

Our Diocese Together

December 2021

At the heart of Christmas



***No one has ever seen God. It is God the only Son,
who is close to the Father's heart,
who has made him known.***

John 1.18

News



Bishop of Derby's Harvest Appeal 2021

Since its launch in September 2021, nearly £2,000 has been raised for the Bishop of Derby's Harvest Appeal. The Harvest Appeal will continue until 31 December 2021 so there is still time to make an online donation or to arrange a parish collection.

St Elizabeth's Hostel in Kolkata, India, is the focus of this year's appeal. The diocese has a long mutual association with the Church of North India, not least through links with schools over many decades.

As a result of the pandemic, financial support has either been cut or is at severe risk in what are sometimes considered as low-priority areas, such as girls' education.

Bishop Libby is determined that the long-term development of girls at St Elizabeth's should continue. You can donate via our Just Giving page <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/harvestappeal2021>

Advent Hope

As we enter Advent, we look for the coming of Christ and of his Kingdom, and the hope that gives us. Between 29 November 2021 and 23 December 2021, Bishops Libby and Malcolm invite you to join them each week on zoom for three quarters of an hour of prayer and reflection together based upon seasonal Bible passages.

Advent Hope is open to all and will be held on Monday morning from 7:30-8:15am and repeated on Thursday evening from 7:30-8:15 pm. Both sessions will be on zoom. Do pass this invitation on.

Good Grief?

In November, St Peter's in the City welcomed visitors to a textile exhibition that highlighted the grief experienced following the loss of a loved one.

"Good Grief?" is the work of artist, Jacqui Parkinson and was created following the death of her husband, Rob, in 2007. Her work is a sequence of delicately stitched handkerchiefs, exploring and expressing her grief. Initially, her work was simply a record of her personal journey through this grief, what Jacqui calls the 'raw amblings of my grief'. However, she was encouraged by friends to display her work and, in association with Deo Gloria Trust, her work has been exhibited in cathedrals and other venues throughout England. Though deeply personal in nature, the pieces still reflect a universal experience – grief.

Jacqui said: "My sadness was shared. Here, on display, are words (my words) - images (my images) - and ideas (my ideas) - which resonate with many widows and widowers and may touch anyone who has been bereaved."

Anita Matthews, Associate Priest at St. Peter's, said: "We're aware that the past 18 months have been very difficult for many people. With the many losses brought about by the global pandemic, many will have experienced grief, often without the chance to work through it in normal ways. We hope that this exhibition offers an opportunity to remember, reflect, light a candle and pray".

Two special services that allowed people to 'reflect on loss' were held alongside the exhibition.

For more information about Jacqui's work visit her website, jacqui-textile.com



The search is on for Britain's best church magazine

Entries are now invited for the annual competition run by the Association for Church Editors (ACE). The competition has been running since ACE started over 20 years ago.

"Church magazines are often a forgotten but effective means of communication," says Sally Churchus, Chair of the national organisation, "so we are keen to encourage editors everywhere."

For the coming 2022 competition, which closes on 7 February 2022, awards will be made for A5 magazines which include all or some colour printing. A panel of judges assess each magazine, giving points for various aspects including cover design, headlines and clarity of the Christian message. The prize-giving in the summer is open to everyone, and will include a lecture by a keynote speaker and talks on various ways to improve your magazine. The date and venue will be announced in due course. For more information and to enter please visit www.churchmag.uk

At the heart of Christmas



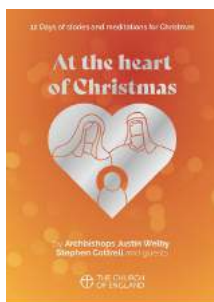
New resources from The Church of England

In 2020, many of us experienced a Christmas when so many of the ways we traditionally mark the season were suddenly denied to us.

This year, of course, we hope and pray that many of the familiar experiences that help Christmas come alive return to our homes, our churches and communities. But whatever else December brings, it will offer us an opportunity to enter more deeply into the joyful mystery that lies at its heart: God becoming human in the birth of Jesus Christ.

Inspired by readings from the Gospels of Luke and John read at so many Christmas services, At the heart of Christmas is an invitation to everyone to discover – or rediscover – the good news of God’s saving love as revealed in the birth of Jesus. It is also a challenge to each of us to ponder in our hearts – as Mary did – what the extraordinary events of the first Christmas might mean for us now and in the years ahead.

As in previous years, the national Church has been working with dioceses and churches to make a range of digital and print content available, branded with the At the heart of Christmas theme:



Reflections

At the heart of Christmas will consist of 12 Stories and Meditations from Justin Welby, Stephen Cottrell and guests where they will share personal stories exploring themes close to the heart of Christmas.

Starting on Christmas Eve and continuing daily (Monday to Saturday) until the Epiphany (6 January), At the heart of Christmas: 12 Days of stories and meditations for Christmas will help you make space for that exploration. On each of the twelve days, a different contributor will share something that lies close to the heart of Christmas for them, bringing the theme to life through a mixture of personal story, Bible reading, reflection and questions to ponder.

National online services for Advent and Christmas

In collaboration with a range of Christian charities and organisations, we will produce online services for the Sundays of Advent and Christmas. This will include an online service for each Sunday of Advent. The weekly online services have been very well received on social media and continue to attract a diverse audience including regular churchgoers, people exploring faith across a wide age range. They will all be broadcast on the Church’s YouTube channel and Facebook page.



The Bishop of Repton writes...

Blink, and you'll miss it. Such is December, such is Advent, so easily squeezed by the busyness of the season, as we all get ready for Christmas. Of course getting ready for Christmas is a big part of what Advent is about – but it is not the main thing.

The main thing, in Advent, is to be ready for the coming Kingdom, for the coming King. Ready, waiting, longing for the rule of justice and peace and joy to replace the mistrust, the broken promises, the tacky disappointments of the so called 'real world.' The Lord's prayer is for the whole year, but what better time than Advent to pray with Jesus, 'your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as in heaven'. I hope many will join Bishop Libby and me for our 'Advent Hope' prayers online on Monday mornings or Thursday evenings. But there will be plenty of other opportunities too in churches across the diocese – time to reconnect with God as we reassess the rest of life in the light of the coming Kingdom. As well as its somewhat scary focus on the 'Last Things' Advent is there to help us put 'first things first.'

In fact, Advent tells us, reality is breaking in on us, if only we would welcome it, and receive, it, and make it our own. Reality is in the hidden presence and power of love, of God's influence, God's insistent call and claim on our lives and on the life of the world. We meet reality face to face in Jesus, whose life, death, and resurrection exposes the powers that be as a sham, and whose winsome teaching of the Kingdom beckons us towards a new world of infinite potential for faith, hope, and love.

Many of us will be using Advent Calendars this month – opening a door each day, to unearth a hidden chocolate and bible text to encourage us, and to prepare us to open the door to Jesus and to the Kingdom. From childhood I have always loved the sense of journey, of a pilgrimage, of progress, which this brings. One year my dad and my big brother made me an advent calendar.

That memory is very special to me.

Of course there is some apprehension, this year as last year, about the extent to which Christmas will happen 'as normal'. But let's not settle for normal. Let us pray that God will move amongst us rekindling our faith and our love, bringing healing and hope in dark times.

Hope for all - for those living in poverty, for those facing the cold with fear for their fuel bills, for those fleeing violence, for victims of discrimination and abuse, for those who are ill, for the bereaved, for everyone, especially for those who are weary, so weary after this last two years. In Advent may God open our eyes again to the reality of his love:

'Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but the Lord will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you.'
Isaiah 60.1-2

Bishop Malcolm

**The Rt Revd Malcolm Macnaughton
Bishop of Repton**



Photo: Top row L-R: Revd Neil Barber, Fr Julian Hollywell, Revd Alicia Dring.
Front row: L-R: Kat Allread, Sue Cavill, Sian Kellogg

Report from General Synod

November 2021 group of sessions

The newly elected General Synod gathered in London for its inauguration and first group of sessions. With 60% of Synod members being new members, the primary focus of the gathering was to induct new members and provide an overview of the ongoing work of the Synod. Unfortunately, Her Majesty the Queen was unable to attend the Inauguration of Synod as usual, but her youngest son, Prince Edward the Earl of Wessex deputised and shared her message of prayerful support.

After the induction day and inauguration service at Westminster Abbey, Synod met for a day and half to conduct business:

- The archbishops set the tone for the new Synod in their joint presidential address, with a focus on how Synod might journey together, listening to each other and the Holy Spirit and being mindful of the past whilst moving forward together.
- In the debate of the Report of the Business Committee the Archbishop of Canterbury clarified his recent statement following his meeting with Ghanaian church leaders regarding proposed legislation which would criminalise LGBT+ people. LGBT+ Synod members welcomed the clarification and staged a demonstration emphasising that 10% of the members of the new Synod could be imprisonable under the Ghanaian law.

- Synod backed a motion to begin the process of drawing up legislation which will allow for dioceses endowed with greater historical wealth to be generous and help less well-off dioceses.

- Synod supported a motion from the Diocese of Leeds which calls on the Government and political parties to take measures to reduce the wealth gap between the rich and poor in our society. There was acknowledgment of all that the local churches are doing and have been doing, particularly in the pandemic, to help the poorest in our communities and a call for reflection from dioceses to see where and how they can protect the most vulnerable including ways of addressing the housing crisis.

- Synod received a 2022 financial update with proposals for apportionment from the Archbishops' Council, which recognised the immense impact the Coronavirus pandemic has had on diocesan and church finances, despite the incredible efforts of parishes and dioceses during this challenging time. Recovery will be difficult and requires every single one of us to address the need for transforming the financial effectiveness as well as transforming the spiritual and missional effectiveness of the Church of England. Canon John Spence stated money is not the end it is merely the means. This is not a time to be frightened but a time to be determined. There may be some areas where there is a need for caution but there a greater need for creativity and courage. Above all a need for us to trust in Christ and trust in each other.

- Synod approved the re-appointment of Mark Sheard to the Archbishops' Council until 2027.

- Presentations were given on the Church of England's Vision and Strategy and the Governance Review, with an opportunity for questions. The Vision and Strategy talks about a 'mixed ecology' which simply means the church expressing itself in many different ways, including regular worship, online church, initiatives like messy church, cafes and clubs, and chaplaincies. The Archbishop of York emphasised that parishes are at the heart of this. The vision is that parishes will be revitalised for mission from which flows a flourishing of new Christian communities, where every person has the opportunity to encounter the transformation a life centred on Jesus Christ can bring. In this context part of Synod's work is to see what God is doing and align resources and training to this. The vision is to be simpler, humbler and bolder.

Visit the CofE website to watch all the General Synod sessions back.



‘Threads of Hope’ Advent address with Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy

Monday 6 December
19:00 – 20:45
Zoom

Lusa will be speaking to the title, ‘Threads of hope’, with an Advent theme. After his talk there will be a short time in breakout groups before a Q&A time, leading up to Night Prayer.

The Revd. Lusa Nsenga-Ngoy is the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Mission & Ministry Enabler in the Diocese of Leicester.

He is committed to issues of social justice, and has a particular concern to see historically marginalised and minoritized voices amplified in theological discourse, and participate more actively in leading and transforming the mission of the Church.

He shares a longstanding interest in theological reflections and practices from a global majority perspective, paying particular attention to questions of identity, justice, and power.

Lusa is an ordained Anglican minister with a passion for storytelling inherited from his Luba cultural and traditional roots.

He recently served on the Archbishops' Anti Racism Task Force, which produced the report, ‘From Lament to Action’.

He is also a Trustee of Initiatives of Change, a global organisation working to inspire, equip and connect people to play their part in building a better society.

Register for this event here: <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/advent-address-threads-of-hope-lusa-nsenga-ngoy-tickets-211604965147>