



From the Church of England website:- “December can feel like chaos – lots of social events, services, Christmas presents to buy, never-ending to-do lists and the pressure to create the perfect Christmas. But in the midst of this chaos,

our churches can offer an opportunity to find peace during this busy time.”

The Church of England's theme for Advent and Christmas 2024, **Follow the Star: Calm and Bright**, draws on the world-famous carol, Silent Night:

*“Silent Night! Holy Night!
All is calm, all is bright...”*

One of the reasons that this carol is so universally loved is the way it invites us into the still centre of the Christmas story, to contemplate Mary holding the new-born Jesus, the Light of the World. The angelic messages we encounter in the biblical story of Jesus’ birth typically hold together the need for **calm** in the present (“Do not be afraid” ... “Fear not”) with the hope of a **bright** future (“for you have found favour with God” ... “for behold I bring you tidings of great joy”).

Throughout Advent, we will focus primarily on how to find **Calm** during this busy period, with reflections offering people a chance to pause during the busy season and tips on how to prepare for a calm Christmas. Then through Christmas, we will focus particularly on **Bright**, with a series of daily reflections from Christmas Day to the Eve of Epiphany (5 January) by Sammi Tooze, Discipleship Adviser for the Diocese of York, both in digital form and as [a full-colour booklet](#) to share locally.

Isaiah 45.8 Shower, O heavens, from above, and let the clouds rain down righteousness; let the earth open, that salvation and righteousness may bear fruit; let the earth cause them both to sprout; I the LORD have created it.

Philippians 4:6-7 Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

The Church of England will also share reflective content throughout Advent and Christmas for those who find this time of year difficult, with some Blue Christmas resources.

Resources for churches

- **Booklets, prayer cards and family resources:** Ideal for giving away at Advent and Christmas services, new printed *Calm and Bright* Christmas reflections booklets, prayer cards for adults and families are available to [order now from Church House Publishing](#).
- **Calm and Bright Advent Calendar:** an ideal way for families and children to prepare for Christmas, the new *Calm and Bright Traditional Advent Calendar* offers a daily picture and a challenge for each day of Advent, as well as a QR code linking to free online audio activities.
- **Christmas episodes from the Cheeky Pandas:** These free resources feature cartoons, songs and Bible stories to help you engage the children in your church with the Christmas story. [Find videos on the Cheeky Pandas website](#).
- **A directory of resources for use at home, church and school**, provided by members of the Parachurch Organisations Network of the Growing Faith Foundation. [from Growing-Faith-parachurch-organisations-network](#)
- **Social media:** Be sure to follow the CofE social media channels – [X/Twitter](#), [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [TikTok](#), [LinkedIn](#), [Threads](#) – this Advent and Christmas for a variety of thought-provoking and inspiring content, aimed at bringing peace in the midst of a busy Advent, and celebrating the joy of Christmas.

Resources for schools

- Four weeks of **collective worship resource materials** is available from the National Society for Education for use by schools during Advent. The resources unpack the theme of ‘Calm and Bright’, through the perspectives of the Angel Gabriel, Joseph, a shepherd and Mary and encourage learners to consider how they can bring calmness and brightness to the world. [Sign up now to get access to this resource](#).

[Follow the Star: Calm and Bright | The Church of England](#)

C = Clergy R = Reader; H = Headteacher; EH = Executive HT; HS = Head of School

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
ADVENT 1 1 Kenilworth Deanery : AD – David Hammond Asst AD – Jim Perryman	2 Berkswell C – Mark Bratton	3 Berkswell CofE VA Primary HT – Tracy Drew	4 <u>DAC meeting (church buildings); DBE Board (church schools)</u>	5 <u>Bishop’s Core Staff Team</u>	6 Seek to find peace during a busy time	7 Stoneleigh with Ashow, Baginton & Bubbenhall C – Petrica Bistran
ADVENT 2 8 Kenilworth – St John C – Andrew Attwood	9 Burton Green CofE Academy EH – Chris Errington; DH Stella Villiers	10 <u>Race Equality Strategy Group</u>	11 Kenilworth – St Nicholas C – Eira Hale	12 <u>Diocesan Finance Group</u>	13 Pause and reflect as we are in the season of varied carol services	14 St Nicholas CofE Community Primary H – Sarah Rayson
ADVENT 3 15 Meriden, St Laurence C – Kevin Flanagan	16 Meriden CofE Primary H – Lucy Anderton	17 <i>O Sapientia</i> <u>Cathedral Chapter</u>	18 <i>O Adonai</i> Leek Wootton – All Saints C – Jim Perryman	19 <i>O Radix Jesse</i> All Saints CofE Academy, Leek Wootton EH – Chris Errington; HS Helen Rose	20 <i>O Clavis David</i> O Key of David and sceptre of the House of Israel; you open and no one can shut	21 <i>O Oriens</i> The Ferncumbe CofE Primary HS – Sally Morris
O Rex Gentium 22 The Ferncumbe Group C – Ann Peachey	O Emmanuel 23 O Emmanuel, our king and our law giver, the hope of the nations, our Saviour	CHRISTMAS EVE 24 The hand of the Lord was upon him [John the Baptist] in a special way.	CHRISTMAS DAY 25 Mary kept all these things in her heart and thought about them often.	STEPHEN, FIRST MARTYR 26 Everyone who endures to the end will be saved (Matthew 10.22b)	JOHN APOSTLE 27 For bright vision and a passion for the Gospel to permeate 2025	HOLY INNOCENTS 28 A cry was heard in Ramah – weeping and great mourning (Matthew 2.18a).
CHRISTMAS 1 29 Jesus grew in wisdom and in stature and in favour with God and all the people. Luke 2.41-end	30 Anna began praising God Luke 2.36-40	31 So the Word became human and made his home among us John 1.1-18	O Antiphons (17-23 December) Sapientia = Wisdom; Adonai = Majesty (plural); Radix = Root; Clavis = Key; Oriens = Dawn of the East; Rex Gentium = King of the nations; Emmanuel = God with us			

PRAYER DIARY

Advent Prayer

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;
through Jesus Christ our Lord.



the still centre of the Christmas story

Coming up – the **Themes** for the next two months will be **Growing Young Leaders** and **Healthy Churches**. Do consider sending in your prayer suggestions, and

BEING HEALTHY CHURCH AT CHRISTMAS

Whether we are in a small church or a much larger one, all of us can appreciate who we would like to join us.

Who is **‘missing from church?’** Pray for the conditions to be right, for the invitations to be wholehearted and for every church to reflect how to make answering this question a priority in 2025.

SPECIFIC DAYS IN DECEMBER 2024

1 – Kenilworth Deanery – AD David Hammond; Asst AD Jim Perryman; Deanery Lay Chair – Mark Lovegrove; *We thank God for the vibrant community life across our churches and schools in the Deanery. Please pray for unity and inspiration as we plan Advent activities that deepen our faith and outreach.* **Churches Together in Kenilworth and District.** Please pray for our outreach at the Christmas Lights Switch-on Event in Kenilworth this afternoon. *Clergy with PTO in the Deanery* – Don Alcock, Peter Holiday, Robert Latham, Richard Moore, Jane Mullaney, John Price, Mary Rai, Roger Turner.

2 – St John the Baptist, Berkswell - We thank God for good recovery following COVID, especially new people who formerly hadn't gone to church. We also thank God for our two Children and Family Ministers and their links with Berkswell Primary School and school parents. The new mum and toddler group ('Stay, Play and Pray') is popular. We pray that our Sunday Evensong will grow again." *Clergy with PTO*, Stephen Mayes R – Richard Hollingdale

7 – St Mary the Virgin, Stoneleigh with Assumption of Our Lady, Ashow, St John the Baptist, Baginton and St Giles, Bubbenhall Stoneleigh: We are thankful for the strong lay ministry that supports our church community. Please pray for renewed strength in our ministry as we continue to serve. **Ashow:** We give thanks for Ashow being a place of pilgrimage. We pray for the development of a Pilgrim's map to guide visitors on their spiritual journeys. **Baginton and Bubbenhall:** We are grateful for the commitment of our community during the interregnum. Pray for fresh vision for growth, mission, and ministry as Petrica begins his new role as their minister-in-charge. R – Audrey Rowberry

8 – St John, Kenilworth – Andrew Atwood says, *"We're experimenting with fasting; for personal and missional breakthrough. Please pray for our review of disciple-making rhythms."* *Clergy with PTO*, Pam Stote; R (PTO) – Anthony Manning, Val Whiteman; R – Ken Pollard, Phil Swards.

11 – St Nicholas with St Barnabas, Kenilworth We give thanks for our new 'Family Lounge', which provides a welcoming and comfortable place for children and their carers to learn about God through play; we pray that this will help us develop effective mission to families in Kenilworth. We pray that our Christmas family event, Journey of the Magi, will help us to build relationships with our local families and that our search for a Children and Families Mission Leader will be fruitful. We also give thanks for our head teacher at St Nicholas CofE Primary School as she retires and pray for the new head teacher as she takes up her post in January. *Clergy with PTO*, James Martin; R (PTO) – Heather Alford

15 – St Laurence, Meriden – Giving thanks for a brand new website; pray that it will help build strong connections and interest from our local community Home - St Laurence Our Christmas Tree Festival is on 14/15th December, with Carols on the Green on 14th December at 5pm. R – Jayne Flanagan

18 – All Saints, Leek Wootton – We give thanks for being a happy, welcoming and faithful fellowship in the midst of a friendly, supportive village community, with a strong relationship with the local village C of E Academy. Thanks too for our Church and Village Acts of Remembrance on Remembrance Sunday which were so well attended and had great involvement by the children of our local Scouting and Guiding Groups. As we approach an interregnum, with Jim's retirement on 31 January after 16 years, please pray for all the practical handover of information from Jim to the Churchwardens and PCC to go smoothly. Pray too for a joyful celebration of Christmas with involvement at our Carol Services of the school children, our Christmas Choir, and our handbells group. Assoc C - Andrew Haines, John Price R (PTO) – Christine Haines; R Audrey Rowberry, Nigel Stallard

22 – The Ferncumbe Group – Hatton with Haseley, Rowington with Lawsonford, Honiley & Wroxall - We thank God for good relationships with Ferncumbe C of E School. We had our first 'Teddy Zip wire' from the church tower at Hatton. It was great fun with 50 brave teddies and their families. Please pray for our Advent and Christmas services: especially Christingle, Pop Up Nativity and Crib. Pray for energy for our small team and for more people to get involved and be drawn into life with Jesus. R (PTO) – Kemble Everitt.



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CALM

We give thanks for the wonderful ministry of +Ruth and +Saju in our Diocese these past twelve months; we pray for them as they complete their service amongst us this month, that they may be calm and refreshed, fully engaged, back in the Dioceses of Bath & Wells and Leicester in 2025.

In light of the recent national news, we wish to acknowledge the enormous amount of work and diligence of our parish safeguarding officers, locally, supported by Sarah Price and the Diocesan Safeguarding Team – we pray for them during this busy season and entering a new calendar year, that they may remain calm and focused.

BRIGHT

It was with great excitement that we heard of the appointment of +Sophie, and we look forward with her to her arrival here in Spring 2025.

[New Bishop of Coventry announced - Diocese of Coventry](#)

PRAYER JOTTINGS – DECEMBER 2024

"If, like me, you feel that it is time to reclaim Christmas as a Christian festival [focused on the nativity of Christ] ... then it is time to revive the tradition of observing Advent as a time of meditating on Christ's return... it puts The Feast of the Nativity in the perspective of preparing our entire lives to be changed by Jesus' coming. It could result in a very different approach to the whole season" (Ruth Grayson, Grove, S134)

The Advent Prose

**Pour down, O heavens, from above,
and let the skies rain down righteousness.**

Turn your fierce anger from us, O Lord,
and remember not our sins for ever.

Your holy cities have become a desert,
Zion a wilderness, Jerusalem a desolation;
our holy and beautiful house,
where our ancestors praised you.

**Pour down, O heavens, from above,
and let the skies rain down righteousness.**

We have sinned and become like one who is unclean;
we have all withered like a leaf,
and our iniquities like the wind have swept us away.

You have hidden your face from us,
and abandoned us to our iniquities.

**Pour down, O heavens, from above,
and let the skies rain down righteousness.**

You are my witnesses, says the Lord,
and my servant whom I have chosen,
that you may know me and believe me.

I myself am the Lord, and none but I can deliver;
what my hand holds, none can snatch away.

**Pour down, O heavens, from above,
and let the skies rain down righteousness.**

Comfort my people, comfort them;
my salvation shall not be delayed.

I have swept your offences away like a cloud;
fear not, for I will save you.

I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel,
your redeemer.

**Pour down, O heavens, from above,
and let the skies rain down righteousness*.**



*Isaiah 45.8

Intercessions for Holy Innocents (28 December)

In peace let us pray to the God of love.

Righteous God,
your Son our Saviour Jesus Christ dwelt among us
and shared our grief and our pain.

We pray for the children of our world,
that they may grow up knowing love and security.

Silence is kept.

We pray for all children who suffer physical or mental abuse.

Silence is kept.

We pray for all communities in our world
who live with the memories of massacre and gross cruelty.

Silence is kept.

We pray for all who are corrupted by power
and who regard human life as cheap.

Silence is kept.

We pray for parents who have suffered the death of a child.

Silence is kept.

We pray for parents and guardians,
that they may be given grace to care for the children entrusted to them.

Silence is kept.

As we celebrate the coming of the Christ-child,
we rejoice in the fellowship of the Holy Innocents
and commit the children of this community,
our nation and our world to you,
our righteous God.

Merciful Father,
accept these prayers

**for the sake of your Son,
our Saviour Jesus Christ.**

Amen.

- Each month we focus on a different Deanery; this month it is **Kenilworth**. We will focus on specific Deaneries again from **February 2025**. I look forward to receiving updates from area deans, clergy, and anyone else with specific prayer requests.

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