

Mon 21

Give thanks for all churches across the Diocese do to reach out to those outside of our church buildings.

Tue 22

Pray that our eyes might be opened to issues that are particularly affecting our locality such as poverty, dementia or a lack of facilities for young people.

Wed 23

Pray for all those who are working towards become 'Eco Churches' in our Diocese.

Thur 24

Pray for all those who feel excluded from our churches and help us to find new ways to ensure they are welcomed.

Fri 25

This Christmas Day, pray for all those who are spending the day alone, particularly those unable to mix with others due to the Coronavirus pandemic. Give thanks for all our churches are doing to reach out to these people.

Sat 26

Pray that the New Year will bring with it new opportunities to support our communities.

## Growing as Kingdom People: Transforming communities

**Reflect:** If you talk about Church, many people will assume you are referring to the impressive and beautiful building in the community; the place where services and special occasions happen. The Church can be that, but it is so much more as well. A Church that wants to grow as Kingdom People will be made up of people who believe that what goes on outside the church building is just as important as what goes on inside it. Our church communities have the most incredible opportunity to reach out and join the wider community in getting involved in issues and ideas that can bring about real transformation for everyone. Stories that have emerged during this pandemic crisis have so often been about church communities reaching out to the isolated and lonely, the hungry and those with unmanageable debt. And there have been stories of church communities looking at God's creation with new eyes and raising awareness about environmental concerns. So much good can come from people working together. What might your church community get involved with to make a real difference to your community and God's creation?

**Pray:** Lord God, we thank you for all the places we can find you in our communities. This Christmas week, help us to remember that Jesus came to transform the world and we all have a role to play in that.

**Act:** Small actions can make a difference in our communities. Collect some Christmas items to give to your local foodbank this week; forego your daily coffee and give the money to a homeless shelter or take time to walk or cycle rather than use the car throughout the week.



## Growing as Kingdom People

### Praying together through Advent



- ◆ worshipping God creatively
- ◆ making disciples
- ◆ sharing hope
- ◆ transforming communities

During Advent, we are encouraging the whole diocese to come together in prayer as we seek to grow as Kingdom People. Each week will focus on one of the four elements of our church life which were highlighted in our recent open conversations as essential to growing as a healthy and sustainable Church: Worshipping God creatively, making disciples, sharing hope and transforming communities.

This publication sits alongside our diocesan prayer diary, with the weekly prayers used in the main diary each Monday. Reflections for each week have been written by Bishop Martin and Claire Lording (Vicar of Pershore and Chair of the House of Clergy) and alongside the prayers are some suggestions for action.

Please join us in this dedicated period of prayer for the future life of our diocese.

Mon 30

Pray that our worship will always be the best that it can be, reaching out to those of different generations.

Tues 1 DECEMBER

Pray for those churches able to offer online worship, that it may be a comfort to those unable to make it to our churches on a Sunday.

Wed 2

Pray for all those who help to bring music to our worship.

Thur 3

Pray for all those who lead worship in our churches, that they will feel inspired and inspire others through their preaching and teaching.

Fri 4

Give thanks for those churches in our diocese who are resourcing other parishes and helping them to grow and develop.

Sat 5

Pray that we will look for opportunities to start new congregations and find ways to revitalise existing groups.

Mon 7

Pray that churches across our diocese will grow as new people join and develop in their faith.

Tue 8

Pray for all the nurture courses taking place and being planned throughout our diocese.

Wed 9

Pray for all those in our communities who are yearning for God's love, that we will recognise those people and help them to come to faith.

Thur 10

Pray for our Calling Young Disciples project as it reaches out to children, young people and families in communities across our diocese.

## Growing as Kingdom People: Worshipping God creatively

**Reflect:** How have you been praying and worshipping during Lockdown? Some people have discovered praying at home in a new way, either alone, or with family members, or joining church online one way or another. Many people have been able to discover the value of daily prayer. One of our clergy said that before 2020 they were nearly always alone in church for Daily Prayer. Now they never have fewer than ten people sharing online in Morning and Evening Prayer, with different people leading and reading each day. Thomas Cranmer would have been delighted to see his vision of daily prayer being the 'work' of the whole people of God coming alive in a whole new way. Others don't have internet, but still set aside a little time each day, at home, or outside to be consciously in the presence of God. To feel his presence, his mercy and his love. To bring before him all that is on their heart.

**Pray:** God of all the world, as we worship you, may we feel today the good news of your love, and know its truth within us. May we rejoice in that love day by day through Jesus Christ our Lord.

**Act:** Why not worship God as part of your daily exercise through the week. Could you pray for different parts of your local area as you walk around it?

## Growing as Kingdom People: Making disciples

**Reflect:** Can you remember when you took the decision to follow Jesus, to join that amazing company of disciples? For some people this is a hugely memorable moment in their lives, for others there is no one moment, just an awareness that following Jesus is the most important thing to do. The joy of being a disciple of Jesus should give us confidence to share the good news of Jesus in as many ways as possible. If we take so much delight from having our lives focussed on Jesus, why wouldn't we want others to have the same opportunity? Jesus asked people to follow him in many different ways, but so often it was the getting alongside that made the biggest impact. He started a conversation and invited people to share in the kingdom he was proclaiming. In our churches and communities, we too can get alongside and start those conversations, confident that Jesus is with us encouraging and enabling us to "make disciples of all nations."

**Pray:** Lord, help us to see the opportunities for coming alongside others and sharing the good news of Jesus. We pray for those just starting on their journey of faith, that they will continue to grow and develop as your disciples.

**Act:** Over the Christmas period, how you could take the story of the nativity to others in your community? Is there an opportunity to do some socially distanced carol singing outside? Could you reach out to your local schools – taking in a tin of sweets and a Christmas card to say thank you to the teachers?

## Growing as Kingdom People: Sharing hope

**Reflect:** Hope is to have confidence in the future, that things will turn out well. That can seem a crazy thing to hold on to in the midst of 2020 of all years! Hope can seem shallow when up against redundancy, lost opportunities, divisive politics, racial injustice, illness and death itself. But Christian hope is different. It doesn't depend on the 'changes and chances of this mortal life' Christian hope rests not on us at all, but on God. 'All my hope on God is founded' as the hymn puts it. Our gospel looks hatred, injustice, suffering and death in the face, as we see what happened to Jesus and his death on the cross. So many hopes were dashed when he was crucified. But that was not the end. Jesus rose again, and Jesus lives in our hearts and in our church communities even today. Fancy that! God is as he is in Jesus, and that's why we have hope. Life begins the other side of despair, resurrection and the coming of the Holy Spirit came after the crucifixion. The message of Christmas is Emmanuel. God is with Us. Hallelujah!

**Pray:** O God we thank you for Jesus: wonderful counsellor, our prince of peace. As we celebrate Emmanuel we know that you are with us, and in the warmth of your love we find our hope renewed and our confidence restored. Help us to share that hope with others. Amen.

**Act:** Find simple ways to share hope with those you meet this week. Could you knit some small angels to leave for people to find? Could you put together small craft packs or similar to give to residents in local care homes?

Fri 11

Pray for our 100 church schools in Worcestershire and Dudley as they share God's love with over 22,000 children and young people.

Sat 12

Pray for the many different ways in which people hear God's word throughout our diocese, whether through Messy Church, Open the Book, homilies at lunch clubs etc.

Mon 14

In today's difficult world, we give thanks that You are there to bring light and hope.

Tues 15

Pray for all those suffering financially at this time and give thanks for those Christian charities locally who provide advice and support.

Wed 16

Give us courage to be a listening ear for those who are currently struggling, bringing comfort where appropriate.

Thur 17

Pray for all those who are living out their Christian calling in our world, particularly those who work in our public services.

Fri 18

Help us all to look for ways in which we can demonstrate the difference that God's call has made on our own lives.

Sat 19

Help us to share the hope of our hearts with one another and enable us to give hope to others through Your work amongst us.