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POTENTIAL**

**UNLOCKING OUR
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DIOCESE OF ST ASAPH

Dear Friends,

It has been my practice every year to issue an Advent Pastoral Letter to our congregations. In recent years, that message has become more elaborate, with a video message, supported by audio and written formats. This year it is different. Among our priorities as a diocese is our work with young people, and, if we are to be effective in our mission, we need to learn to listen to young people and their aspirations and faith. I have done just that, and, with the assistance of the diocesan team, I have been in conversation with three of our young people, Alisha, Francesca and Taliesin.

My hope is that wherever possible, this Advent Conversation and Message will be used in place of the sermon at the main act of worship on Advent Sunday, or the following week.

I can understand that this is not always easy to arrange, even in our modern tech-friendly world, and so, where it is not possible to play the actual conversation, I would like this letter to be read.

The young people with whom I talked recognised that Advent is the season of preparation for Christmas. They also understood that there are a wide range of preparations, and that this can be a busy, even a difficult, season for families. At the same time, they were keen to find ways to encounter God as part of the spiritual preparation for Christmas, and explored with me where God is to be found.

There is a particular message for us as churches. Sitting passively and listening was not a mode of worship that attracted the young people with whom I talked, and they were looking for an opportunity to be involved in worship in which they were engaged, and in which they would be active participants. There are lessons to be learned here.

However, they were also intrigued by the relevance of Jesus' proclamation of the Kingdom: that the Christian message speaks directly into such issues as justice and peace, homelessness and poverty. If Advent is a time to encounter God, it is also a time to take what God says about these issues seriously.

Even if you are not able to receive the Advent Message in our worship today, my hope is that everyone will take the opportunity to look at the message at home or in study groups. It can be found at

- <https://stasaph.churchinwales.org.uk/people/the-bishop-of-st-asaph/advent-message-2018/>
- Or on youtube: <https://youtu.be/x8jOWZm5kKs>

We need to become a Church in which the voice of our younger members is taken seriously and given equal weight. This year, we have been given a call to open our churches to their participation, to take the spiritual preparations of Advent seriously, and to apply our faith to the issues challenging the world and our society as we seek to proclaim God's Kingdom.

I would like to thank Alisha, Chesca and Tal for their time, their enthusiasm, and their challenge and the call to renew our faith and our churches in this Advent season.

In Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gregory Henry". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping flourish at the end of the name.