

## NEWS & CHAT Thursday 26 November 2020

Welcome to the joint weekly newsletter of Christ Church and the Bridgwater Drive Church.

Due to the government-imposed lockdown, ALL services and meetings in both church buildings are suspended until at least 2 December. Sunday services will continue as before – live on the Christ Church Facebook Page at 10am and sent out in paper form weekly with News & Chat. **We hope to have news in next week's N&C of what will happen after 2 December.**

### Sunday 29 November 10am – Advent Sunday

**NO Tuesday Church, at Bridgwater Drive, or Thursday meetings at Christ Church until further notice.**

**Christ Church Christmas Appeal - Please send donations marked 'Christmas Appeal' to Keith by 29 November – THIS SUNDAY.** This appeal is supporting Hopeworx and Home-Start. There are now only a few days left – so if you can, please send in your donations to enable Hopeworx to provide Christmas Food Hampers and Home-Start to provide toys and volunteers to help families.

**Advent Course** – Wednesday **2 December at 8pm** is the first Advent session on Zoom. We will focus on Luke 1: 5 - 20 which is the account of the angel's appearance to Zechariah and we'll consider that this is a call to watch and wait for God's promise to be fulfilled. Here is the link, which will be sent nearer the time too: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/89060067596?pwd=QllleUxLVm1XVEZCQmp2OU51b2ZJQT09>  
Passcode: 0hWS0Y

**Advent House Group** – There will be Advent themed House Group on Zoom on **Monday 30 November** and Monday 14 December, at 7pm based on material from *A Strange Christmas*  
Link: <https://zoom.us/j/97687672976?pwd=ZHFwMU1GaEJPaUhFRFUvcGJjRlpSdz09>

I know Zoom is not everyone's cup of tea, but I would encourage you to join in the Advent Course and Advent House Groups if you can – it is only 40 minutes, and is fun and a good way to chat with people you wouldn't otherwise be able to see at the moment. The links will be sent out again nearer the time.

**If you would be interested in a Zoom Carol Sing-a-long, please contact Sandy or Naomi.**

### ADVENT CANDLES

You are reminded, if you want to, to put a candle, or a picture of a candle, in your window every day during Advent to represent Christ as the Light of the World. If you don't want to do it every day, why not do it at least on the four Sundays of Advent.

### CHRIST CHURCH ADVENT CALENDAR

I'm very excited about our church calendar! I have now received most of the days and they are wonderful. Look out for each new picture in the windows and doors of the church, and check the **Latest News** section of the website daily for the revealing of the new day, where there will also be a sentence of explanation if necessary: <https://christchurchrayleigh.org.uk/category/news/>

### CHRIST CHURCH POST BOX

The Christmas post box will be in the Welcome Area from Sunday, 29th November, with **last posting date Sunday 13th December**. Strictly church family cards only. Mark is happy to deliver cards if people are unable to pick them up. And he will put a box on his doorstep at 11 Brixham Close Rayleigh SS6 9PG for anyone who can't get up to the church. If the church is not open, you can put cards through the letter box. If you can't get to church or to Mark's house, please contact Mark so he can collect them. It would help if you could put them in alphabetical order and in a bundle with a rubber band (easier to sort) – thank you!

A reminder that the CC charity for November is the **Romanian Crestin Trust**.

**CHILDREN'S SPACE – see attached Children's & Families News**

Christ Church, Rayleigh (CC) and the Bridgwater Drive Church (BDC)

**SUNDAY 29 NOVEMBER is the UN International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People.**

The date of 29 November was chosen because of its meaning and significance to the Palestinian people. On that day in 1947, the General Assembly adopted resolution 181 (II), which came to be known as the Partition Resolution. That resolution provided for the establishment in Palestine of a “Jewish State” and an “Arab State”, with Jerusalem as a *corpus separatum* under a special international regime. Of the two States to be created under this resolution, only one, Israel, has so far come into being. The USA has now recognised Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, not a ‘special’ area. The Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank are illegal under international law.



The International Day of Solidarity traditionally provides an opportunity for the international community to focus its attention on the fact that the question of Palestine remains unresolved and that the Palestinian people have yet to attain their inalienable rights as defined by the UN, namely, the right to self-determination without external interference, the right to national independence and sovereignty, and the right to return to their homes and property, from which they have been displaced.

If you want to find out more about the Israel/Palestine situation, here is a link to the URC information:

<https://urc.org.uk/israel-and-palestine>

I make no secret of my solidarity with the people of Palestine and in 2015 I cycled from Edinburgh to London as part of the Big Ride to raise awareness and money for children: <https://www.thebigride4palestine.com/about>

Last week, I attended an online URC discussion about Israel/Palestine at which Preach for Palestine was mentioned – churches in the USA and the UK are encouraged to talk about the situation in Palestine, particularly that of Christians living in Bethlehem who have completely lost their livelihoods due to the pandemic and resulting lack of tourists. So, the prayers on Sunday will focus on Palestine and her people.



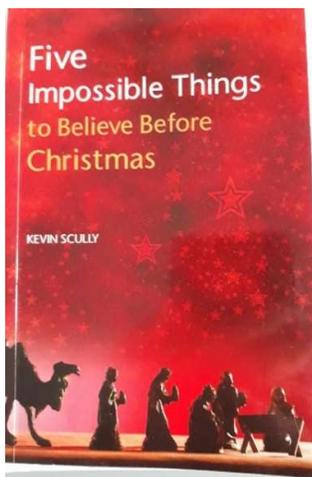
## **DEVOTION – Christmas is coming the goose is getting... killed early so she doesn't get too fat!**

There has been a lot of talk in the media, in government and amongst the public about 'saving Christmas', but what do they mean? It seems that what is meant, by and for most people is the big Christmas dinner with relatives you don't usually see for the rest of the year! And shopping (we need to save the economy). I haven't seen or heard much mention yet of the religious aspect of Christmas (maybe I'm looking in the wrong places!). It looks like churches will be allowed to open again, but of course there will still be restrictions on numbers, face coverings and no singing.

But, let's look on the bright side. I'm sure many of you can predict what I am going to say, along with hundreds if not 1000s of clergy around the country – we have the perfect opportunity to set aside all the secular and commercial trappings of Christmas and focus on the real meaning. And in the true spirit of 2020, the lectionary has given us the least 'traditional' of the Advent readings, including two from Mark's Gospel which has no nativity story at all. In fact, neither does John, so only two gospels mention Jesus' birth (Matthew has the Wise Men, but no actual birth scene, and Luke, the best known with angels, the inn-keeper, stable birth, and shepherds). The most important thing is that God became human. That the God who created everything, the whole of creation, should choose to be born as a vulnerable human baby, and then suffer a life time of the trials and tribulations of being human, culminating in torture and a hideous death. And, as if that wasn't enough, God was born into poverty, into social exclusion, into almost immediate fleeing for his life as a refugee.

Advent used to be a time for solemn reflection and fasting much like Lent, preparing not only for the coming of Christ in his birth, but also his Second Coming, and his coming into the hearts of believers. Now it is all about shopping and eating, Advent calendars with chocolate, and even gin! It has become fluffy and commercial. It is the four weeks you have to cram in all the nativity plays, and carol singing and mulled wine and mince pies... I don't want to sound like Grinch – I love Christmas, I'm looking forward to biting the head off a chocolate Reindeer as much as the next person, but I also love Advent. Real advent – the kind when we think about the actual meaning and impact of a God incarnate. If the pandemic has given us anything (and in fact it has given us many good things as well as the truly awful things) it is the opportunity for a proper Advent. No need to fast though – pass me a mince pie!

## **TIPS & IDEAS** Here is another resource for Advent:



There were some good parts to this book, though overall I was a bit disappointed. And the fifth 'thing' I didn't think was 'impossible', or even really a 'thing'! But I did like the exercises at the end of the first four sections, so I am going to share one a week during Advent, in case you would like to do them:

### 1. related to Angels

- \* Find a picture of an angel that appeals to you. Think about what aspects are interesting to you, and if you are taking part in the Advent course, maybe share with others in the group what you found interesting.
- \* Make an angel. Use any materials you like. Afterwards, tell others why you chose the materials you did and what they mean. And maybe send in a photo to share here in N&C!

Most weeks in N&C, I share an idea from a weekly mailing I receive from #64MillionArtists. Their weekly challenge is always set by a charity/arts group. This week it is from **The World From My Window**. "A growing global anthology of stories from the windows of the world which was started during the first UK lockdown... Nearly 1000 stories have been submitted from over 75 countries. At a time when the world can feel increasingly disconnected, the project is utilising the power of storytelling to bring people together."

<https://www.theworldfrommywindow.com/read-the-stories/>

I haven't read any of the stories yet, but I hope to soon. Here is their suggestion for something you might like to do:

Christ Church, Rayleigh (CC) and the Bridgwater Drive Church (BDC)

Grab a pen/pencil and a piece of paper and make yourself comfortable in a seat by a window. Look outside through your window and start to think about the following questions; What can I see, hear or smell? Are there things that I'm noticing that I've not seen before?

Now, grab your pen and piece of paper and draw a big picture of your window on the page. This time, look out of your window and ask yourselves the following 2 questions; what have I discovered about myself and the people around me this year? What are things that really matter to me? Try to capture anything that comes to mind on the paper in front of you; it could be images, words, sentences, doodles...

## RESOURCES

An **Advent Resource** for personal reflection to download if you like:

<https://media.sanctuarymentalhealth.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/06071951/Finding-Light-in-the-Deepest-Dark.pdf>

New weekly reflections from St Paul's Cathedral by the Revd Dr Rachel Mann. These arrive on Fridays so are a week behind: <https://mailchi.mp/5dfa9a3d0003/coming-up-from-st-pauls-cathedral-1367452?e=e30a1f608a> on the feast of Christ the King (last Sunday, but it is still interesting and relevant!

## PRAYER CORNER

I invite all of you to set aside time daily to pray for our churches and members but also for the whole nation and world. I am praying 'live' with a short devotion every day, Monday – Friday, on the Rev Naomi Facebook Page, then shared with both church FB pages.

This week we pray for Palestine, especially the people living in Bethlehem, surrounded by a wall that separates them from family and from jobs, who have no income due to the pandemic at what would normally be their busiest time of year. And we pray for all those who need to make decisions about church, work and Christmas following the new rules after lockdown.

### Particular prayer requests this week:

Barbara and Richard

Chris, a friend of Sally

Ernie L.

Malcolm, a friend of Di

Cindy and Les, Sandy's parents

Sophie



**Thank you for gifts from our Christmas Appeal so far:**

**HOME START**  
Essex

*Thank you for helping families to  
★ have a magical Christmas! ★*

Your donations will help us provide gifts for children, as well as vouchers towards the cost of toiletries, food and other essentials that families may be struggling to buy.

*'I've never been in this position before, but we're really struggling with money this year. Any help would be wonderful'*

A working parent supported by Home-Start Essex