

The Church of England's Worship at Home for the fourth Sunday of Advent reflects on the experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic of those suffering from illness, bereavement and mental health setbacks.

Featuring voices from end of life charity, Marie Curie, and introduced by broadcaster Revd Kate Bottley from Christchurch, Belper in Derbyshire, the service premieres at 9am on Sunday 20th December on the [Church of England's website](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) accounts.

In the service, **Helen Nicell**, who has been living with stage four breast cancer since 2012 gives a reflection on a year of living with terminal cancer during Covid-19 restrictions, describing how treatment programmes have been disrupted and family contact limited:

"Living through a pandemic with a life-limiting illness hasn't been easy," she says.

"It has helped to take one day at a time. I've remained active in the community and have been touched by people's kindness.

"I will also recall 2020 as an amazing time to take time to enjoy nature – listening to birdsong and observing the changes in trees and plants.

"I do feel there is light at the end of a very long dark tunnel regarding the pandemic, and I hope for brighter times ahead."

Clive Pryce from Gloucester reflects on a period of unemployment during the pandemic before reflections from Dorothy Moore Brooks, Chaplain of Great Ormond Street Hospital, and Revd Juliet Stephenson, Director of The Good Funeral Company, who reads the Gospel.

Hymns and carols in the service come from St Martin's Voices, while Marie Curie's Chief Nurse, Julie Pearce, and Chief Executive, Matthew Reed, contribute prayers and a reading.

The address, on the topic of Hope, is given by **Revd Dr Sandra Millar**, the Church of England's Head of Life Events:

"This Christmas might be feeling more than a bit broken," she says.

"Alongside that, advertising and media talk makes us think we have to create the best Christmas ever and all of that places unrealistic expectations on us.

"It's when we're broken that we need to hear the words of comfort and joy.

"The Advent promise is that God is with us and will meet us wherever we are in our lives which are a mixture of light and shade.

"Make space for all the mixed emotions of this year and then keep on blessing with those little kindnesses that mean so much to people and in a small way reflect the great love of God that came into the world at Christmas."

Marie Curie nurses, doctors and allied health professionals have continued to support people living with a terminal illness throughout the pandemic, at the charity's nine hospices across the UK and in people's homes.

The charity also has an Information and Support Line and service, which is open to anyone dealing with any aspect of dying, death and bereavement.

Marie Curie Chief Executive, Matthew Reed, said:

“As we mark the fourth Sunday of Advent and Christmas Day gets ever closer, we all know this will be a difficult and very different year for so many.

“This online service will be a time for us all to reflect on the year that’s been, remember those loved ones who might have died and other loss we have experienced in 2020. And importantly look forward with hope to a New Year in which will emerge, I hope, a more compassionate and kinder world.

“At Marie Curie, we have continued to provide vital end of life care and bereavement support throughout the pandemic for people dying from Covid-19 and other conditions, support which we know has been hugely valued by the many families we have had the privilege of caring for during these harrowing times.

“We want everyone to know that we are still here to help anyone through their continued grief, and hope our involvement in this Church of England virtual service will help some way towards that.

“We wish everyone a Merry Christmas and hopes for a peaceful New Year.”

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