic have been likened to the days of the wars which convulsed our nation and our world in the first half of the twentieth century. God has seen wars, and pandemics before. But over it all the angels continue to sing, joining with us in mourning and loss, but also in comfort and joy, just as they did in December 1940. May we know the joy and promise of the Christ child in our hearts this Christmas, and have the grace to share that good news with a broken and anxious world.



**John Witcombe
Dean of Coventry**

150 new worshipping communities by 2030

On Saturday 14 November, the Diocesan Synod approved a growth strategy for the Diocese of Coventry. The aim is to launch 150 new worshipping communities before the end of this decade.

Bishop Christopher introduced the discussion by playing a short video about the Diocesan Growth Strategy (which can be viewed on our website).



Following a discussion, Diocesan Synod approved the strategy with 87% voting in favour, 2% voting against and 10% abstentions.

After the meeting, the Venerable Barry Dugmore, the Archdeacon Missioner said:

"I am humbled yet filled with a sense of anticipation and excitement for the future following Synod's decision to endorse our growth strategy and our vision for 150 new worshipping communities.

The activity of Holy Spirit is evident in so many ways in our communities, with people of all ages spiritually curious, and not yet part of a church community.

As God's people we are invited to see with fresh eyes 'ripe harvest fields' and partner together for work of the Kingdom, sharing our hope in the Good News of Jesus Christ.

I look forward to working with others on our continuing endeavour and adventure of faith to grow the heart of England."

Living in Love and Faith resources published

The Church of England has published a landmark set of resources about human identity, relationships, marriage and sexuality created by a team of 40 people led by the Bishop of Coventry.



The resources are the product of three years' work and draw together the Bible, theology, science and history with powerful real-life stories. They include a 480 page book, a series of films and podcasts, a course and an online library of other publications, in what is thought to be the most extensive work in this area by any faith group in the world.

The Bishop of Coventry, Christopher Cocksworth, who oversaw the Living in Love and Faith project, said:

"These learning resources are the fruit of an extraordinary collaborative process. This has involved intense and prayerful study and reflection as well as listening to as wide a range of voices and experiences as possible. Our hope is that through them people will be inspired by the Bible's glorious and joyful vision of God's intention for human life.

"Questions of identity, sexuality, relationships and marriage are deeply personal with real life consequences. Engaging with these resources will be enriching and, at different points for different people, deeply challenging and uncomfortable. They ask us to examine afresh what it means for Christians to live in love and faith. We offer them in the hope that the whole of the Church of England will embrace this opportunity to learn and reflect together across difference for the sake of our unity in Christ."

Go to www.lif.churchofengland.org to access the resources.

Thu 24

Christmas Eve

We pray for the people preparing food in homeless shelters and hostels around the country. May their efforts to feed, clothe and give shelter bring God's blessing to many during this season.
We give thanks for the humble birth of Jesus Christ. God, help us to love and serve in humility.

Fri 25

Christmas Day

Joy to the World, the Lord is come! As we celebrate the birth of Jesus, we pray that many would hear and know the Lord Jesus for themselves this Christmas. Lord Jesus Christ, your birth at Bethlehem draws us to kneel in wonder at heaven touching earth: accept our heartfelt praise as we worship you, our Saviour and our eternal God. Amen.

Sat 26

Stephen,
Deacon, First
Martyr

Walsgrave-on-Sowe. Clergy: Malcolm Tyler, Dmitry Lutsenko, Frances Tyler. Readers: Lorraine Baker, Stephen Baker, Trefor Richards, Tony Thistlewood. We thank God for the way in which our congregation has returned to church and pray for a greater awareness of how we can engage with the parish more widely.

Sun 27

John, Apostle
and Evangelist

We pray for all those who come to church as a 'once a year' experience, that they may have a real encounter with God and be moved to reconsider questions of life and faith. We also pray for congregations, that people may make the transition from being attenders to engaging in authentic community.

Mon 28

The Holy
Innocents

Binley Woods LEP. Clergy: Rachel Jeffreys. We thank God for the love in our community during the pandemic and the first year of our new minister, Rachel. Please pray that together we will know and follow God's call on us to take our part in His mission in Binley Woods.

Tue 29

St Chad, Wood End. Clergy: Brian Nash. Reader: Jacob Matumamboh. We pray for God's blessing upon the church members and the local community.
*Thomas Becket, Archbishop of Canterbury, Martyr, 1170

Wed 30

We thank God for our brothers and sisters who serve and worship in other Christian denominations. We ask God for new opportunities to work together ecumenically to help transform our local communities.

Thu 31

St Marks, Coventry. Clergy: Phil Atkinson, Tom Eagles, Andy Clasper. We pray for God's blessing upon the church members and the local community. As 2020 passes and a new year begins, we pray for those who are needing to find hope, purpose and faith in the coming year.
*John Wyclif, Reformer, 1384

Cycle of Prayer - December 2020

With a focus on parishes and schools in Coventry East Deanery

Tue 1

We pray for the Diocesan Board of Education, and for all schools and places of learning throughout the diocese; that they may celebrate the true meaning of Advent and Christmas together.
*Charles de Foucauld, Hermit in the Sahara, 1916

Wed 2

St Mary Magdalene and Risen Christ, Wyken. Clergy: Interregnum. Reader: Margaret Robinson. We thank God for our continued outreach and service to all ages in our local community. We pray for innovative ways in which our financial commitments may be met in the coming year. We pray for those suffering with mental health issues and loneliness at this time.

Thu 3

Blue Coat CofE VA School & Music College. Head: Victoria Shelley. We pray for God's blessing on the pupils, staff, teachers and governors of this school community.
*Francis Xavier, Missionary, Apostle of the Indies, 1552

Fri 4

Through the busyness of Christmas we pray for all Clergy, Readers and Licensed Lay Workers throughout the diocese.
*John of Damascus, Monk, Teacher of the Faith, c.749
*Nicholas Ferrar, Deacon, Founder of the Little Gidding Community, 1637

Sat 5

Church of The Holy Cross, Caludon. Clergy: Liz Harris. Please pray for the whole church community as the interregnum continues, and for all who are taking on extra responsibilities in different areas of church life. We pray for young and old in the parish who feel lonely and isolated, and give thanks for all who have offered support and friendship.

Sun 6

Second Sunday
of Advent

St Bartholomew's CofE Academy. Head: Mina Sharma. We pray for God's blessing on the pupils, staff, teachers and governors of this school community.
*Nicholas, Bishop of Myra, c.326

Mon 7

Stretton CofE Academy. Head: Susan Samra. We pray for God's blessing on the pupils, staff, teachers and governors of this school community.
*Ambrose, Bishop of Milan, Teacher of the Faith, 397

Tue 8 Willenhall. Clergy: Pam Howell, Charlotte Jackson. We pray for God's blessing upon the church members and the local community.
We pray for the Diocesan Finance Group which meets this morning.
*The Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary

Wed 9 All Saints CofE Primary School. Head: Cara Page. We pray for God's blessing on the pupils, staff, teachers and governors of this school community.
We pray for the Parsonages Committee which meets this afternoon.

Thu 10 Walsgrave CofE VC Primary School. Head: Damien Sowerby. We pray for God's blessing on the pupils, staff, teachers and governors of this school community.
We pray for the Diocesan Board of Education which meets today.

Fri 11 Stoke St Michael. Clergy: Claire McArthur, Daniel Bennett. Readers: Ann Brown, Janet Pocklington, Suzanne Sapriano and Chris Dronfield. We give thanks for the abundant skills of our lay leaders and pray for our new curate, Dan, as he starts his ministry with us. Please pray as we start our building project to update our church centre.

Sat 12 Stoke Aldermoor. Clergy: Buff Forbes Stone, Julie Watkins-Wollner. We thank God for the growth of small groups over the lockdown and Zoom keeping our congregation worshipping together. Please pray for children, young people and their families who have found it more difficult to meet in these challenging times.

Sun 13 Whitley. Clergy: Anne Richards. We pray for God's blessing upon the church members and the local community.
*Lucy, Martyr at Syracuse, 304
*Samuel Johnson, Moralist, 1784

Mon 14 We pray for families for whom this Christmas season is a painful time; for parents who have lost sons or daughters; couples who are no longer together; children who are unhappy, confused or in trouble; and those who are alone.
*John of the Cross, Poet, Teacher of the Faith, 1591

Tue 15 St Peter's, Hillfields. Clergy: Interregnum. Reader: John McCoach. We give thanks for the ministry of the Revd Bee Boyde - for all the varied and imaginative ways that she helped us to deepen our spirituality. We pray that nothing will prevent the exciting diocesan initiatives taking shape in the coming months as we begin working more closely with St Marks.

Wed 16 Potters Green. Clergy: Mike Eaman. We continue to thank God for the generous giving within the parish and for continued care for one another during this difficult time. Please pray for all those people who hire our facilities, that they may be safe and be able to join us soon.

Thu 17 Binley. Clergy: Jon Taylor. Readers: Greg Sampson, Chris Mellers. We pray for God's blessing upon the church members and the local community.
*O Sapientia
*Eglantine Jebb, Social Reformer, Founder of 'Save The Children', 1928

Fri 18 Today is International Migrants Day. Throughout history, migration has been a courageous expression of the will to overcome adversity and to live a better life. The day is an opportunity to recognise the contributions made by millions of migrants to the economies of their countries and to promote respect for their basic human rights. We pray for all migrants today.

Sat 19 As we look forward to celebrating the birth of Jesus in a stable surrounded by animals and worshipped by shepherds, we pray for all who are looking after livestock this winter. We pray that there will be enough fodder for the winter, and resources to cope with the weather. We also pray for farmers and others working long hours in the cold weather as they care for God's creation.

Sun 20 Today is International Human Solidarity Day. It is a day to celebrate our unity in diversity, to raise public awareness of the importance of solidarity, to remind governments to respect their commitments to international agreements, and a day of action to encourage new initiatives for poverty eradication. We pray that this day is successful in its aims.

Fourth Sunday
of Advent

Mon 21 This evening Coventry Cathedral will be holding their annual Service for the Longest Night at 6pm. The service marks the Winter Solstice and is intended for those whose Christmas celebrations are tinged with sadness. We pray for this service.

Tue 22 St Alban, Stoke Heath. Clergy: Barney and Zoe Pimentel. We thank God for the use of technology, generous colleagues who share resources, and the six new people who have joined our fellowship since lockdown. Please pray for us to continue to engage with our children, young people and their families, and for the church to adjust to new ways of worshipping.

Wed 23 All Saints, Coventry. Clergy: Clive Hogger. Reader: Mick Harling. We give thanks that no one from our congregations has had Covid. Please pray for the parish as Clive takes a sabbatical in early 2021.