

Dear all

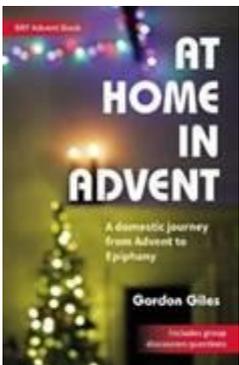
Well, it has just been announced that South Kesteven is lumped in with the whole of Lincolnshire (and Humber!) in Tier 3. Amazingly, those just over the other side of the Welland are in Tier 2 (as are both my children in London). It does seem rather unfair, but it is what it is, and we must make the best of it.

What this means for churches is unclear at the present time. What we do know is that we can open up again after 2<sup>nd</sup> December for congregational services. So, we will be returning to our former pattern of live services, streamed on Facebook. We do plan to have the Christingle and Crib services as well as the Midnight Mass, though we are still awaiting more details as to how we can manage the practical details. We are hoping that we can have some singing in the church – though this is likely to be choir only. I have heard hints that we might be able to sing outdoors, so... we will see. It's too early to speculate any further.

It will be OK, however, to follow the arrangements we had planned prior to the lockdown – namely to re-establish the Thursday morning communion (9.30am), 1<sup>st</sup> Sunday evening prayer (how much evensong it will be remains unknown), and 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday alternative evening prayer, both at 6.00pm. (I am making the assumption that they are not planning to stop communion!). The 3<sup>rd</sup> Sunday evening in December will take the form of a 'Blue Christmas' service – a service designed for those who want a more reflective, less celebratory Christmas reflection. It will be particularly relevant for those finding life a bit of a struggle, perhaps through bereavement.

In the meantime, we will try to keep our life as a church community going.

We have suggested an Advent Course based on the book *At Home in Advent* by Gordon Giles.



I quoted The Church Times: *In the BRF Advent Book, Gordon Giles identifies the three Advent themes that his reflections seek to explore: "hope, expectation and trepidation". At Home in Advent is intended both for individual use and for groups. With daily thoughts accompanied by questions, activities, and prayers, it offers a "domestic journey from Advent to Epiphany". The unpretentious text takes account of the coronavirus threat without traumatising the reader. Its very domesticity would make this book the perfect present for someone on lockdown.*

*The author believes in the "bounty of Christmas" and is happy to find this bounty in the everyday. Here is a timely reminder that, while some of the celebrations may be different this year, it is impossible to "cancel" Christmas.*

I asked if anyone wanted me to get hold of a copy for them. No one has got back to me, so I am assuming that all who want to have sourced their own copies.

The format has a chapter a day, starting from the 1<sup>st</sup> December. I am going to suggest that I set up a Zoom meeting on Thursday afternoons, at 2.30pm, to meet and reflect over the chapters we've read. I hope that will be OK for those who wish to join in. That will mean we will meet on 3<sup>rd</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> December. We might be able to fit in a final session on Christmas Eve, or perhaps another time, by negotiation. I know of about 4-5 who are interested. Anyone else, please let me know.

Someone, who shall remain nameless, has said they're already about ¾ through the book! They remind me of the Facebook post I saw the other day. "According to my chocolate Advent Calendar, it's only 3 days to go until Christmas"!

I have mentioned Nick Fawcett a few times recently – and how he is really struggling with his health at the moment. His most recent post is very encouraging. I had my second injection today delivering my new cancer drug, and all seems to be going well. No adverse reaction, blood results beginning to look a little healthier, and – best of all – me starting to feel like my old self again. It's been a long job, but I definitely seem to be well on the road to recovery from my recent illness, and I can't tell you how good that feels. Thank you all for your caring support; I've valued it so much.

Nick's latest posting is a new prayer for the pandemic:

## **For victims of Covid-19 and for signs of hope**

Here's a new prayer I've for the countless victims of coronavirus – in some sense, essentially all of us – and for the possibility that an end to the pandemic and its associated crisis may perhaps be in sight in the months ahead.

God of mercy,  
hear our prayer for all those whose lives,  
during this past year,  
have been overturned by Covid-19;  
those who have suffered and died,  
those who still struggle with the after-effects of the illness;  
those who have lost loved ones as a result;  
those in our hospitals and health centres  
exhausted by the demands made upon them;  
those in our nursing and residential homes,  
who have been so vulnerable,  
yet who have felt so isolated;  
those who have developed vaccines and treatments,  
or who continue to work upon them,  
and those whose job it will be to organise and roll out the vaccination programme;  
those in governments and positions in leadership,  
seeking to take right decisions for the present and the future;  
those whose livelihoods have been undermined,  
even destroyed,  
by the economic impact of lockdowns and the like;  
those facing years of unemployment  
and an uncertain future  
as a result of the pandemic's impact.  
Our country,  
our society,  
our world,  
is broken –  
hurting,  
but hoping;  
fearful of the future,  
yet praying for a miracle.  
Hear our prayer,  
and, in your love,  
pick us up  
and put us together again.  
Amen.

Another post I have received recently is from the Royal School of Church Music (RSCM). They have launched a series of YouTube talks. Here are the details of the latest one, which some might be interested in:

In a brand new initiative for this English 'Lockdown 2' period and beyond, we are delighted to bring you a series of free, fascinating weekly live Friday lunchtime lectures at 1pm (GMT).

Focused on a variety of aspects of sacred music, these hour-long sessions will be delivered by experts in their respective fields and include short interactive Q & A sessions to enable direct audience engagement.

The lectures will be hosted on our [YouTube](#) channel . Our third lecture on Friday 27 November is: **From Advent to Epiphany with J. S. Bach by Canon Charles Stewart**. The content of this lecture will include both choral and organ music composed for that period, or which resonates with the themes of those seasons.



Finally, a St Gargoyle cartoon from the Church Times. The caption is *This year's argument about the Advent candles had to be online*. (For those who don't know, there is a perennial argument whether to have 4 purple candles, or 3 purple and one pink... and even whether pink should be 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent. Every year I wind up my erstwhile neighbour, who is now Archdeacon of Ashford. "Will you be wearing pink robes this Sunday, Father". "THEY'RE NOT PINK, THEY'RE ROSE!!!!")... (They're pink!!!!).



Stay safe

Blessings and love

Mark