

"God fills our lives with love and knows what we suffer," the Archbishop of Canterbury Justin Welby will say in an online Midnight Mass highlighting those bereaved and feeling anxious and isolated over the festive season.

The Archbishop will speak about how the Christmas story brings a message of love and hope, in a pre-recorded online Midnight Mass led by the Bishop of Dover, Rose Hudson-Wilkin.

The service – to be broadcast on the [Church of England's website](#), [YouTube](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts tomorrow at 11.30pm - is the Archbishop's first online midnight mass. It is one of thousands of remote services taking place over Christmas this year, after congregations moved worship online as a result of the pandemic.

More than 50,000 events and services run by Church of England parishes have been listed this month on the Church of England's church-finder website [A Church Near You](#).

The site has seen the number of views nearly double from 40 million last year to 77 million this year

In his sermon Archbishop Justin will say that Jesus was born into weakness and vulnerability, in poverty and surrounded by disease, and knows our suffering.

"This baby, fully human, is also fully God," the Archbishop will say. "We can ignore him or make space for him, and when we do that, like the shepherds, we find this baby fills our lives to past overflowing with the love of God.

"We find a presence invading our lives that is made of love. We may be in a hospital ward, we may be missing someone in a hospital ward, missing someone who seems to have gone. We may be frightened and anxious, isolated, lonely. God will fill our lives with love.

"He offers that and gives us choice, He knows what we suffer because he did too, he knows us better than we know ourselves."

Intercession prayers will be read by Phoebe Parkin, Methodist Youth President, with carols and anthems sung by St Martin's Voices and Westbury-on-Trym Parish Church choir from Bristol.

The service is part of a series of pre-recorded 'worship at home' national online Church of England Advent and Christmas services with the theme of Comfort and Joy.

A recording of the service will also be available on Daily Hope, the free 24-hour phone line offering Church of England services, prayers and reflections since the start of the pandemic.

The national online services are being offered alongside in person, pre-recorded and livestreamed services from Church of England cathedrals and parishes.

## Notes to editors

- **Daily Hope** is available on 0800 804 8044, 24 hours a day
- The Church of England's national online services have received more than three million views so far this year. Up to one in five people watching go to church infrequently or have never been before and up to one third of viewers are under the age of 34.
- Explore the full range of **Comfort and Joy resources produced by the Church of England**.
- The remaining schedule for the Church's Advent and Christmas online services is as follows:
- 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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