Foreword from Bishop John

As I write this foreword, we are in the midst of the second lockdown. Our Archbishops have asked us to make this month a month of prayer and I’m delighted how many people have responded positively to their request. This prayer diary covers the season of Advent and Christmas and it reminds us that prayer should be as natural to us as breathing. It’s appropriate to every season, something we can do as long as the Holy Spirit gives us breath. It’s one thing that cannot be banned during lockdown.

These are hard times: we should take encouragement from St Paul’s words to the Christians at Philippi: ‘Do not worry about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.’

With that in mind, it’s good, now and then, to have an extra ‘push’ on prayer and to follow the national month of prayer we are also publishing prayers each day.

As part of the campaign this year the Mothers’ Union will be holding their Global Day (5 December) online, focusing on the disturbing and unacceptable figure that ‘1 in 3 women worldwide have experienced domestic or sexual abuse’.

In Worcester Cathedral, a candle will be lit and the MU prayers used each day. To find out more about the work of our local Mothers’ Union and this campaign against gender-based violence, please visit www.worcestermu.org.uk/.

Mon 30 Growing as Kingdom People: Worshipping God creatively

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.

Tue 1 DECEMBER Kingswinford Deanery

Pray for the Deanery Chapter, Synod and PCCs as we work through the effects of the pandemic and join in the Diocesan Restructuring Conversation. For hope and courage, Rural Dean: David Hoskin; Lay Chair: Anthony Lovey.

Wed 2 Diocese of Peru

Following the impeachment of the president and the widespread public discontent with this action by Congress, pray for the people of Peru as they endure political turmoil on top of the devastating consequences of pandemic, especially that they may find leaders of integrity to lead them through this crisis.

Thur 3 Brierley Hill Team: St Michael, Brierley Hill

Give thanks for monies coming into the area through the High Street Heritage Action Zone. Pray for benefits for the whole community and for church to recognise opportunities. Clergy: David Hoskin, Carol Weston; Readers: Keith Colley, Val Houghton. Reader-in-training: Tracey Skidmore.

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Pray for the choir and all working to produce creative Christmas worship for Facebook and YouTube that they may become real community events. Clergy: David Hoskin, Carol Weston; Readers: Keith Colley, Val Houghton. Reader-in-training: Tracey Skidmore.

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Sunday 29 NOVEMBER

Campaigning against gender-based violence

Each year, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women on 25 November marks the start of a 16-day international campaign, which culminates on International Human Rights Day on 10 December. Throughout the campaign, the Mothers’ Union is joining with around 6,000 organisations from approximately 187 countries to raise awareness of, and call for an end to, gender-based violence in all forms and in all societies.

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Lord, we pray that through the work of the Mothers’ Union and other charities worldwide, gender-based violence is brought to an end.

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Lay Chair: Anthony Lovey

St Andrews, Dunkeld and Dunblane (Scotland):
Bishop Ian Paton

Lusitanian Church:
Bishop Jorge Pina Cabral
Pororo (Finland):
Bishop Bo-Göran Åstrand

Segondi (Ghana):
Bishop Alexander Asmah

Eastern Michigan (USA):
Bishop Todd Ousley

Seoul (Korea):
Bishop Peter Lee

Eastern Newfoundland & Labrador (Canada):
Bishop Geoffrey Peckle

Seychelles (Indian Ocean):
Bishop James Richard Wong Yin Song

Easton (USA):
Bishop Patrick Bell

Sheffield:
Bishop Pete Wilcox, with Bishop Sophie Jetley (Doncaster)

Eastern Zambia (Africa):
Bishop William McChombo

Shinyanga (Tanzania):
Bishop Johnson Chinyong’ole

Eau Claire (USA):
Bishop William Jay Lambert

Edinburgh (Scotland):
Bishop John Armes

Gasabo (Rwanda):
Bishop Laurent Mbanda

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**Comfort & Joy at Christmas**

#ComfortandJoy is the Church of England’s Advent and Christmas campaign for 2020. It holds together the hope that Christmas will bring joy and celebration after a difficult year with an acknowledgement that — for those who have experienced loss or bereavement, or who are still not able to be together with loved ones – it may be the Church’s role to provide consolation.

Daily reflections are available along with a printed booklet Comfort and Joy: Nine Lessons and Carols for Christmas which explores biblical texts alongside the words of much-loved Christmas carols.

Nine online services, created in partnership with charities like Christian Aid and the Church Army, are also available. These include: a service for each Sunday of Advent; a Children’s Society Christmas: nine lessons and carols; and midnight services. Churches are encouraged to list the full range of their Advent and Christmas services on A Church Near You.

It is hoped that Comfort and Joy will reconnect us to the rich and joyous traditions of the past and offer God’s consoling love in the present.

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**Mon 7**  Growing as Kingdom People: Making disciples

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 disciples.

**Tue 8**  Kingswinford & Wall Heath

Pray for St Mary’s and Church of the Ascension as they enter vacancy; for all in ministry and supporting continued worship and the online Jigsaw Church and for our ALMs. For St Mary’s & Ascension CE VC Primaries; Heads: Peter Booth and Steve Hudson. Readers: Jill Nicholls, Deborah Filgate, David Cousins

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**Wed 9**  Diocese of Morogoro

We pray for all those who lost homes and land in severe flooding in Morogoro earlier this year. During this time, church buildings were destroyed and many clergy lost their homes. We rejoice that gifts from our own diocese have played an important part in bringing some much needed relief.

**Thur 10**  St Mark, Pensnett

Please pray that God’s spirit replenishes us, keeps us going and gives us joy in these hard times. We pray that our needs will be provided for. Clergy: Ness Tobin; Reader: John Lawrence

**Fri 11**  St Chad, Coseley

As we start a new chapter in the life of St Chad’s Coseley, we pray that God’s love will continue to shine brightly to all in the community, illuminating his love and compassion. Clergy: Gary Hartill

**Sat 12**  St Mary, Hurst Hill

Praying for a continued sense of hope and strength during the time of uncertainty. Also giving thanks for our growing daily online worship. Strengthen our clergy: Emma Stanford and Tim Westwood, and our ALM: Bob Hill

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**Christmas-tide in Malvern Link and Cowleigh**

This Christmas-tide, Malvern Link and Cowleigh are getting creative with the children, young people and families in their parish, with support from their Mission Enabler, Helen Laird.

To celebrate the Advent season, every Primary school child has been invited to decorate a bunting pendant with Christian imagery of Christmas. Once decorated, the 1,500 themed pendants will be sewn together in class groups and used to decorate the church.

Not only will the Christmas story be recreated in fabric, but also with food at the planned ‘Edible Nativity’ next weekend. On Saturday 19 December, families will visit St Matthias and St Peter’s churches to decorate pre-cut and baked gingerbread biscuits in the shape of Nativity characters, ready to take home and adorn their Christmas trees, if they make it that far!
Christmas Carols

For many of us, the rich melodies of Christmas carols are synonymous with the Advent season. They serve us with a reminder of hosts of angels filling the night sky with joyous songs at the miraculous coming of the Christ-child. Carols as we know them have their roots as early as the fourth century, with several traditional pieces like ‘While Shepherds Watched Their Flocks By Night’ first appearing during the Medieval period. However, most of today’s popular carols were first composed and circulated in the Victorian era.

With moving harmonies and a mixture of solemn and uplifting lyrics, carols are often full of awe, hope and joy – emotions we can identify with as we await the Nativity. This year, we have been recording a diocesan version of ‘Once in Royal David’s city’ featuring singers from across our parishes. Look out for it on our social media channels and the diocesan website this week.

Mon 21 Growing as Kingdom People: Transforming communities

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.

Tue 22 Gornal & Sedgeley Team Ministry

Please pray for all of the people of St Peter’s Church as we continue with the closure of our current church building and for the development of our church hall. Also for the Churches Together Alpha course across the area starting in January. Clergy: Guy Hewlett, Catherine Mitchell; Reader: Canon Jan Humpries.

Wed 23 Economy and Daily Life

Pray for those working in retail during the difficulties of lockdown, with the continuing pressure of Christmas, and especially for all working over the holiday period; that all may find the rest they need and know the Peace of the Christ-child.

Thur 24 Churches Together in Brierley Hill

Pray for all the Christian denominations working together in the Brierley Hill area.

Fri 25 Christmas Day

Eternal God, in the stillness of this night you sent your almighty Word to pierce the world’s darkness with the light of salvation: Give to the earth that peace we long for and fill our hearts with the joy of heaven through our Saviour, Jesus Christ. Amen (Common Worship, Church of England)

Sat 26 Retired clergy in Kingswinford Deane

On this commemoration of Stephen, deacon and martyr, we give thanks for the retired clergy of Kingswinford Deane. For their own ordination to the diaconate, and for the many years of service and of preaching they have given in the course of their ministry.

Diocesan Chancellor retirement

The Diocesan Chancellor, Charles Myrons, will be retiring at the end of 2020. Charles is a barrister and has been in post for 23 years. During that time, he has sat in judgement on a whole range of issues affecting churches in Worcestershire and Dudley. Charles said: “I have enjoyed my time at Worcester; and have been hugely supported by both the Bishops of Worcester as well as the seven archdeacons with whom I have had the privilege of working. I am very grateful to all.”

Bishop John said: “Charles’s wisdom and judgement have been hugely appreciated. His skill and deep Christian commitment have enabled him to act at all times for the good of the mission of the church as well as the care of our heritage. I give heartfelt thanks for him and pray for God’s rich blessing on him in the future.”

Every Church of England diocese has an ecclesiastical court whose judge is the Chancellor. Much of the routine work that the Chancellor undertakes is centred on faculty jurisdiction, which allows work to be carried out on consecrated churches and churchyards.

Mon 28 PCC and Deanery Synod members

Pray for all those who serve our church as members of the Parochial Church Council and give thanks for their important role in the mission of the Church. Also for Deanery Synod members who play a vital role in the governance of the Church.

Tue 29 Lay Ministry

Pray for all those who serve the church in a lay capacity. Giving thanks especially for the ministry of Readers/Licensed Lay Ministers (LLMs) and Authorised Lay Ministers (ALMs).

Wed 30 Diocesan HR Team

Pray for the Diocesan Human Resources Team: Jo Hyrons and Becky Lowe. Give thanks for their skills and experience and for all they do to support clergy and employees of the Diocesan Board of Finance.

Thur 31 New Year’s Eve

Lord, as we enter the new year, we each have our hopes and expectations for all that is ahead of us - but you alone know what it holds. Give us the strength and the wisdom we will need to meet its challenges and assure us of the certainty of your unchanging love.

Fri 1 January Black Country Urban Industrial Mission

Pray for Chaplains and Trustees of the Black Country Urban Industrial Mission (BCUIM), as they support workers across the Black Country, including the retail sector, Jaguar Land Rover, West Midlands Ambulance Service and National Express Bus drivers and staff.

Sat 2 Fire Service / Police

Pray for all who work in the Fire & Rescue Service and the Police, for safety and resilience, especially with the added pressure of Covid-19. Pray also for their chaplains as they reflect God’s love and care for all officers and staff. Joint Lead Chaplain: Dick Johnson. Chaplains: Richard Babbers, Stuart Sandys, Tony Whalley, Paul Lawlor, Tim Williams, Mike Wilkinson, Keith Locke, Keith Osmund-Smith, Catalin Macrae, Tony Whalley, Ahmed Hans.
Bishop Daniel Sylvanus Mensah Torto
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Bishop Monday Chukwuma Nkwoagu

The Episcopal / Anglican Province
Bishop Sarah Mullally with Bishops
reasons, including through a
Praying for our Baptism families
Archbishop Mouneer Hanna Anis

Lord, we pray for all those
who have suffered so heavily as a result of Covid in Peru,
without universal healthcare or unemployment support. Pray especially for young
people for whom the future seems so bleak, that they may have hope.

Pray for all the children in their care.

After each service there’s a chance for people to catch up and to share
any news – even if it’s just what they’ve seen out of the window that day!

“It’s important that we’ve been able to be there for our whole community both
spiritually and through offering fellowship. We’re reaching those on the
margins and the vulnerable – we’ll definitely keep doing it.”

Mon 4

Droitwich Area

In the new deanery structure, Droitwich Deanery is likely to be split three ways
with parishes moving into the new Worcester, Bromsgrove and Evesham deaneries.
Thank you to our hard-working Deanery Officers past and present. Pray for Rural
Dean Wyn Beynon who is retiring in Summer 2021.

Tue 5

Wychbrook Benefice

Pray that although our church communities may move forward in different
directions, we are always open to missional ways of working and see boundaries
as lines of welcome and cooperation rather than borders. Clergy: Wyn Beynon;
Reader: Melissa Beynon

Wed 6

Diocese of Peru

Pray for all those who have suffered so heavily as a result of Covid in Peru,
particularly for those fighting illness and those who have no income in a country
without universal healthcare or unemployment support. Pray especially for young
people for whom the future seems so bleak, that they may have hope.

Thu 7

Wychbrook Benefice

Pray as planning continues for Feckenham to potentially join the existing Christ
the King Team (Crabbs Cross, Headless Cross and Astwood Bank) to form a
new benefice sharing their focus of the south side of Redditch and immediate
countryside. Clergy: Wyn Beynon

Fri 8

Wychbrook Benefice

In our proposed new structure, Stock and Bradley will return to the ‘new’ Bowbrook
Group. Pray that the building may be well used as a centre for this very rural and
dispersed community. Clergy: Wyn Beynon

Sat 9

Growing as Kingdom People

As the new deanery plan comes into effect, pray for all those who struggle with change
and pray that the new structure will be effective in offering us more flexibility
in deploying ministry to better meet pastoral and missional needs.

Mon 11

Wychbeck Benefice

Please pray for Paula Honniball as she begins her ministry as Associate Priest in
Stoke Prior, Wychbold and Upton Warren, lead the parish as it hopefully becomes
part of the Bromsgrove team. Clergy: Wyn Beynon, Paula Honniball

Tue 12

Bowbrook Benefice

Pray for all who minister in Crowle and Bredicot, for Crowle First School, the Open
Book team & Fellowship Group; that we can meet again soon. For new facilities
at Crowle church. Clergy: David Morris, Rita Holden, Keith Withington; Readers:
Peter Charlesworth, Margaret Farquhar, John Spencer, Yuki Johnson

Wed 13

Diocese of Morogoro

Give thanks for the vital work at the hospital in Berega. Pray for Director, Canon
Isaac Mgego, and all the doctors and nurses. We rejoice that the nursing school
has been recognised by the Government as an officially approved training institute.

Thu 14

Bowbrook Benefice

Pray for our ministry team at Hadzor w Oddingley and Tibberton and for all who have
been recently bereaved. For those exploring vocations and for Tibberton First School.
Clergy: David Morris, Rita Holden, Keith Withington; Readers: Peter Charlesworth,
Margaret Farquhar, John Spencer, Yuki Johnson

Fri 15

Bowbrook Benefice

Pray for all in Himbleton & Huddington; the school, congregations and volunteers
who maintain an active, visible and caring ministry. Pray for all who minister here.
Clergy: David Morris, Rita Holden, Keith Withington; Readers: Peter Charlesworth,
Margaret Farquhar, John Spencer, Yuki Johnson

Sat 16

Bowbrook Benefice

Pray for the community of Hanbury. Pray also for the retired clergy that offer their
ministries and for our worship leaders especially those leading the Open Door
Sunday service for Hanbury First School and for all those who will hopefully
be married here this year. Clergy: David Morris, Rita Holden, Keith Withington;
Readers: Peter Charlesworth, Margaret Farquhar, John Spencer, Yuki Johnson
Week of Prayer for Christian Unity

The Week of Prayer for Christian Unity is traditionally held between 18-25 January.

This year’s materials have been prepared by the Monastic Community of Grandchamp in Switzerland. The chosen theme, “Abide in my love and you shall bear much fruit”, is based on John 15:1-17 and expresses the Grandchamp Community’s vocation to prayer, reconciliation and unity.

The community has fifty sisters, all women from different generations, Church traditions, countries and continents. The sisters remain faithful to a life of prayer, life in community and the welcoming of guests as they share the grace of their monastic life with visitors and volunteers who go to Grandchamp for a time of retreat, silence, healing or in search of meaning. Abiding in Christ is an inner attitude that takes root in us over time. It demands space to grow. It can be overtaken by the struggle for the necessities of life and it is threatened by the distractions, noise, activity and the challenges of life. During this week, the sisters are inviting churches to enter into their tradition of prayer and silence, remembering that prayer and everyday life are not two separate realities but are meant to be united. All that we experience is meant to become an encounter with God.

Holocaust Memorial Day

Holocaust Memorial Day (HMD) takes place every year on 27 January, and is the international day to remember those murdered in the Holocaust, under Nazi persecution and in the genocides that followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia and Darfur. It is promoted and supported by the Holocaust Memorial Day Trust (HMDT), the national charity which encourages remembrance in a world scarred by genocide.

HMD is marked in communities across the UK who come together to learn, reflect and take action for a safer future. Faith groups are a huge part of this, and HMD provides support and resources to help churches mark HMD with their parishes. For HMD 2021, the theme is “Be the light in the darkness” – a call to action which resonates with people of all faiths and none.

Resources include prayers, liturgical resources, films, life stories and much more. For more information, visit HMDT’s website.
If you have a story to feature on a Sunday in a future diary, please do get in touch! Large print copies of the diary are always available – email Sam Setchell, Communications Officer on ssetchell@cofe-worcester.org.uk, or contact the Diocesan Office reception on 01905 20537 if you or someone you know would like one.