



Connection

Sunday 29th November 2020
First Sunday of Advent



This Sunday starts the season of Advent, when we begin our preparations for celebrating the joy of the birth of Jesus at Christmas. It is usually a time of excitement and activity; one where we decorate our houses, buy presents and give cards to family and friends, we often attend social gatherings and parties and at church each Sunday we journey through services where Advent wreaths and candles are lit as we remember special people from the bible – patriarchs, prophets, John the Baptist, the Virgin Mary and ultimately on Christmas Day, Christ Himself.

Advent is a time for inward reflection as we prepare our hearts for this most holy of celebrations, and this year, more than many others in living memory, we have much to reflect on and pray for. Sadly, this year Advent Sunday will be spent in our homes, but I do encourage you to share in celebrating the start of this special season leading up to Christmas, either by joining in our Morning Prayer service at 10.30am on Zoom, where we will be lighting the first candle in our homemade Advent Wreaths, or at the many services on television or livestreamed from other churches. Or perhaps you feel you would like to use the coming weeks to read a spiritual book or a particular book from the bible.

All these ways of engaging in some time with God will help enable us to be ready for the entry into the world once again of the Word made flesh.

Advent and Christmas will be different this year, but thankfully, it has been good to hear this week that we will, from 3 December, be able to resume worship in our churches once again. Details of all services and events taking place during Advent and Christmas will be published in parish magazines and through the Connection: And so I do hope that you will be able to join me in some of the worship and special activities which will be happening across the Bredon Hill Group in the coming weeks and may God bless your Advent journeys, as we watch and wait together.

Blessings,

Collect

Almighty God,
give us grace to cast away the works of darkness
and to put on the armour of light,
now in the time of this mortal life,
in which your Son Jesus Christ came to us in great humility;
that on the last day,
when he shall come again in his glorious majesty
to judge the living and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal;
through him who is alive and reigns with you,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
one God, now and for ever.

Amen

Reading: Isaiah 11: 1-11

A shoot shall come out from the stump of Jesse, and a branch shall grow out of his roots. The spirit of the LORD shall rest on him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of the LORD. His delight shall be in the fear of the LORD. He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide by what his ears hear; but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. Righteousness shall be the belt around his waist, and faithfulness the belt around his loins. The wolf shall live with the lamb, the leopard shall lie down with the kid, the calf and the lion and the fatling together, and a little child shall lead them. The cow and the bear shall graze, their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox. The nursing child shall play over the hole of the asp, and the weaned child shall put its hand on the adder's den. They will not hurt or destroy on all my holy mountain; for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. On that day the root of Jesse shall stand as a signal to the peoples; the nations shall inquire of him, and his dwelling shall be glorious. On that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that is left of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Ethiopia, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea.

Reading: Mark 13: 24-37

But in those days, after that suffering, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will be falling from heaven, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see 'the Son of Man coming in clouds' with great power and glory. Then he will send out the angels, and gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the earth to the ends of heaven. "From the fig tree learn its lesson: as soon as its branch becomes tender and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near. So also, when you see these things taking place, you know that he is near, at the very gates. Truly I tell you, this generation will not pass away until all these things have taken place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. But about that day or hour no one knows, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Beware, keep alert; for you do not know when the time will come. It is like a man going on a journey, when he leaves home and puts his slaves in charge, each with his work, and commands the doorkeeper to be on the watch. Therefore, keep awake—for you do not know when the master of the house will come, in the evening, or at midnight, or at cockcrow, or at dawn, or else he may find you asleep when he comes suddenly. And what I say to you I say to all: Keep awake."



Advent Reflection

Advent, 1969 or 70. The Cathedral was to put on its traditional service and, as the building itself had an austere mediaeval beauty and the choir was celebrated, we looked forward to a memorable evening. It was indeed memorable – but for wholly unforeseen reasons.

I don't remember what caused the power cut but at some point in the afternoon a wide area of the city centre was suddenly plunged into darkness. There was no information on local radio as to when the lights might come back on. And, of course, even if they had existed then, internet and mobile phones would have been useless if those people or places you might have contacted were themselves without power.

It was a long walk to the Cathedral. Were the buses running? Was it worth turning up for a service that might not exist?

We decided to give it a try, only to find that almost everybody else wanting to attend had taken the same decision. The power had not been restored, so the building had been unheated for some hours but in an ancient and chill stone building there is a lot to be said for being tightly packed in. There was no power to the organ but I think some volunteers hand pumped it for part of the time. No lights so this was through necessity a completely candlelit service save for those in the choir whose torches stuttered across their scores. The rest of us sat in darkness, with a few scattered candles throwing strangely shaped shadows around the nave and just enough moonlight outside to silhouette the stone tracery in the windows.

It was magical. I suppose that we couldn't be sure if it would be possible for the service to run its planned course and maybe in some way that uncertainty emphasised the notes of hope and longing in some of the Advent carols. But we still had the rolling thunder of Wesley's confidence in the incarnation - as well as his almost mawkish anticipation of the Cross. It was intense and unforgettable.

Stepping out outside afterwards and finding the city still unlit, we picked our way back towards the centre. Perhaps a hundred yards ahead was a crossroads with traffic rather gingerly picking its unregulated way through the junction. But before we reached it, the power returned – the area to the north rippled back into life as the power raced towards us quickly reaching the buildings around us. What had been blind lumps of huddled brick and masonry were suddenly patched with lighted windows. It was as though the whole city had suddenly stirred from sleep.

Meanwhile the traffic lights celebrated the return of power by running through several series of their possible combinations before settling down. They looked like a group of slot machines simultaneously ringing a bumper set of jackpots. Fluorescent light re-filled the city centre shop windows; and secular Advent re-asserted itself: a once-penitential season re-purposed as four weeks of imperative retail. From the dark of the Cathedral aisles to the tawdry, gaudy High Street. From the stillness of the centuries-old cloisters to the clamour of the Christmas countdown - only 26 more shopping days to Christmas! It was as if joy in the return of power was dampened by a pervasive crassness – we had light, but no illumination.

That Advent should be a time of restraint, reflection and renewal is perhaps a commonplace. But maybe it would do no harm if, in a year when unprecedented restrictions have been imposed on our outward daily lives, we looked for a bit of inner liberation to rediscover something silent, numinous and eternal.



Intercessions by Wendy Harrison

On this first Sunday of the Church's New year, we greet you, God our Father, with thanks and praise. Guide us we pray through this time of self examination and preparation.

Prevent us from being side-tracked by the baubles and glitter of a commercial journey to Christmas. This year of all years let us concentrate on the simple grandeur of the birth of Christ, and give thanks for our own families, friends and communities which have sustained us through troubled times.

Lord in your mercy, hear our prayer.

Uppermost in our minds are those who suffer in many ways as the result of the Covid virus. Father God, we pray for those who mourn the loss of loved ones, and for those who are passing through sickness and need our prayers.

We give thanks for the selfless care given by nurses, doctors and all medical staff. Strengthen the resolve we pray, of all who suffer as the result of the pandemic, particularly those who are lonely, and those who miss seeing their nearest and dearest at a time when they most need them. We remember those who suffer from anxiety over their employment, or as the result of closures of local shops and amenities.

Lord, in your mercy -Father, we live through times of some chaos in the whole world. We pray for wisdom as we try to deal with global warming, and all that that implies. We are only too well aware of political chaos too. On this day when Americans traditionally celebrate the achievements of the founding fathers of their nation, let us pray for a peaceful and democratic solution to the electoral problems there.

Lord in your mercy -

O Lord our God, make us watchful and keep us faithful as we await the coming of your son our Lord.; that when he shall appear he may not find us sleeping in sin but active in his service and joyful in his praise, for the glory of your holy name. (Gelasian Sacramentary)

Merciful Father, accept these prayers, for the sake of your son, our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen

Requests for Prayers

If there is someone or something that you would like to pray for please email us at eckingtonvicarage@hotmail.com



Please continue to pray for the ill and isolated, frontline, hospital and medical staff and for all those who are in any kind of need. We pray that through the work of the Mothers' Union and other charities worldwide, gender-based violence is brought to an end.

Those who are sick: Roy and Margaret Putnam, Richard Clements, Christopher Frith, Edward Bunn, Brian Bolam

We continue to pray for: Don Dufty, Percy and Sharon Blizzard, Jackie Pickford, Clive Hunt, Mary Doney

Those in residential care: Sheila Bigland-Gibbons, Barbara Milton, Rita Sheppy

Those who have died and their families: Brian Druce, Charles Brazier, Nils Wilkes, Simon Flynn, Doreen Byrd, Geoff Relph

Anniversary of a death: Please pray for those who have lost loved ones



The first Sunday of Advent - Morning Prayers via Zoom on Sunday 29th November at 10.30am with lighting of the Advent Wreath

Reverend Allison will be leading Morning Prayer via Zoom at 10.30am. There will be a collective lighting of the Advent Wreath as detailed in the Connection last week. If you would like to join the service either by video or dialing in from your telephone; please contact Alison Khan at acbhteam@gmail.com or 07984 748059 who will send you the invite link.

SEASON'S GREETINGS FROM HOLY TRINITY CHURCH ECKINGTON

With many of the usual Christmas celebrations having to be cancelled due to Covid this year, we would like to invite you to take part in a few alternative activities to celebrate the Christmas season.



BAUBLES: From **December 1st** onwards, we would love you to hang a bauble from a tree in the churchyard. Your bauble could be handmade or bought. You could decorate it or add the name of a loved one.

COVID SNAKE: Ecki is still growing and is becoming quite a timeline, marking various events in the year. Why not paint a Christmas stone and see if we can make Ecki even longer!





NATIVITY TRAIL: On **Wednesday 23rd December between 2.30 and 4.30pm** there will be a Nativity Trail and live Christmas music in the churchyard. Trail sheets and prizes will be available at the front of the church. In order to maintain social distancing please message Karen on 07593260432 for a 20-minute time slot.

These are just some of the ideas that we have had in Eckington – if you would like to share these ideas or any that you have in your villages, please do contact us at eckingtonvicarage@hotmail.com



Christmas 2020

We are collecting festive goods for Pershore Foodbank. Here are some ideas:

- Christmas biscuits
- Christmas cakes
- Tinned Cold Meats e.g. ham and chicken
- Tinned salmon
- Christmas chocolate
- Festive sweets
- Custard
- Any other festive goodies

Donations of Christmas Fayre can be placed in the boxes outside Holy Trinity church on **Saturday 5th and Sunday 6th December**. Thank you!

The Rota for December 2020

Date	Church	Time	Minister
6 th December	Chapel of Ease, Bredon's Norton	9.00am	Reverend Catherine Lack
	Holy Trinity, Eckington	9.00am	Reverend Allison Davies
	St Peter's, Little Comberton (Morning Prayer)	10.30am	Reverend Allison Davies
	St John the Baptist, Beckford	10.30am	Reverend Doug Chaplin
13 th December	St Barbara's, Ashton Under Hill	9.00am	Reverend Allison Davies

	St James', Defford	10.30am	Bishop Michael Hooper
	St Giles', Bredon	10.30am	Reverend Allison Davies
20 th December	St Peter's Chapel, Besford	9.00am	Reverend Allison Davies
	St Mary's, Elmley Castle	9.00am	Canon Roger Spiller
	St Margaret's, Alstone	10.30am	Archdeacon Robert Jones
24 th December	St Barbara's, Ashton Under Hill	10.00pm	Reverend Doug Chaplin
	St James', Defford	10.00pm	Reverend Allison Davies
25 th December	St Giles' Bredon	10.00am	Bishop Martin Gorick
	St Mary's, Elmley Castle	10.00am	Canon Roger Spiller
	St Faith's, Overbury	10.30am	Reverend Catherine Lack
	Holy Trinity, Eckington	10.45am	Reverend Allison Davies
27 th December	St Michael's, Great Comberton (Morning Prayer)	9.00am	Reverend Nancy Murray Peters
	John the Baptist, Beckford	10.30am	Archdeacon Robert Jones

Given the reduced capacity of churches resulting from social distancing rules being in place; if anyone would like to attend a service on either the 20th, 24th, 25th or 27th December can they please let Alison Khan know at acbhteam@gmail.com or by telephone on 07984 748059 so that a place can be reserved for you.



Compassion UK

November 9 at 3:05 PM · 🌐



A classic carol service, in a new way!

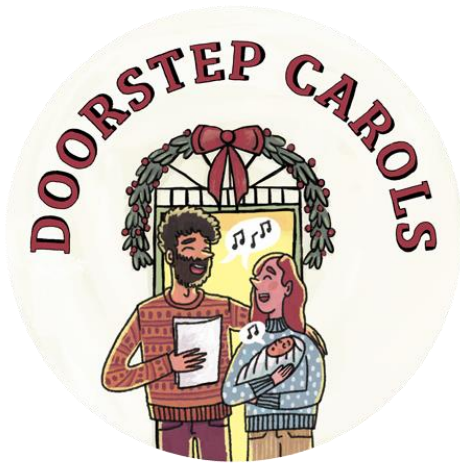
TBN UK and Compassion UK are proud to present 'Carols with Compassion'.

Join us on Sunday 6th December at 8pm for a night full of Christmas cheer, including a blend of contemporary Christian music and traditional carols from Compassion ambassadors and close friends;

Philippa Hanna
 Noel Robinson
 Graham Kendrick
 The London Community Gospel Choir
 Hillsong London
 Lurine Cato MBE
 Martin Smith and
 Elle Limebear.

Don't forget to join the Facebook event for more updates, behind the scenes exclusives and reminders of the broadcast nearer the time.

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1792507960901066>



Carols on the Doorstep

WHEN? Wednesday, December 16th, 6pm

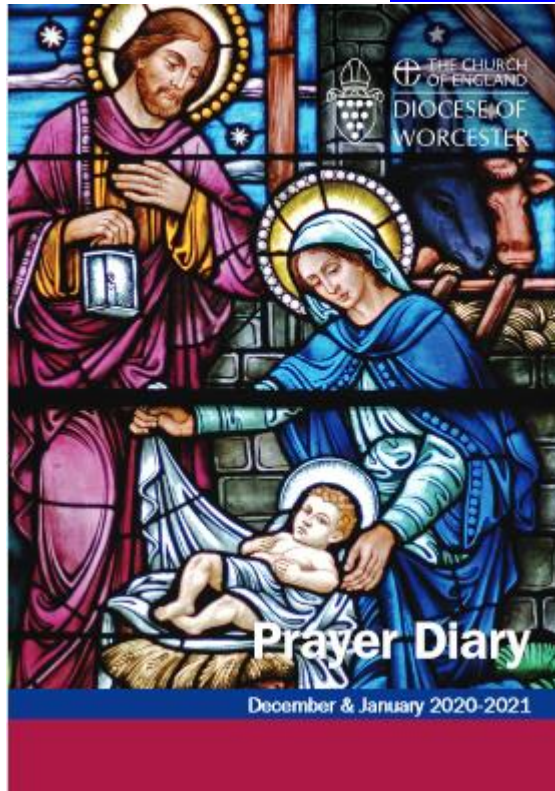
WHERE? Your Doorsteps!

HOW? Sing along with the radio!

Join us on your doorsteps across the nation this Christmas to sing carols together and spread some much-needed cheer! [Find out more](#)

News from the Diocese

Prayers and diocesan news can be found at www.cofe-worcester.org.uk



Reverend Allison Davies

Vicar of Eckington, Defford with Besford and Hill Group



Associate Priest for the churches of the Bredon

