Bishops give Christmas messages of hope at the end of a year of “darkness and despair” in the world.
God is with us, whatever we have to face and whatever life may bring, Bishops say in Christmas messages at the end of a year of “darkness and despair” in the world.

They speak of hope and peace in the Christmas story, and the true joy it brings, even at a time of “huge challenges” – from the wars in Gaza and Ukraine to loss and hardship in the UK amid the cost-of-living crisis.

The Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally, speaks of a “distressing” year of conflicts across the globe, tearing people from their homes and separating them from loved ones.

“The story on which we build our faith does not speak of hope whilst ignoring suffering,” she says. “It speaks of hope into that suffering. It speaks of light in darkness.

“Through the sheer vulnerability and yet the extraordinary tenacity of a newborn baby, it speaks of the cost and the risk of God's utter commitment to the world and its people.”

In a video message, the Bishop of Gloucester, Rachel Treweek, spoke of the impact of the Israel Gaza war and the suffering inflicted by conflict, poverty, famine and natural disasters on children across the world.

“When God one day there will be no more crying — no more pain, no more death. Even now God longs to hold us — as children. Longs for us to cry ‘yes’ and to stretch out our hands to God and to each other. May it be so,” she says.

The Bishop of St Albans, Alan Smith, spoke of the ‘deep shadows’ cast by the conflict in Gaza and the war in Ukraine.

Jesus teaches us that the journey to peace starts not with somebody else, but with each one of us, he said.

“He calls us to self-examination and penitence and invites us to embrace a way of living whose hallmarks are integrity, generosity and mutual respect,” he said.

The Bishop of Bath and Wells, Michael Beasley (pictured, below) said: “As we look at the world around us at the close of this year, it's important to remember that Jesus came to be with us not just for the good times, but for the difficult too.

"Jesus is ‘God with us' everywhere – in trenches in Ukraine, bomb shelters in Israel and Gaza, in hospital wards where loved ones die, in relationships where there is conflict and distress. The baby born in Bethlehem stands with us in all that we experience."

The Bishop of Chichester, Martin Warner, said that across the world, Christians will be praying for peace this Christmas, particularly in the land where Jesus Christ was born.
“The prayers that Christians say are not a wish list, with fingers crossed, hoping for the best,” he says.

“They are a cry that reasserts, against all the odds, the enduring power of beauty, joy and love, which will ultimately win through, consuming fear.
The Bishop of Norwich, Graham Usher, said: "I pray that peace is the gift we will all receive from God this Christmas. Peace in our families, peace in our communities, peace in our churches, peace in our world."

In his message, the Bishop of Rochester, Jonathan Gibbs, says: “The message of the angels was that a Saviour had been born whose name was Immanuel, which means ‘God is with us’. "

“This is the heart of the Christmas message: that God is with us, whatever we have to face and whatever life may bring. "

“God has entered into our world to draw near to us – and He invites us to receive him into our lives, so that we may know for ourselves His love and joy and peace. "

“That message is as relevant today as it has ever been – and perhaps even more so today with all the challenges that we are facing.”

The Acting Bishop of Exeter, Jackie Searle, adds: “The Christian message is one of light and of hope, particularly at dark and difficult times. The light shines in the darkness, the Bible tells us, and that darkness has not overcome it."

The Bishop of Portsmouth, Jonathan Frost, says: “We believe that whatever matters to you matters to God, because Christmas is about a God who is with us – God with us in Jesus, to bring us home, to love, to walk with us, whatever journeys we’re making, whether they are difficult as you approach Christmas, or whether they are joyful.”

The Bishop of Newcastle, Helen-Ann Hartley, says: “My prayer and my hope for you this Christmas is that amidst all the busyness and the things of life, the challenges and the joys, there would be glimpses of glory that stream in and the light of Christ will be made visible and known to you for you to share with all whom you meet.”

The Bishop of Chelmsford, Guli Francis-Dehqani, says: “At Christmas we remember the astonishing fact that, in the birth of Jesus Christ, God came to dwell with us, to make His home among us. The events of the first Christmas are rooted in a particular time and place, but God's presence abides still and the invitation to draw near remains for each one of us.”

Meanwhile the Bishop of Loughborough, Saju Muthulaly, speaks of joy “even when things aren’t going our way, even when times are rough.”

"Joy is not something that we acquire, buy, manufacture, or entertain ourselves into this Christmas,” he says.

“It is what we receive from what we open ourselves up to God in His Son, Jesus Christ.”

The Bishop of Salisbury, Stephen Lake, filmed a message partly in a food bank (pictured), which is seeing rising demand.
He says: "It's a very different Christmas this year with so much of concern in our world. And it's into that world that Jesus Christ is born, the word made flesh, God with us. And for me, that's what makes Christmas real and meaningful – that God came to us and shares our life.

“And in many ways, it's just as simple as that.”

Meanwhile the Bishop of Worcester, John Inge, says: “My hope and prayer is that this Christmas, we will be able to let the message of peace fill our hearts and hear the song of the angels and the words of the Prince of Peace.

“We need to follow him and remind ourselves that if there is to be peace on Earth, it must begin with us.”

The Bishop of Durham, Paul Butler, says: “Christmas is good news. It's wonderful news. It speaks to all our lives in all their variety. And at the very, very heart of it all is the good news that God loves us so much that He sends his Son into the world for us.”

The Acting Bishop of Birmingham, Anne Hollinghurst, said: "This Christmas, we are aware of many conflicts in our own world today - whether in Gaza and Israel, the Ukraine, or in many other places – indeed conflicts of many kinds closer to home and in which we may find ourselves embroiled," she says.

“The invitation of the Christmas angels is still to join the song - the song of the one who first sang creation into being, the song of the one who loved the world so much that he came in Jesus Christ to draw us back to the ways of love, compassion, justice and peace.”

The Bishop of Southwark, Christopher Chessun, said: “The birth of Christ assures us that goodness is the fundamental truth, that love is stronger than hate, life goes beyond death, hope is deeper than fear. Indeed through the eyes of faith, we know that the light shines in the darkness and the darkness does not overcome it.”

And the Bishop Rob Saner-Haigh, Acting Bishop of Carlisle, speaks of God's welcome for us: “His invitation and welcome to you and me, no matter who we are, to come and be part of His family. This is the great welcome of God, made possible through Jesus," he says.