

Making the most of Comfort and Joy this Christmas.

Comfort
and Joy



Christmas will be very different this year. Not only will attendance at church services be restricted in order to be covid secure, but it is uncertain whether other national or local restrictions will also be in place. It is unlikely there will be any congregational singing of the carols we love so much. In addition, as we know well, Christmas comes at the end of an exhausting year which has been exceptionally tough for so many of us.

And yet, never has Christmas been more important. More than ever, we need to hear the message of the angels, and to be reassured that God's light continues to shine in the midst of darkness. It is an encouragement that faithful Christians will wish to hear once more, and also a message of hope we can give as a gift to our wider communities.

For many churches, we know that the planning of Christmas services has become burdensome: it is uncertain what we can do, and many of us have little energy to do it. We offer this summary of ideas and resources to the parishes of our diocese in the hope that wherever we are, however we are feeling, whatever resources we have, there will be things here that we can do, in church, online, in the community, that might bring Comfort and Joy to the world.

How to make use of the deluge of resources?

There are two things here.

1. There are some "**Oven Ready**" practical suggestions. We have grouped things in three levels. We recognise that some churches have amazing resources of people and abundance of IT confidence, whilst others are stepping enthusiastically if not necessarily confidently into new territory, and others again are quietly being overwhelmed by the restrictions, the lack of personnel or IT resources either in church or at home. These levels are, obviously, a bit arbitrary but we hope are a useful guide as to where to start.
2. There are pointers to **Online Resources**. These are either things you can use online or things you can use in person, in church or in the community.

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Oven Ready Suggestions

LEVEL A (when your resources are restricted)

- For the congregation. **Comfort and Joy booklets.** Send these to those who are part of the congregation and have some extras available to others who might want them.
<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/preparing-advent-christmas-2020-comfort-and-joy>
- For families/groups. **Bible Society Christmas video** is great for **children and parents or carers from your congregation or groups.** Signpost it or send out the Bible Society Christmas booklet version of the story to those who are offline. <https://www.biblesociety.org.uk/get-involved/christmas/>
- For folks at home. **National and diocese online and televised services.** Put up a **poster** inside and outside the church with the information.
- Online. **Comfort and Joy posts.** Like, share or retweet these to social media on your Church's social media pages.

LEVEL B (when you can spread your wings a bit further)

- For the congregation. **Christmas Card** delivery? Include a **Comfort and Joy bookmark.**
- For families/groups. **Online Christingle service.** The Children's Society has lots of great ideas and resources for running this online. <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/how-you-can-help/fundraise-and-events/christingle/planning-your-celebration>
- Online **Bereavement** Offer a short online reflection for those who have experienced a through the year where they can light a candle at home to remember their loved one?
- In church. **An empty Christmas tree** in the church building. Place some stars or bauble shapes with a loop of ribbon or thread attached on a table and leave some pens with them. People can are then invited to **write their prayers or words of thanksgiving** to add to the tree (either when they come in for private prayer or when they come into the building for services)?
- For folks at home. **New Year's Eve watch party** for some of the online or televised services so that there is still a sense of community even if everyone is staying at home.

LEVEL C (when you have capacity and ability and confidence).

- For the congregation. **An Advent Window Trail** around the parish with different members of the congregation taking a day each and decorating their window with a message of Comfort and Joy or a scene from the Christmas Story?
- Online **Carol Service** If you are planning to have an online or in building this year, why not ask some members or groups from the community to pre-record themselves singing a carol that you could show in your service?

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- For folks at home. **Party Bags** Why not make up some for Christmas day including the Comfort and Joy booklet, the Bible Society booklet for children, a balloon, and perhaps a candle to light at home with the **comfort and joy prayer card** to accompany it?
- Online **Messy Christmas** An at-home event using the Messy Church Christmas resources [https://www.messychurch.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/pdf/Messy Christmas at home.pdf](https://www.messychurch.org.uk/sites/default/files/uploads/pdf/Messy%20Christmas%20at%20home.pdf)

Online Resources

The National Campaign - Comfort and Joy

<https://www.churchofengland.org/resources/preparing-advent-christmas-2020-comfort-and-joy>

You will find a wealth of resources to choose from

- 1. Free Reflections** by email and app
Weekly Reflections for Advent
Daily Reflections from Christmas Eve to 2 January.
- 2. Free 9 Online Services**
for Advent and Christmas
- 3. Printed Material (not free)**
Bookmarks, Christmas cards, banners, flyers, posters, booklets – you can order direct from this site
- 4. A Church Near You**
A wealth of free resources

Other Online Resources

Diocesan Digital Nine Lessons and Carols, 7pm 23 December

If your church is not able to host a carol service this year, help is at hand! On the 23 December at 7pm we will bring together choirs and music groups from across the diocese for a digital service of Nine Lessons and Carols. This will feature musicians and readings from across the diocese to share worship for some much-needed comfort and joy. The link to access the service will be widely publicised nearer the time.

<https://www.manchester.anglican.org/news/2020/11/12/join-our-diocesan-virtual-choir/>

<https://www.facebook.com/events/698361951094590/>

A Church Near You Resource Hub

Photos, videos, logos and music, free to download for any church page editor:

<https://www.achurchnearyou.com/hub/>

Church Support Hub

<https://churchsupporthub.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/Inspirational-Christmas-Ideas.pdf>

One page of straightforward ideas. Brilliant

<https://churchsupporthub.org/baptisms/occasions-for-follow-up/christmas-2020/>

Baptism follow up, with ideas for use in church, outside, at home, online.

<https://padlet.com/jlawrence65/x78h8kfg95rk6lu4>

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A page full of dynamic ideas. Sort of like Pinterest with Advent/Christmas in mind.

CPAS (needs registering)

<https://www.cpas.org.uk/browse-everything/making-most-advent-and-christmas>

Drive-in Carol Service - <https://www.cpas.org.uk/browse-everything/drive-christmas-carol-service>

Create your own QR Code (for the techie confident).

<https://www.qrcode-monkey.com/>

Put it outside and link it to your activities, your website and so on. Lots of YouTube clips to help. Some people are used to using QR Codes with the NHS COVID image.

Reflections for parishes to use in pre-recorded services for Advent 1, a Carol Service and Christmas Day from senior clergy: <https://www.manchester.anglican.org/news/2020/10/07/reflections/>

Children and Young People

The **Ultimate Online Advent Calendar** will be a collection of 24 short videos released each day on the Diocese of Manchester YouTube channel. Pitched for young people (11-18) but hopefully enjoyed by everyone, each video talked about an Advent theme, with a clear message and bible reference, along with the obligatory door opening to reveal the day and some chocolate. The videos will be shared via Instagram (mandioyouth), Twitter and Facebook each day, so you can share them with an advert for the calendar going out the week before it starts.

Si Smith and **Proost** have designed some brilliant resources around Advent their **Advent Calendar** which is available on the Proost website for £5.00 (<https://proost.co.uk/downloads/advent-calendar-bonus>). Simon's distinctive and powerful pictures are partnered with very short reflections from Ian Adams to accompany us through Advent.

Tiny Advent Poems from Engage Worship is a brilliant resource - 24 short reflective poems enabling us to travel through Advent with anticipation and imagination.
<https://engageworship.org/ideas/tiny-advent-poems>

Further Advent and Christmas resources for **young people** will be posted on the Diocese of Manchester Youth Work Resources Facebook page. Similarly, resources for **children and families** will be posted on the Diocese of Children and Family Resources Facebook page and the Padlet page.
<https://padlet.com/karenbeal/c5xlb3i02dw5sc9h>

Be honest. Be realistic. Keep Christmas simple.

If you and your flock can do two or three things, go for it.