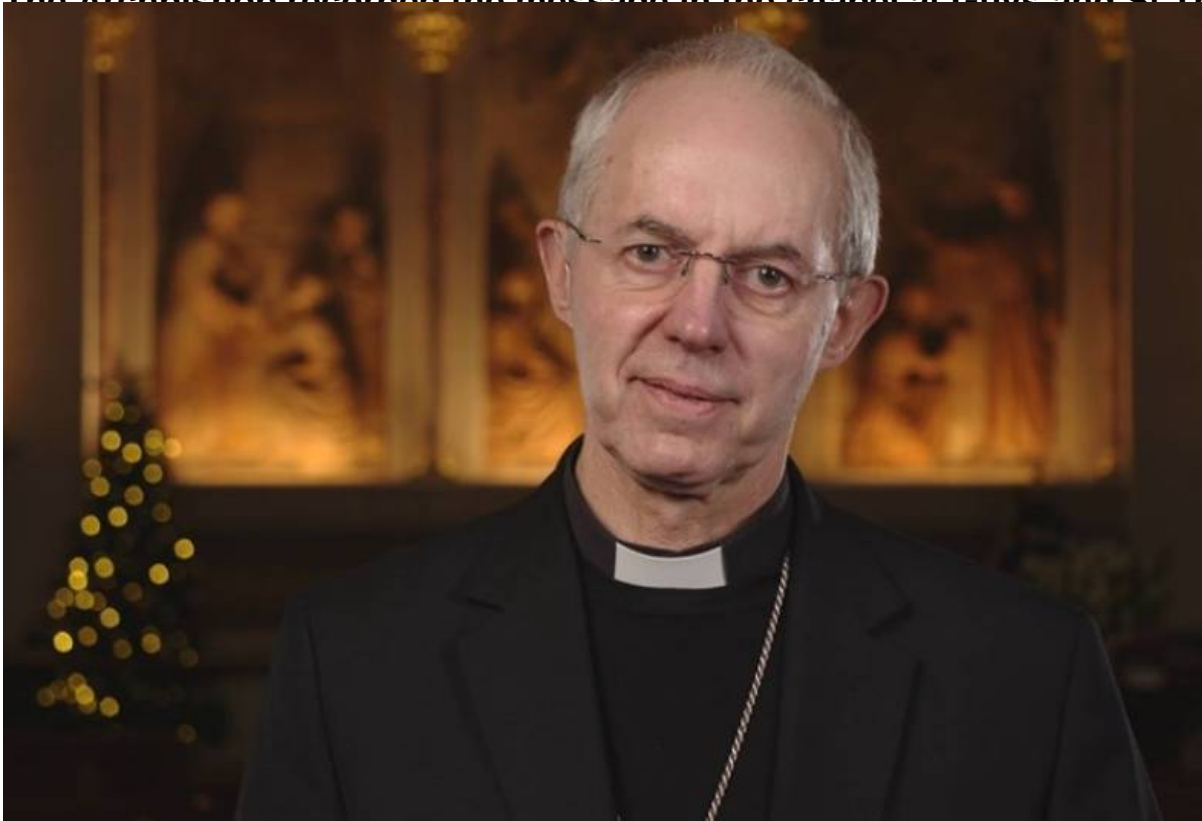


In his New Year Message, Archbishop Justin Welby reflects on his experiences volunteering as a hospital chaplain at Guy's and St Thomas' hospital during the pandemic, and where he finds hope for the year ahead.

The Archbishop recorded the message in the chapel at Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital. It was first broadcast on BBC One and can be



This chapel is at the heart of Guy's and St Thomas' in central London – one of Britain's largest and busiest hospitals.

Like health workers across the country, the staff here have been on the front line of the coronavirus crisis and have responded with incredible bravery, skill and care.

It's my local hospital, a few minutes' walk from where I live. During the pandemic, I've been volunteering as an assistant chaplain – working for the senior chaplain, the wonderful Reverend Mia Hilborn.

We visit Covid wards and other units – spending time with patients, staff and relatives.

One evening, I might be with a young child, praying with him and his mother. On another I could be sharing a joke with someone – finding a moment of warmth and connection in a frightening time.

Sometimes the most important thing we do is just sit with people, letting them know they are not alone.

This year has seen tremendous pain and sadness. Many of us have lost family members or friends, often without being able to say goodbye. For anyone who is on the dark and difficult journey of grief – a path I know myself – I want to assure you that I am praying for you.

But it's at St Thomas' that, alongside acknowledging this darkness, I find reasons to be hopeful for the year ahead. Because what I see here teaches me something about human beings – and about God.

This crisis has shown us how fragile we are. It has also shown us how to face this fragility. Here at the hospital, hope is there in every hand that's held, and every comforting word that's spoken. Up and down the country, it's there in every phone call. Every food parcel or thoughtful card. Every time we wear our masks.

The Bible tells us that God rejoices in these small acts of love – because they reveal who we truly are: human beings made in God's image, deeply connected to one another.

Such gestures speak to me of Jesus – the one who shows us what God's love looks like. And for this reason, we can have hope for each and every month ahead. May God bless you, and all those you love, in this coming year.

3 min read

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