

A church is engaging sight, sound, touch and smell in a carol service designed to welcome everyone, including those with a sensory impairment such as being deaf or blind.



The service at St Peter's, Hereford, has been planned as a "journey engaging all the senses".

There will be straw on the floor to evoke the scene by the manger and even the smell of meadows wafting through the nave.

On arrival, everyone will be handed a bag with tactile objects and smells such as freshly baked bread.

Clergy will sign all hymns – including some with specially adapted lyrics.

Revd Andy Dodwell, the Associate Minister, explained: "I've only got Level One British Sign Language, which is a bit like GCSE French, so conversational signing.

"But I'm being supported by the Revd Hilary Morgan and curate Revd Katy Smith who are chaplains for deaf people - both of whom can sign far more fluently than me."

On arrival, people will be taken by a steward in a Covid-secure manner from the entrance, past a crib scene, and taken through to a seating area where fresh straw will evoke the scene of Jesus's birth.



The service has taken time to plan – including adapting the lyrics of well-known carols into sign language. For example, “The cattle are lowing,” has been shifted into the more accessible: “The cows are talking.”

Revd Dodwell continued: “The deaf church in Hereford have only had one service this year.

“During the lockdown they’ve been using Zoom and YouTube and so really, we were asked by the chaplain can we offer something, and we said:

‘What would you like?’

“We want to demonstrate to ourselves, and to the outside world, that we’re serious about engaging and partnering with the whole of our community.

“Everyone can come and engage in this entire service.”

Hereford is also home to the Royal National College for the Blind and the church is currently developing a chaplaincy link. While many of the students are already at home, both staff and pupils have been invited to the carol service.

**More information:**

- The church is expecting more than 50 people to attend on the 19<sup>th</sup> December. The event **requires registration online ahead of the service.**

---

**Source URL:** <https://www.churchofengland.org/news-and-media/stories-and-features/touch-straw-and-smell-meadows-church-welcomes-all-multisensory>