ADVENT 2026

MAKING ROOM FOR HOPE



A daily devotional for Advent

27 days to make room for Jesus

WEST HEREFORD TEAM MINISTRY
All Saints, Holy Trinity, and St Michael's

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Welcome

Advent is a season of making room. Mary made room for Jesus in her body, and the shepherds left their fields to make room for him in their night. This booklet offers twenty-seven days to do the same.

Each day has a short reading, a reflection from one of our clergy or Readers, and a prayer. Four weekly practices gather the days together: offering ourselves, finding God in our work, holding money with open hands, and telling others what we have seen. The days are brief enough to read over breakfast or before sleep.

Begin on Sunday 29th November and take each day as it comes. If you miss one, pick up the next. The words are here to help you pause, and a pause of a minute counts.

I am grateful to Christine, Paul, David, Chris, Diane, and Michael, who have written alongside me, and to everyone who will read this in a kitchen, a car, or a quiet corner of church.

May you find Christ already waiting in the room you make.

Jonathan Widdess
Priest in Charge
West Hereford Team Ministry

A Prayer to Make Room for Hope

Lord Jesus Christ,
born in a borrowed room,
find a place in us this Advent.
Clear away what crowds our days.
Loosen our hold on what we grip too tightly.
Quieten the noise until we hear you drawing near.
Give us Mary's yes, the shepherds' haste,
and a little of Elizabeth's delight at your arrival.
Where hope is thin, hang your star above our roof.
Where we are weary,
lay your small, warm weight in our arms.
We offer you our mornings and our work,
our money and our company.
All of it is yours.
Come, Lord Jesus.
The room is ready.
Amen.

The Advent Course

Four Thursday evenings to talk, pray, and think together alongside the daily devotional.

When: Thursdays from 26th November, 7pm to 8:30pm
Where: All Saints Church, Hereford
Who: Everyone is welcome. Come to one or all four.

Each evening takes up the theme of the week in the booklet. We share a short input, time for conversation, and a few moments of quiet prayer. You need no experience of church and no preparation beyond an open mind. Bring a friend if you like.

Week 1

Offering Ourselves

We offer ourselves.

Worship reaches well beyond Sunday. Romans 12 calls the whole of life a true and proper offering: body, work, time, money, and relationships. Ordinary days become the liturgy, and Sunday gathers what we have offered, names it before God, and sends us back into the world. Advent begins by asking what it would mean to offer everything to him as we wait for Christ.

What would it mean to offer all of life to God, every day of the week?



PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK

Three times a day, morning, midday and evening, pause and say: Here I am. This is yours. *Offer the next portion of the day to God before you enter it.*

Day 1, Sunday 29th November

Isaiah 40:1-5

Comfort is the first word of the passage, and Isaiah says it twice, as though God knows how slowly we believe it. Then comes a building site. Valleys raised, hills brought low, rough ground made smooth, a road laid ready for the Lord.

After the first autumn gales I walked Phoenix down the lane and found a branch across the way. Someone had already dragged it to the verge and swept the leaves aside. Nobody had asked them to. They simply knew other people would be coming along.

That is how Advent begins for me, with someone getting a path ready. God will see to the mountains. Our part is the broom, a small stretch of ground cleared each day so that the road reaches our own front door.

The threefold pause is a sweep of the broom. Morning, midday, and evening, stop for a moment and breathe. Begin with the words of the prayer. By the end of the week there is a track clear enough to walk on.

Jonathan Widdess

PRAYER	*PRACTICE*
Here I am, Lord. This day is yours before I have even begun it. Amen.	*The threefold pause, morning, midday and evening.*

Day 2, Monday 30th November

Romans 12:1-2

In his letter to the Romans, St Paul urges us to "present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God". He calls us to offer God the whole of ourselves: our time, gifts, relationships, work and everyday lives.

This is a daily offering, allowing God to shape us, renew our minds and change how we see the world. It means resisting the patterns and priorities around us, and learning to live as people who belong to Christ.

George Herbert captures this spirit in his poem Praise (II), written in 1633 and familiar to many through the hymn "King of Glory, King of Peace". He offers God his whole life, recognising that even the smallest gifts and acts of love can become an offering.

Perhaps today we might ask: what am I holding back from God? What might it mean to offer it freely?

May we have the grace to place our whole selves in God's hands, offering him "seven whole days, not one in seven", trusting that a life given to him is never wasted.

Paul Roberts

PRAYER	*PRACTICE*
Take my ordinary hours, Lord, and let them be my worship. Amen.	*The threefold pause, morning, midday and evening.*

Day 3, Tuesday 1st December

Psalm 100

Read this psalm slowly, aloud and one line at a time, allowing its message to sink in.

The psalm encourages us to shout, worship and sing with gladness and joy, remembering that the Lord is God and that he has made us.

It is an extraordinary thought that we belong to him. Take a moment to ponder this: you are made by God, and you are his. Let the wonder of that truth settle in your heart. This Advent, may it awaken gladness and help us notice the joy that grows with each passing day.

Shouting and singing for joy may not come naturally to us. Yet today, let your heart sing as you remember that you are created by a God who loves you. May this bring fresh gladness and gratitude. His love will never leave you. God is faithful, and his love will sustain you for ever.

May this psalm remind you of how deeply you are loved, and encourage and sustain you throughout Advent and always.

Christine Cattanach

PRAYER	*PRACTICE*
Teach me gladness in the waiting, Lord, not just patience. Amen.	*The threefold pause, morning, midday and evening.*

Day 4, Wednesday 2nd December

Luke 1:26-38

There are moments when God asks us to pause, because something new is beginning. Mary's encounter with the angel is one such moment. She is told she will bear the Son of God, though she cannot know all that her "yes" will mean. She does not know the misunderstanding, danger or sorrow that lie ahead.

Yet Mary listens. She does not demand to know the whole plan. She asks one honest question, then offers herself: "Here am I, the servant of the Lord; let it be with me according to your word."

We often want to see the destination before taking the first step, or understand the cost before saying yes. Faith asks us to trust the One who calls us, even when the way ahead is unclear.

Perhaps today God is inviting us to pause, lay aside our fears and need for certainty, and make ourselves available to him.

Paul Roberts

PRAYER	*PRACTICE*
Like Mary, let me say yes before I understand what it costs. Amen.	*The threefold pause, morning, midday and evening.*

Day 5, Thursday 3rd December

1 Corinthians 11:23-26

My dad was a vicar, so some of my earliest memories are of him leading Communion. In time I was confirmed and knelt at the rail, but leading Communion myself was something else. At first it was frightening: so much to remember, so much that could go publicly wrong.

Gradually, though, it stopped being something I did and became something I was. At its heart were the moments just before the prayer over the bread and wine, and just after its great "Amen." I began to hold silence at those points and could feel the air thicken, the presence of God among his people. For a moment, time stood still (and still does). We on earth were one with the worship of heaven.

In ordinary everyday life I am not so holy! Yet those moments of communion remain part of who I am: glimpses of his presence now, with the hope of being in it for ever.

Perhaps prayer, at its heart, is simply this: stopping for a moment and letting the silence speak.

David Thomson

PRAYER	*PRACTICE*
Lord, let the Communion table remind me what my whole life is for. Amen.	*The threefold pause, morning, midday and evening.*

Day 6, Friday 4th December

Acts 2:42-47

What strikes me about the first Christians is how ordinary their devotion looks. They listen to teaching, share meals, pray, and sell the odd possession when somebody is in need. Nobody is described as doing any of it alone.

I think of watching football on a Saturday afternoon. Stand among strangers for ninety minutes and by the final whistle you know the men around you better than you expected. You have groaned, leapt and sung the same song in the same bad key, all in company. Nobody experiences that kind of belonging on their own.

Luke says the believers devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayer. The word carries a sense of staying power. A community takes shape slowly, through the simple act of turning up in the cold, week after week.

Let each pause today carry the names of those who stand beside you in church. Then pray the words of the prayer, and let them form you together.

Jonathan Widdess

PRAYER	*PRACTICE*
Form me, Lord, alongside others, not only on my own. Amen.	*The threefold pause, morning, midday and evening.*

Day 7, Saturday 5th December

Psalm 95:1-7

The psalm opens with a shout of praise and then, a few verses later, tells us to kneel. Singing and bowing sit side by side. There is something lovely about that movement, from exuberant praise to quiet surrender.

Phoenix is very good at getting me out for our morning walk. When I come downstairs, she springs to life and heads straight for the front door. She knows exactly what comes next, and makes sure I am paying attention. The day has barely begun, and already she is ready to follow a familiar path.

The psalm calls us the sheep of his pasture, the flock under his hand. Sheep depend on their shepherd to lead them. They know the safety of staying close and following his voice.

At tonight's evening pause, as Sunday approaches, put yourself in the shepherd's care. The week behind is his, and so is the one ahead.

Jonathan Widdess

PRAYER	*PRACTICE*
Before the week ends, Lord, receive this offering of my life. Amen.	*The threefold pause, morning, midday and evening.*

Week 2

God in the Washing Up

We meet God where we are.

God meets us in the ordinary grind long before the great day arrives. Genesis places work in the garden itself, and Paul tells the Colossians to work as for the Lord, whatever the task in front of them. The spreadsheet and the school run can both be offered. Brother Lawrence found that washing pots in God's presence was as holy as receiving communion. Advent's waiting happens mostly in weeks like this one, ordinary and undramatic, and this week asks what it means to find God there.

Where does God meet me in my daily work?



PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK

A short breath prayer carried into the working day:
Come, Holy Spirit; fill me now.
Pause mid-task to offer the work to God. Pray for a colleague by name each day.

Day 8, Sunday 6th December

Genesis 2:15

One verse today, and a short one. God places the man in the garden to work it and take care of it. Work arrives before anything has gone wrong. It belongs to the original gift, given in the same breath as the trees and the river.

I find that surprising, because Monday mornings rarely feel like Eden. Most of what fills my diary would never be called gardening. Emails, and the dull forms every parish seems to breed.

Yet the Hebrew verb for work can also mean serve, and the one for take care of means to keep, to guard. Whoever put us here was handing over something precious and asking us to look after it. A spade in the hand or a keyboard under the fingers can carry that same trust.

The breath prayer is short enough to say between one task and the next. Come, Holy Spirit, fill me now. God is already in the garden, waiting to meet us in the work of our hands.

Jonathan Widdess

PRAYER	*PRACTICE*
God is already in the garden, waiting to meet us in the work of our hands. Amen.	*Carry the breath prayer, Come, Holy Spirit, fill me now, into today.*

Day 9, Monday 7th December

Ecclesiastes 3:9-13

This passage reminds us that we will never fully understand what God is doing in our lives. It offers no neat explanation for everything that happens, but invites us to live with the mystery of being human and the generosity of God.

When we learn to receive the present, we begin to notice God in the ordinary things of life, finding satisfaction in the work before us. We may long to understand God's purposes, but Advent invites us to slow down, to wait and to recognise the blessings of this season.

We often hear this passage at funerals, when grief leaves us struggling for answers. It reminds us that it is alright not to understand. No one can fathom what God has done from beginning to end. We are invited to live with that mystery and trust the God who holds us in his love.

So let us wait, and trust. Let us put one foot in front of the other, and do what is ours to do today.

Christine Cattanach

PRAYER	*PRACTICE*
Give me eyes to see today's work as a gift, Lord, even the dull parts of it. Amen.	*Carry the breath prayer, Come, Holy Spirit, fill me now, into today.*

Day 10, Tuesday 8th December

Colossians 3:23-24

In my old King James' Bible today's passage begins: "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily.' When I was at Oxford, the rowing club were called "hearties". You can imagine why, rowdy lot that they were. I wasn't one of them; and in truth I am not (on the outside at least) a very hearty sort of person, but all "head". I spent nine years at colleges in all (and taught in them afterwards too); and when I felt the call to turn my collar round and be ordained it was with a pretty intellectual mindset and faith.

It was after I was ordained that my heart (and the Holy Spirit) caught up with me. I was able to do a lot in my own strength and do it well, but as pastoral ministry opened me, I was taken to the edge of my own resources and beyond: and God met me in my need. Ministry was now not what I could do but what God was doing, and my job was to join in—with his people on my heart.

I wonder where God will be in your work today? Breathe his Spirit in as you do it.

David Thomson

PRAYER	*PRACTICE*
Whatever is in front of me today, Lord, let me offer it to you. Amen.	*Carry the breath prayer, Come, Holy Spirit, fill me now, into today.*

Day 11, Wednesday 9th December

Exodus 35:30-35

Bezalel is a name most of us skim past. He is the first person in the Bible said to be filled with the Spirit of God, who gives him skill in working gold, cutting stone and carving wood. God's breath enters the workshop before it enters the pulpit.

I like that order. I write hymns, and some mornings the word I am hunting for is as stubborn as a knot in oak. When it comes, it feels like a gift. The line settles into place and I have the odd sense of being handed something. Every maker I know says much the same.

Verse 34 adds a detail I long missed. God also gives Bezalel the ability to teach others. His skill is meant to be shared.

Whatever you make today, a spreadsheet, a meal, a row of stitches or a lesson plan, the skill comes as a gift from above. Carry the breath prayer into your work, and let today's thank you rise as your hands are busy.

Jonathan Widdess

PRAYER	*PRACTICE*
Thank you for the skill in my hands, Lord, and for the making it allows. Amen.	*Carry the breath prayer, Come, Holy Spirit, fill me now, into today.*

Day 12, Thursday 10th December

Nehemiah 4:6

Nehemiah's account of rebuilding Jerusalem's walls reminds us that God's work is often accomplished through the labour and determination of ordinary people. We read that "the people had a mind to work". What a wonderfully simple phrase. It captures the shared purpose that made possible what might otherwise have seemed impossible.

Having spent part of my working life as a town planner, I know that building anything worthwhile takes time, and often faces opposition. Plans need to be drawn, permissions secured, competing interests reconciled and obstacles overcome. What looks straightforward on paper can be considerably more complicated on the ground!

The same is true of God's work in us and through us. We are called to build communities, mend relationships and nurture hope. We may not always see the finished design or how our work fits into the bigger picture.

God is at work in the planning as much as in the building. Our task is to offer our gifts, our energy and our willingness, trusting him with the outcome.

Paul Roberts

PRAYER	*PRACTICE*
When the work feels opposed, Lord, keep me building anyway. Amen.	*Carry the breath prayer, Come, Holy Spirit, fill me now, into today.*

Day 13, Friday 11th December

Matthew 25:14-30

In the parable, the master entrusts three servants with talents and expects them to put them to work. Two do so; the third buries his talent.

While serving in the Diocese in Europe, we introduced a "Parable of Talents" scheme in one congregation. Volunteers were each given €10 and challenged to grow it for the benefit of the church's outreach.

The results were remarkable. One lady made English pies to order, a rare treat in Portugal. A couple hosted monthly Sunday lunches for paying guests. Others organised Portuguese lessons, quiz nights and computer classes. There was even a market stall selling home-grown fruit after church.

More than fifteen years later, some of those ventures are still raising funds for the chaplaincy. God can make much of the gifts we place in his hands.

Diane Bates

PRAYER	*PRACTICE*
Let me be faithful with what is small, Lord, and trust you with what is not yet mine. Amen.	*Carry the breath prayer, Come, Holy Spirit, fill me now, into today.*

Day 14, Saturday 12th December

Proverbs 16:3

Commit your work to the Lord. The original Hebrew gives us a wonderfully physical picture. The word means something close to roll. Imagine rolling a heavy barrel off your own shoulder and on to someone stronger. That is what it means to commit your work to God.

On Sunday afternoon I sometimes open the diary for the week ahead, and when I do, I can feel it weighing on me before it has begun. Funerals, deadlines, conversations. Each one takes up space in my heart and mind, and if I'm not careful I carry them all in advance. It is the heaviest way to carry anything.

The proverb suggests another way to begin. Open the diary, turn the pages slowly, and hand over each entry in turn as you pray today's words. Say the name of the meeting or the person. Let God take its weight.

The second half of the verse promises that plans will be established. I read it as a quiet assurance that the week is held by Someone who has already seen it.

Jonathan Widdess

PRAYER	*PRACTICE*
I commit this coming week's work to you, Lord, before it even begins. Amen.	*Carry the breath prayer, Come, Holy Spirit, fill me now, into today.*

Week 3

Living with Open Hands

We loosen our grip

What we do with money shows what we worship. As Christmas spending gathers pace, this week asks what it would look like to give as an act of worship, and to hold money more lightly than the season usually allows.

What does it look like to be truly generous?



PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK

One deliberate act of generosity, chosen and carried out this week. For those wanting to go further, give away a set percentage of income for the week, even a small one, and notice how it changes you. Give thanks each day for what has been provided.

Day 15, Sunday 13th December

Luke 12:13-21

We are in the darkest time of the year, only a few days from the winter solstice. The days are short and the nights are long. It is fitting, then, that the church today remembers Saint Lucy, whose name means “light”.

Jesus tells the story of a man who has everything—or so he thinks. His barns are full, his harvest is abundant, and his future seems secure. Yet there is something missing: he has forgotten that life is more than what he can possess.

Lucy lived in a world where wealth, status and security mattered greatly. Yet she chose to give away her possessions and to place her whole trust in Christ. Her treasure was not something she could squirrel away in a barn. It was a life given away in love.

Jesus does not condemn possessions; he challenges the illusion that possessions can give us our identity or security. The rich fool speaks only of “my crops”, “my barns”, “my grain”, “my goods”. His possessions have become so important that they have become a measure of himself. He has forgotten that he is more than the sum of his belongings.

Lucy offers another way. Her life reminds us that what we have is entrusted to us, not given to define us. Even in the darkness, Christ's light shows us who we truly are: not consumers, or owners, but beloved children of God, called to share what we have received.

And perhaps that is the challenge for us, particularly in a culture which so often tells us that we are what we own, what we earn, what we achieve or what we can afford. As the darkness gathers outside, Lucy points us towards a different light: the light of Jesus Christ, in whom we discover our true worth.

Paul Roberts

PRAYER

Keep me from mistaking what I own for who I am in you, Lord. Amen.

PRACTICE

Choose this week's act of deliberate generosity.

Day 16, Monday 14th December

2 Corinthians 9:6-11

St John of the Cross, whom the Church remembers today, understood that the spiritual life involves a gradual letting go. We can become so attached to what we possess, our money, achievements, reputation, even our sense of control, that these things begin to possess us. Generosity is one way of becoming free.

In today's reading, Paul uses the image of sowing and reaping: "whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously." Christian generosity, though, is not about giving in order to get something back. We are to give freely, without resentment or calculation.

That can be a challenge. Sometimes we give because we feel we ought to, or keep a mental note of the cost. Our generosity can even come with strings attached. John of the Cross reminds us that the more freely we let go, the more room we make for God.

Paul tells us that God provides abundantly, so that we may be free to give and "abound in every good work."

Paul Roberts

PRAYER	*PRACTICE*
Make me a cheerful giver, Lord, not a reluctant one. Amen.	*Choose this week's act of deliberate generosity.*

Day 17, Tuesday 15th December

Mark 12:41-44

The poor widow in today's Gospel gives just two small coins. Jesus sees her and points her out to his disciples. Others have given much larger sums, but she has given all that she has to live on. He sees the generosity and the love behind her gift.

At first, this reading might seem to be telling us that we should give everything away. But perhaps the widow is showing us something about the heart with which we give. Mother Teresa is quoted as saying, “It is not how much we give but how much love we put into giving.” The widow's gift was small in value, but it cost her dearly. Are we challenged by her example?

When we have plenty, it can be easy to give from our abundance. The widow reminds us that giving involves something of ourselves, whether we give our time, money, possessions or prayer.

When my husband and I were in our twenties, a family friend gave us a car. It was twenty years old and called Gertie Golf. She seemed to be on her last legs, but our friend wondered whether having a car might help us, as we had very little money and were just starting married life. Gertie was a huge blessing. She kept going, and after a couple of years we were able to give her to another friend, who enjoyed several more years with her. Something given to us in generosity became a gift we could share with someone else.

As we wait in this season of Advent, the widow invites us to look again at our reasons for giving. May our giving come from a generous heart, knowing that even a small gift can make a big difference to somebody.

Christine Cattanach

PRAYER

Let what I give cost me something, Lord, even if it is small. Amen.

PRACTICE

Choose this week's act of deliberate generosity.

Day 18, Wednesday 16th December

Proverbs 11:24-25

For many years I worked as a self-employed furniture maker. In my workshop I designed and made bespoke items for customers who could afford to have something created to fill a certain space or need. My sense of pride in this work came from honing my skills to make the highest quality pieces I could achieve.

These days I work in the Design & Technology department of a large secondary school. Every day I work with young people, showing them how to use basic hand tools such as chisels, saws and hand planes and machinery like pillar-drills and lathes. Most of the pupils have never used tools before and the quality of the finished projects reflect this. However, I believe I'm more fulfilled and enriched by passing on whatever skills I have learnt to these children, and seeing their joy in making a simple wooden pencil box, than I ever was in creating expensive hand-made furniture.

God of creation, thank you for the opportunities you give us to pass on what we have acquired to others.

Michael Wild

PRAYER	*PRACTICE*
Thank you for what you have given me, Lord. Teach me to pass it on. Amen.	*Choose this week's act of deliberate generosity.*

Day 19, Thursday 17th December

Matthew 2:1-11

This lovely, evocative passage concludes with the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh. We are often told they symbolise Jesus' kingship, deity and death, but Christian teachers over the centuries have offered other interpretations.

One suggestion is that the gifts reveal the spiritual disposition of the givers. Another is that the Magi's decision to bring such valuable gifts to an infant shows they were guided by divine revelation rather than worldly logic. Both might help us as we pray this week to live with open hands and consider what we might offer.

Are we guided by what seems convenient, or are we open to God's leading? I have sometimes noticed that the things people think they are good at offering are not always their real gifts. They can overlook the things they do especially well.

There is no hurry to make a decision. The Magi followed the star for a long time. We may need to allow time for God to show us what we really should offer.

Chris Pullin

PRAYER	*PRACTICE*
Like the wise men, let me bring my best, Lord, not what is left over. Amen.	*Choose this week's act of deliberate generosity.*

Day 20, Friday 18th December

1 Timothy 6:17-19

Paul gives Timothy a short note about the wealthy, and we might expect it to be rather stern. Instead, there is a warm surprise: God richly provides everything for our enjoyment. Paul has no quarrel with enjoyment. His worry is where we rest our hope.

Each December we put lights up outside the vicarage, and I venture into the depths of the garage and the loft to find the Christmas boxes. There are tangled lights, baubles the children made at primary school, and a lovely nativity scene that, thankfully, is all present and correct. Last year, though, we couldn't find the leg for one of the children's little Christmas trees. We made do with a temporary replacement from a different tree, which happened to be pink. We found the proper leg in August.

There's something reassuring about having all these things tucked away, ready for Christmas. Yet I wonder how much of my sense of security rests in the things I've gathered and stored. Paul reminds me that my hope belongs in God. The things I store away may make Christmas feel secure, but they cannot give me the deeper security I need. That comes from knowing that my life is held in God's hands, and that I can trust him with what I have.

Paul's remedy is generosity. He asks the rich to be ready to share, promising that they will take hold of the life that is truly life.

By now, you've probably already chosen this week's act of generosity. If it is still waiting to be done, today would be a good day. Then say the prayer, and place your hope in God.

Jonathan Widdess

PRAYER

Set my hope in you, Lord,
not in what I have stored up.
Amen.

PRACTICE

Choose this week's act of deliberate generosity.

Day 21, Saturday 19th December

2 Corinthians 8:9

Paul gives us a glimpse of the heart of the Christian faith in this short verse from his second letter to the Corinthians. He points us towards the extraordinary generosity of Jesus, who, though he was rich, became poor for our sake, so that through his poverty we might become rich.

We see this most clearly in the story of his birth. Jesus did not arrive in a palace, surrounded by wealth and power. He came as a baby, born in humble circumstances to ordinary parents. His life turns our understanding of what it means to be rich on its head.

We live in a world that encourages us to want more, where wealth and success are often measures of a life well lived. Yet Jesus shows us another way. His generosity invites us to hold what we have more lightly, sharing freely what God has given us.

How might you live with more open hands this Advent?

Christine Cattanach

PRAYER	*PRACTICE*
You became poor, Lord, so that I could be made rich. Let that shape what I give. Amen.	*Choose this week's act of deliberate generosity.*

Week 4

Messengers of Hope

We tell others what we have seen

You do not need to be a professional evangelist, only willing to talk about what you have found. Witness is the natural overflow of a life being formed. As Christmas nears, this week turns outward, echoing the shepherds who went and told what they had seen.

How can we talk about faith without being weird or pushy?



PRACTICE FOR THE WEEK

In 200 words, write what Advent has stirred in you this year. Practise telling it to one person outside the church before Christmas Day.

Day 22, Sunday 20th December

John 4:27-30, 39-42

She leaves her water jar at the well. John mentions it quietly, and I think it matters. She came for water, and now she goes without it, hurrying to the town with something more urgent in her hands.

Her message is short. Come and see. She offers no argument. She asks, could this be the Christ, and lets the town find out for itself. Later the townspeople say they have now heard for themselves, and that is exactly right.

I remember a woman in my church in Bargoed who received prayer for healing. When she returned to her GP, the doctor was so amazed at her improvement that she said, "I need to go back to church." The woman hadn't set out to persuade anyone. She had simply received prayer, and something had happened that prompted her doctor to say those words.

Who might need to hear your story today? You don't need all the answers. Simply tell someone what Jesus has done in your life, and invite them to come and see.

Jonathan Widdess

PRAYER	*PRACTICE*
Give me the courage of the woman at the well, Lord, to tell what I have found. Amen.	*Write two hundred words on what this Advent has stirred in you*

Day 23, Monday 21st December

1 Peter 3:13-16

St Thomas is often remembered as the disciple who doubted. Yet the Church's tradition tells us that, having encountered the risen Christ, he became a messenger of the Good News, travelling as far as India, where he preached Christ and established Christian communities whose descendants remain today.

Thomas reminds us that sharing the Good News doesn't require us to have all the answers. It begins with encountering Christ ourselves and being willing to speak honestly about what we have seen and experienced.

Peter writes: "Always be ready to make your defence to anyone who demands from you an account of the hope that is in you." Notice that he speaks of an account of our hope. We don't need to win arguments or have a ready answer for every question. We simply need to be able to say why Jesus matters to us.

Perhaps someone today needs to hear a word of hope, or a simple story of how God's love has touched our lives.

Like Thomas, may we have the courage to share the hope we have received.

Paul Roberts

PRAYER	*PRACTICE*
Let my hope be visible enough, Lord, that someone asks about it. Amen.	*Write two hundred words on what this Advent has stirred in you*

Day 24, Tuesday 22nd December

Luke 1:39-45

Mary has barely spoken her greeting when Elizabeth's baby leaps and the Holy Spirit fills her. She cries out, calls Mary blessed, and names the child she carries as her Lord.

Jesus is not yet born, and already someone has worshipped him. Elizabeth does it in her own front room, with a baby kicking inside her.

I think of stepping off a train into a crowded station and spotting my wife across the platform. She sees me too, and there's that moment of recognition and welcome. Before she's said a word, I know I'm expected and loved. Elizabeth gives Mary that same welcome, recognising the Lord she carries. It must have meant the world.

Recognising Christ is a gift of the Spirit. Sometimes it happens in ordinary places, through a conversation or a kindness that makes us aware of his presence.

As you look back over Advent, where have you recognised Christ? What can you share with someone else?

Jonathan Widdess

PRAYER	*PRACTICE*
Like Elizabeth, let me recognise you at work, Lord, and say so. Amen.	*Write two hundred words on what this Advent has stirred in you*

Day 25, Wednesday 23rd December

Luke 2:8-20

Great joy! Hooray for the angels. They are really good at joy and really good at sharing it. I wish I was better—old Eeyore that I am.

Joy is catching. Look what it did to the shepherds. If we this Christmas can catch a bit of it from God, there's a good chance it will spread—into our homes and families, our workplace and even church! Christmas is a very anxious and pressured time for so many, and a time when sadness can easily surface (the absence of a loved one; a rift in the family ...). Let's treasure the angels' words of joy, breathe them in and try and breathe them out too.

You *could* go round and knock on all your neighbours' doors and swamp them with ecstatic news of salvation. I used to wake up our family on Easter or Christmas Day with the Hallelujah Chorus full blast on the stereo. But the quiet joy of a quiet word, a well-chosen proper Christmas card, a friendly smile, and perhaps an invitation to go to a Carol Service with you is more likely to meet the mark, I think. And always with joy.

David Thomson

PRAYER	*PRACTICE*
Give me the shepherds' readiness, Lord, to go and tell what I have seen. Amen.	*Write two hundred words on what this Advent has stirred in you*

Day 26, Thursday 24th December, Christmas Eve

Luke 2:1-7

Luke begins with an emperor and a census and then narrows, in a few sentences, to a young woman in a borrowed place. Everything grand in the passage sits in the opening line. The rest is small and close.

The detail I keep returning to is the cloth. It feels like an eyewitness detail, something remembered because it was there in front of someone. Mary wrapped him up. After the labour, in a stranger's stable, the first thing recorded is that she did the practical thing a mother does. Then she laid him down in the one place available, a feeding trough.

I think of all the small preparations that have been made in churches across the country for tonight. So much care goes into making ready for a few hours of worship. All the preparation has the same quiet shape as hers. We make ready as well as we can with what we have, and then the child comes anyway.

Tonight there is little left to do except watch, pray, and stay near the manger.

Jonathan Widdess

PRAYER	*PRACTICE*
Tonight, Lord, the waiting ends. Keep me watching for you. Amen.	*Write two hundred words on what this Advent has stirred in you*

Day 27, Friday 25th December, Christmas Day

John 1:1-14

John starts before the beginning, and the language is vast. Word, light, life, and a darkness that cannot put the light out. Then in verse 14 the sentence drops to earth. The Word became flesh and lived among us. The Greek word suggests that he pitched his tent among us.

The first time I held our eldest child, what struck me was the weight. All that expectation had come down to a few pounds in the crook of my arm, warm and slightly damp. I was filled with love. For a moment, there was nothing else.

That is what John is telling us. The one through whom everything was made has allowed himself to be held. He has taken up room in a human life, in a house, in a street, in a body that gets hungry.

Today there will be noise, food, wrapping paper, and somebody asleep in a chair. Let all of it be the place where he has pitched his tent. Today's prayer says thank you. He is more than enough. Enjoy him today.

Jonathan Widdess

PRAYER	*PRACTICE*
The Word became flesh, Lord. Thank you for making room among us. Amen.	*Write two hundred words on what this Advent has stirred in you*



After Christmas

Christmas Day is the beginning. The child in the stable stays, and so does the room you have made for him.

Keep the pause. The three daily pauses of Week 1 can continue into January. Morning, midday, and evening, a breath and a few words are enough.

Share your two hundred words. If you have written what Advent stirred in you, tell it to one person who does not come to church. Plain words from a real life are the best invitation.

Come and worship. Our churches gather every week across the team, and you are welcome at All Saints, Holy Trinity, or St Michael's, each with its own character. All Saints and St Michael's meet at 9:30am, and Holy Trinity at 11am.

Keep walking through Lent. *Living in Hope* follows on from this booklet, with a daily devotional from Ash Wednesday to Easter. The cross stands at its heart, and so does the hope that rises from it.

Explore Credo after Easter. Credo is a six-week course for anyone who wants to understand and deepen their faith.

Go further. If you would like to talk about faith, prayer, baptism, or confirmation, speak to any of us after a service or get in touch through westhereford.org.uk. We would love to walk with you.

Pass it on. Give this booklet to a neighbour next Advent, or tell a friend where to find it online.

Thank you for making room.

About the Authors

Jonathan Widdess

Priest in Charge (Team Rector Designate)

Jonathan joined the West Hereford Team in 2025 and serves across all three churches. He is married to Amanda, walks the dog most mornings, and writes hymns, poetry, and prose alongside parish ministry.

Christine Cattanach
Assistant Curate

Christine is Assistant Curate in the West Hereford Team. She grew up in Leicestershire, trained as a cartographer and later a teacher, and lived for some years in Hong Kong, where her faith deepened. She has also worked in health and social care, including as a Dementia Adviser and with the brain injury charity Headway. Christine is married to Mark, and they have two grown children. She was ordained last July, and her ministry is rooted in mission, community, and walking alongside people in their faith.

Paul Roberts

Associate Minister (Team Vicar Designate)

Paul joined the West Hereford Team in September 2026 as Team Vicar, with particular responsibility for All Saints. He is married to Rosie, who is also priest, based in Cradley, Mathon and Storridge and they have two boys. Pilgrimage, music and local history are among Paul's passions alongside parish ministry, and he is also Chaplain to Hereford and Worcester Army Cadet Force. He believes God is present in the stuff of everyday life, and his ministry seeks to help people notice, celebrate and respond to that presence. His working days in parish are Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays and can often be found in the café with a cup of excellent coffee.

David Thomson

Retired Clergy

David is an Hon Assistant Bishop in the Diocese (retired) and helps out across the diocese—but lives in our benefice and stands in when others are unavailable. He is a northern lad who began his working life as an academic mediaevalist before turning his collar round and serving in parish ministry for many years before becoming Bishop of Huntingdon. He continues to research and write on the Middle Ages and enjoys setting and solving difficult crosswords! He is married to Jean who is also active in the benefice and they have four children—two of whom are local (one is a Rector in the Golden Valley).

Chris Pullin
Retired Clergy

Having been a parish priest, Chris came to Hereford to be Canon Chancellor of the Cathedral, retiring in 2022. He and his wife remain settled here, and he assists in the West Hereford Team. He enjoys producing illustrations, looking after his garden, travelling, and doing some research work. He has been a Benedictine Oblate, and still sees people for spiritual accompaniment.

Diane Bates

Anna Chaplain and Lay Reader

Diane was the first Anna Chaplain in the Diocese of Hereford, a ministry alongside older people. She is a Lay Reader based in the West Hereford Team.

Michael Wild

Lay Reader

Michael is a Lay Reader in the West Hereford Team. A former bespoke furniture maker, he now works in a secondary school, sharing his practical skills with young people through Design and Technology. He finds particular fulfilment in helping others discover the satisfaction and joy of making something with their own hands.



Making room for Jesus

Advent is the season of making room. A few quiet minutes each day prepare the heart for the coming of the child in the stable.

This daily devotional was written by the Clergy and Lay Readers of the West Hereford Team Ministry.

ADVENT COURSE

Thursdays from 26th November, 7pm–8:30pm

All Saints Church. Everyone welcome

READ ONLINE

westhereford.org.uk/making-room

WEST HEREFORD TEAM MINISTRY