Walking with Angels

Advent 2026



Introduction:

Angel literally means messenger. Angels have been evident throughout the Bible as messengers of God. They are heavenly beings that bridge the gap between heaven and earth. They have given messages of reassurance, announcements, greetings of favour and join in with praise and worship. As such they play an important role in the Biblical narrative. They seem to be very evident at significant times in history and there seems to be an escalation of activity around the birth of Jesus. As we travel through Advent this year we will be seeking to explore angels in more depth and consider the messages they brought to God's people. Bishop Ellie Sanderson who is Bishop of Hull in the UK, previously Assistant Bishop of Wellington, has written a book as an Advent Study that looks at this whole topic of angels. Her book is called Walking with Angels and is available on line or from Mana Bookshops. In the book she talks about people's experiences with angels and we will be sharing one of her experiences each week of Advent. She also encourages us to prayer walk during Advent using the words of the angels as our prayers to bless the people who live in the areas where we walk. Each week we will be encouraging folks to take these angel messages and use them as you prayer walk your neighbourhoods and write reflections in a prayer journal. If walking isn't really your thing she suggests you could do it as you drive or take public transport which makes the activity accessible and doable for everyone who wants to join in.



DIGGING Deeper!

NT Wright on angels 'It's a pity we today don't reflect more on angels, on what they are and what they do. They turn up all over the place, of course – on calendars, on Christmas trees, on greetings cards and so on. We rather like the idea of angels, but we have made them cosy and domestic. They are safe like that. We don't need to take them seriously. But in fact God's creation is peopled with all kinds of beings, and it seems that the angels have a hand in running the world; so that people who want to cast off authority begin by rubbishing the God-given invisible powers that stand behind human authorities.' Wright, *Early Christian Letters*, 114-15.

Mike Bird reflects that…so much of what we think of angels is based on cringy stereotypes of Cupid, medieval horror, movie plots, and derives from the spiritual-but-not-religious crowd's obsession with angels. There is, what I would call, the Oprahification of angels in our cultural imagination. The result is that angels have become all too familiar to us, subjects of memes and emojis, sentimental folk religion, paraphernalia of Christian Christmas kitsch … rather than regarding them as ministering spirits whose mysterious presence and purpose takes place in the unseen realm around us.

PRAYER WALKING - PRAYER JOURNAL

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Advent 1 2026



Bishop Ellie's Story:

One morning in my early twenties, I was in church when we were asked to pray with the person sitting next to us. As I was beside the leader of my home group, Bevan, we began without too much prior conversation, and after I had prayed for him, I waited to hear his words for me. Nothing came. The minister called us all back together and continued with the next part of the service. Glancing at my friend, I noticed that his face was completely white. He was obviously in a state of shock. Eyes wide, he looked at me blinking slowly. Finally, he said, very quietly, "you have a guardian angel. It's really, really big and its standing right behind you." Bevan wasn't able to say any more, and I sat there beside him in dazed silence. As the day continues, I remember being filled with a sense of deep love and wonder. God was with me! I walked through the city of Wellington that afternoon in a kind of warm fuzzy haze. We can accept that something is true or real, but it may take an experience or an encounter to really know. I had just had one, Although, I believed that I was part of an earthly and heavenly community, that I was not alone, this encounter with the angel had an impact on my understanding in a completely new way. It was as if, for the first time, the wonder of it all had become real. Watch the short video by Bishop Ellie for Session One here

DIGGING Deeper!



1. How do you respond to this story?
2. What new insights have you gained?
3. Has it changed your understanding of angels and how they interact in our world?
4. Where have you experienced connection or disconnection with God?
5. Where have love and fear been present in your prayers?

You may also like to consider downloading the Discussion Questions underneath Bishop Ellie's video.

PRAYER WALKING

The words to pray over the community this week are **'Do not be afraid: the Lord is with you.'**



PRAYER JOURNAL

What did I notice on my prayer walk? What did I experience? For whom, or what, was I particularly drawn to pray?

Walking with Angels

Advent 2 2026



Bishop Ellie's Continuing Story:

On what would be the first day of my 'walking with angels' season in Hull, I set off in the car to drive someone in need to the home of a person who had offered pastoral help. It was a wet and dusky evening, and having simply followed the directions of the satnav, I ended up on the other side of the city in a place I'd never been before. I literally had no idea where I was! However, I decided (while waited for the person I'd brought) to walk through these unfamiliar streets and pray, using the first words of angels that came to me.

'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty'

As I began, I apologized to God for any presumption there might be hidden in my heart that I was asking for the grace of an encounter, and said that I would simply walk in prayer for the people and the place to which he had asked me to come in his name.

The moment I took my first step, I felt a hand on my shoulder. Someone very, very tall was behind me …. The familiar sensation of holiness and power flooded in, and as I moved forward, so did they, step after step. Passing terraced houses and corner shops, through drizzle and dimming light, I walked the streets of a new city, praying in the company of an angel.

Watch the short video by Bishop Ellie for Session Two here



DIGGING Deeper!

1. How do you respond to this story?
2. How is Jesus currently helping you to receive his holiness and his love?
3. Read either Isaiah 6 or Revelation 4.
4. How does the presence of the angelic realm impact the pattern of your regular worship?

You may also like to consider downloading the Discussion Questions underneath Bishop Ellie's video.

PRAYER WALKING

The words to pray over the community this week are

'Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty'



PRAYER JOURNAL

What did I notice on my prayer walk? What did I experience? For whom, or what, was I particularly drawn to pray?

Walking with Angels

Advent 3 2026



Bishop Ellie's Continuing Story:

One of the most surprising and heart-changing angelic encounters I've had was during a time when I was experiencing the Church being a mix of good news and news that wasn't as good as it could be. It was a spell when I really wasn't feeling very peaceful at all. A family came to visit one of the parishes I looked after and shared with me after the service that an older parishioner had taken time over coffee to tell them many of the things they thought were wrong with the church. This wasn't the kind of good news welcome the family needed, and they let me know quite openly and honestly that they couldn't make this particular church their home.

That evening, as I was praying and grieving in my heart, I felt a stillness surround me, and in my mind's eye, I saw that an angel, dressed in a warrior-type way was also kneeling in prayer. This struck me as being at variance with my other angelic encounters, but I kept my head bowed, alert and aware of God's presence and the sense of heavenly companionship. Then the atmosphere changed, and I discerned a very clear invitation to talk to the angel.

A question arose from deep within me, coming out so clearly as I voiced it in prayer that I knew it expressed everything I was feeling and wrestling with, not only in that moment, but on an ongoing basis. It was a sense of profound weariness: 'How do you keep going?' In asking this, I recognized the angelic being was an entity unbound by our understanding of time, inhabiting a world we can only see and understand in part. I had no idea

if there was such a thing as a lifespan for an angel! But in the season of the new covenant alone, after speaking with Mary, after ministering with Christ, after being part of hundreds and hundreds of years of the Church, how do they keep going? How do they not lose hope? How do they stay with humanity in our brokenness? Do they ever want to walk away?

As clearly as the question arose from my spirit, I heard a very simple answer: "We do not fight the other faithful angels.' I sat in silence … So why do we often still fight flesh and blood as a primary instinct? Why does it seem all too common for people to express condemnation and criticism to one another rather than relate compassionately and prayerfully?

Watch the short video by Bishop Ellie for Session Three here

DIGGING Deeper!



1. Where have you most experienced God's glory?
2. Where do you most want to see good news and peace in your neighbourhood?
3. How, might God be inviting you to wake up your glory?

You may also like to consider downloading the Discussion Questions underneath Bishop Ellie's video.

PRAYER WALKING

The words to pray over the community this week are

'Glory to God in the Highest and peace to God's people on earth.'



PRAYER JOURNAL

What did I notice on my prayer walk?
What did I experience?
For whom, or what, was I particularly drawn to pray?

Walking with Angels

Advent 4 2026



Bishop Ellie's Continuing Story:

This relates to an event that happened after a very serious operation on her neck.

A few weeks later, in the midst of a difficult recovery and ongoing uncertainty about my operation's success, James and Julia, a couple who have a profound prayer ministry in our church, came to pray with me. At one point, I felt something move, and then James said, 'I just got a very strong and clear picture of an angel touching your neck and putting something back in place.' The next MRI scan showed the discs in my spine had, in fact, moved into a better alignment …

When I pray for others, I sometimes see angels ministering to them, either in my mind's eye or by actual sight. In fact, it is sometimes by perceiving what an angel is doing that I learn how to pray for that person.

Watch the short video by Bishop Ellie for Session Four here

DIGGING Deeper!



1. Take some time to look at some of the ways the angels minister to and with Jesus in his earthly life and the early church in the book of Acts. Here are some scriptures to help you.
   a. Luke 1
   b. Matthew 1 + 2
   c. Luke 2
   d. Matthew 4:11, Mark 1:13
   e. Luke 2:43
   f. Acts 1
   g. Acts 5
   h. Acts 7
   i. Acts 8
   j. Acts 10
   k. Acts 12
   l. Acts 27
2. Which stories have the most impact on you and why?
3. Where do you most experience the coming of God's kingdom in your life and your neighbourhood?

You may also like to consider downloading the Discussion Questions underneath Bishop Ellie's video.

PRAYER WALKING

The words to pray over the community this week are

'Come, Lord Jesus, come! Your kingdom will never end'



PRAYER JOURNAL

What did I notice on my prayer walk?
What did I experience?
For whom, or what, was I particularly drawn to pray?