

The Church of England is joining forces with Christian Aid for a special service of lessons and carols with participants from around the world.

Through Bible readings, carols and reflections, the service - which premieres on the [Church of England website](#), [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) accounts at 9am on Tuesday December 22nd – issues a challenge to stand up for “righteousness and justice”.

Lord Williams, the former Archbishop of Canterbury, who is Chair of Christian Aid, gives the sermon and there are contributions from Kenya, Portugal and around the UK. Music comes from the choir of St Martin-in-the-Fields, London, and the St Martin’s Voices group.

Chine McDonald, Christian's Aid's Head of Community Fundraising & Public Engagement, opens the service with prayers, remembering "those among whom the Christ was born - the poor and helpless, the aged and young children; the cold, the hungry and the homeless; the victims of poverty, injustice and oppression, the sick and those who mourn, the lonely and the unloved; those in despair or in the shadow of death."

Dr Marianna Leite, Christian Aid's Global Lead for Gender and Inequality, originally from Brazil, joins from Lisbon, Portugal, where she is based, with a reading from Isaiah 9 - "the people who walked in darkness have seen a great light".

And Wendy Lloyd, Christian Aid Faith Communications and Just Scripture co-ordinator, offers a reading from Luke 2 and reflection about the Shepherds from her home on Mull, Scotland.

Speaking from Nairobi, Kenya, Bob Kikuyu, Christian Aid's global theology adviser, reflects on the familiar passage in Jeremiah 23 which promises that God will "raise up a righteous branch".

Noting how King David was once a shepherd, he says: "One ordinary person can make a difference in the destiny of a people.

"We should therefore not discount our contribution now.

"When we faithfully serve the Lord in righteousness and justice in our day and time it could very well be honoured in the days to come by God raising up someone on the foundation of the work we are doing now.

"Ordinary people in the hands of an extraordinary God can change the world."

Lord Williams then picks up the theme in his sermon. He explains that the word "righteousness" in the readings should be understood as like "truthfulness" or "appropriateness".

"The very nature of God is to share the divine joy and beauty that is God's eternally," he says.

"Yet our own selfishness and ignorance means we regularly go about not noticing what God has given to the world we live in.

"The gift of Jesus's life restores our ability to see clearly and to act generously – to be 'righteous', to do justice to what's really there in front of our noses.

"Like the shepherds in Bethlehem, we have seen the night sky lit up with splendour and radiance; and with them we set out to see what it is that God has done and what God is doing in our midst."

Upcoming national online services over Advent and Christmas

- **20 December 9:00am** - Worship at Home for the Fourth Sunday of Advent with Marie Curie
- **22 December 9:00am** - Worship at Home: A service of Lessons and Carols with Christian Aid
- **24 December 11:30pm** - Worship at Home: Midnight Mass with the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Bishop of Dover
- **27 December 9:00am** - Worship at Home for the First Sunday of Christmas with Church Army
- **31 December 9:00am** - Worship at Home: A service with the Archbishop of York on New Year's Eve
- **3 January 9:00am** - Worship at Home for Epiphany with Embrace the Middle East

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