



conflict and troubled times in Christmas messages and sermons.

In her sermon at Canterbury Cathedral on Christmas Day, the **Bishop of Dover, Rose Hudson-Wilkin** will speak of the birth of Jesus as a triumph of “light and hope” over “fear and darkness”.

Far from simply being a tale from the past “encased with tinsel and mistletoe”, the Christmas story is, “today’s story”, filled with real “human cost” and pain, she is expected to say.

Bishop Rose will highlight the rejection experienced by Mary and Joseph finding no room at the inn in Bethlehem and the fear felt by the shepherds at the approach of the angels. She will draw from her own experience including a visit a few days ago to Calais to meet people seeking asylum and volunteers supporting them.

She is expected to say: “The story of Christmas is not yesterday’s story that is being celebrated in the present, encased with tinsel and mistletoe as if it belongs in a fairytale.

“The story of Christmas is real and costly, not in terms of the currencies that we use but of human cost. ... the story of Christmas is today’s story – still costly, continuing to reflect vulnerability and the pain of rejection; the pain that comes with repeatedly knocking at the door of the Inns of our lives and hearing the words, ‘There is no room’.

“The story of Christmas is today’s story, relevant to the thousands of people in pain due to being abused, dislocated, in refugee camps, fleeing violence, war, climate change, famine and starvation.”

She is expected to add: “It is my prayer and hope that those of you who are gathered for worship this day are choosing to come and see for yourself. To cast off fear and darkness and to walk in the light of hope that has come into the world; the light of Christ that shines to help to recognise and acknowledge the pain.

“And that all of us together may pattern love and compassion, and to share the good news that God is with us; and through knowing this, bring joy into our hearts. Then we too, like the shepherds, can leave with the joy of the angels ringing in our ears.”

The **Bishop of Manchester, David Walker**, takes up the same theme in a Christmas message [filmed at Manchester Cathedral](#), saying the joyful news of Christ’s birth is needed today “as much as ever” as it was at the time of Christ.

He says: “Our world is in many ways as dark and dangerous as Roman-occupied Israel. We need joyful news as much as ever.

“I, along with billions of other Christians worldwide, spend our lives seeking to live in the light of who Jesus was and is.

“We form ourselves into communities - congregations - that seek to love and serve their neighbours, even as he did.

“Which is why I think it’s important that at Christmas, what comes first is simply to allow the joy which the Angel announced to enfold us in its warmth.”

A number of bishops speak in their Christmas messages about recent events in the Church, the importance of safeguarding and the need to listen.

In her [video message](#), the **Acting Bishop of Ely and Bishop of Huntingdon, Dagmar Winter**, says: “In an ever more unpredictable world, it is our Christian calling to create those safe spaces where children can thrive, free from harm, in an atmosphere of love and of trust.

“This Christmas, I want to say a special thank you to all those of you who work so hard to protect and care for others, so that together we can all thrive.

“Whether you’re a Parish Safeguarding Officer or whether you run a Toddler Group, whether you’re running a foodbank or whether you’re supporting troubled teenagers. The list goes on. Thank you very much indeed.”

In his message, the **Bishop of Oxford, Steven Croft**, adds: “It’s been a difficult and eventful year here on planet Earth. We’ve seen elections and a change of government here and across the world. We’ve seen terrible sufferings and conflict in the Middle East and the Ukraine and elsewhere. We’ve seen the continued effects of climate change. We see a growing mental health crisis caused by technology. We’ve seen a crisis of confidence in many of our institutions, including in our own Church.

“We need to pause and take stock at Christmas time. Underneath all of these crises and difficulties, we find a simple question. What does it mean to be human, to live well, to build a good society?

“Christians dare to believe we found an answer to that question. We dare to believe that Almighty God, maker of the universe, became a human person in Jesus. That one truth proclaimed in the Gospel of John tells us who we are; loved and called and mended by God.”

In [her Christmas message](#) the **Bishop of Gloucester, Rachel Treweek**, reflects on the hymn Silent Night – and the theme of silence.

“Earlier this year I was in Bethlehem, that place where the Christmas story first unfolded,” she says.

“I was there to listen to the voices of Palestinian Christians, to be silent as they express their struggles living in the occupied Palestinian territories of the West Bank, and their turbulence at the silence of the wider world.

“Silence can be about colluding with the dark. Silence can be about listening and shining a light.

“We’ve been rightly and painfully reminded of all this in the Church of England in recent weeks. In these days of Christmas, wherever [you are](#),

whatever your age or story, whatever the joy or pain, may there be moments to be silent, to peer into the animal trough of that first Christmas, and to see the baby Jesus Christ, God come to be with us.

“God can seem silent amid the noise of media and social media, and amid the world’s noisy hatred and vengeance and abuse of power, and yet God’s love and hope are powerfully present if only we would listen.

“May there be moments of silence to hear the voice of the angels, just as on that first Christmas night bright against the dark night sky of the Bethlehem hills.”

In a letter to clergy, the **Bishop of Blackburn Philip North**, writes: “Christmas reminds us forcefully that, if we were perfect, we would have no need for Jesus. It is into this broken world and to redeem a sinful people that he has been born. And even though we make mistakes, he goes on working in and through his Body, the Church.

“In the Son, the Father speaks to us, and what he says is powerfully good news. Heaven has come to earth in a stable in Bethlehem.

“God has come to share in our lives so that we can share in God’s life. God has come to die the death we sinners deserve so that sin can be destroyed. Even against a backdrop of a troubled Church and an uncertain world, nothing can ever take away that message of joy.”

The **Bishop of Newcastle, Helen-Ann Hartley**, highlights the vulnerability of the baby Jesus in her [Christmas message](#).

“Christmas is filled with all sorts of things visually, things that we hear, things that we eat, things that we happen to pass by in the street,” she says.

“There are lots of signs that something exciting has happened, but this sign that is given to the shepherds is a very specific one.

“Not about a great king, but about a child born lying in a manger wrapped in bands of white cloth. It is perhaps the most surprising and shocking sign of all, and that, after all, is the true message of Christmas.

“In the vulnerability of a baby, God became human. Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour. And that’s an amazing sign to live by.”

**The Bishop of Portsmouth, Jonathan Frost**, speaks of the light of Christ illuminating the darkness of conflict and troubled times.

He speaks about his visit to Ghana earlier this year, citing the actions of a passing lorry driver who provided his headlights and a kit to help his group change a tyre on the side of a busy unlit road.

“That was a light in the darkness for us, stuck as we were on the edge of things,” he said.

“And I think that’s a lovely picture of Christmas, for at this time of year we remember God’s light shines in Jesus.

“That’s important to remember in a world where there is much darkness.

“We think of Ukraine, Syria, Israel, Palestine and the rest of the Middle East, where there is so much suffering and sadness.

“I hope it’s not the case, but maybe your life too has dark shades in it and things you struggle with. I know mine does.

“This is where our faith in the Christ-child, son of Mary, is so important and such a gift to the world. For the story of Christmas is the story of God’s light flooding into the darkness and the darkness not overcoming it.”

**The Bishop of Lichfield, Michael Ipgrave**, highlights the peace brought by Christ in the midst of the Christmas “frenzy” of activity.

“This is the kind of hopeful, expectant calm that we too can access even in the midst of the frenzy,” he says.

“It’s possible to stop and ponder how we still are impacted by the arrival of a single child 2000 years ago among the estimated 100 billion people who have been born in the past 20 centuries - even if that impact is only that we run ourselves ragged without thinking why.

“It doesn’t have to be like that: Jesus Christ, Saviour of the World was coming to us, born as a baby, bringing us good news of God. He sits quietly expectant for us behind the frenzy.”

**The Bishop of Leeds, Nick Baines**, echoes the theme, In a [message to be broadcast online on Christmas Day](#), speaking of “the surprise, the shock” that however we expect God to enter our world and sort out our problems, he “shocks everyone by coming in as a tiny baby.”

“So we’re doing something deeply subversive at Christmas - subverting the expectations of what power looks like, of how God might be expected to behave,” he says.

“And I hope that this Christmas we will rediscover, perhaps look for it in a different way, but rediscover the presence of God, not in our prejudices and our expectations, but in the baby who frustrates our ways of seeing, our ways of thinking.

“A baby who is vulnerable, born into a world as full of contradictions and danger as ours today.”

The **Bishop of Peterborough, Debbie Sellin**, speaks of the good news that the birth of Jesus brings to our world today.

“The story of the birth of Jesus reminds us that life contains both joys and challenges,” she says.

“A young unmarried mother gives birth to her firstborn in a stable, following a difficult and uncomfortable journey. Her fiancé chooses to support her, despite the shame and disgrace that goes with this.

“And in the midst of these challenges a baby is born who will bring joy to the world. Shepherds are amongst the first to witness this and become

storytellers in their own right.

“Wise men from a distant land follow a star and encounter the Son of God. And the angels sing a song of hope and promise for the whole world - God has chosen to live among us so that we might know him in a new and more personal way.”

The **Acting Bishop of Durham and Bishop of Jarrow, Sarah Clark**, speaks of the invitation at Christmas to exchange fear for joy and peace.

“Fear and joy, trouble and peace. These are the realities within the Christmas story of people with difficult lives living in hard times, encountering God, being drawn into God's story,” she said.

“The angel this Christmas calls us to hear afresh the invitation to trust Jesus and His love and exchange our fear for joy, our troubled hearts for peace because Jesus is Emmanuel. God with us. God with you. God with our world.”

The **Acting Bishop of Truro, and Bishop to the Armed Forces Hugh Nelson**, speaks of the beauty and the suffering of the world.

“What’s clear is that at that first Christmas 2,000 years ago, and still today, as we welcome Jesus into this beautiful, broken world,” he says.

“He doesn’t come with a quick fix. He wasn’t born with a magic wand in His hand. He doesn’t come with a clever five-point plan with sophisticated spreadsheets to back it up. He doesn’t come with an app full of pithy wisdom.

“Instead, Jesus came to change our hearts first by showing us what we’re really like, who we really are. Capable of astonishing beauty and goodness and of, well, some other stuff too. And then, by inviting us, each of us, to let Him change our hearts.”

The Acting **Bishop of Carlisle, Rob Sauer-Haigh** speaks of the “new life, new hope and new meaning” brought by the birth of Christ

He says: “The nativity story is the proof of God’s love for us and the proof that he wants to bring new life, new hope and new meaning to anyone who is willing to let him in and risk it.”

The **Bishop of Southwell and Nottingham, Paul Williams**, speaks about turbulence and crises in world but how the story of the birth of Jesus “has the power to rewrite history”.

“The arrival of Jesus changes everything,” he says.

“That's why we are boldly praying for a spiritual Revival, a Revival of Faith this Christmas.

“As churches open their doors and welcome all, through Carol services and Christingles, nativities and Christmas communion, we are praying that this will be an opportunity for people to not just experience tradition but encounter true transformation.

“We believe that this Christmas what the world truly needs isn't more gifts around the Christmas tree but more faith in the Living God. Faith to know that you are welcomed and you are loved. Faith to know that you're forgiven and set free. Faith to understand that through Jesus hope, peace, joy and love are not fragile dreams but can be firm foundations for life.”

In his [message](#) the **Bishop of Leicester, Martyn Snow** talks about praying for people in Ukraine, Israel, Palestine and Gaza, Lebanon and Syria, adding: “At this Christmas time, we remember in particular that this Christ child was born as the Prince of Peace; the one who came to break down the barriers of this world, the one who came to reconcile communities even as we are reconciled with God.”

## Where to worship

- [Find a Church Near You for a Christmas service](#)

---

**Source URL:** <https://www.churchofengland.org/media/press-releases/birth-jesus-offers-hope-todays-troubled-world-church-england-bishops-share-christmas-messages>