

Dear Parishioners

'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it'. John 1: 5

As Christmas approaches this year, it feels as though we have been enduring many months of darkness as, with countries throughout the world, we have been responding to coronavirus. It has been and is a dark time for many: those seriously suffering from the disease, the bereaved, the hard pressed medical and other emergency workers; those whose livelihoods are threatened or already lost; those whose mental health is affected and carers with less support; the elderly, isolated and vulnerable and those in care homes. It is rare anyway, with his being so far way, but we have only been able to visit my father in his Lancashire care home once since the first lockdown began.

Even for those of us who are relatively fortunate and less directly affected, there has been the need to adjust to all the various rules and guidelines. I want to give a special mention to the staff in our Church School – along with other schools – who have worked so hard, first to provide home education at the same time as schooling the children of essential workers, then adapting to how to have children back in school safely. It has affected us in church too. At present, we can only accommodate sixty-six individuals/families/bubbles safely: not enough for our usual Christmas congregations. We have been giving thought to how to do things differently. Everything I write is subject to the fact that I am writing during lockdown, hoping but not knowing for sure that we will return to the three-tier system in December and be in the first tier here.

Posada

Some of you may have heard of this Mexican tradition of a symbolic item travelling around the parish, visiting a different home each night? It reminds us of Mary and Joseph's journey to Bethlehem, and of the journey we are on, preparing during Advent to celebrate again the coming of Christ at Christmas. We propose to circulate an Advent Candle and a laminated Prayer Card – both easy to sanitise – and to publicise through our Church School, Church Website and Facebook; then draw up a list of households where the candle may travel to and be lit each night from 4th December, when I will start the journey at School Worship. We may even need more than one candle! Please contact Chris Wheatley 01825 790467 if you would like the candle to visit your home!

Carol Service

We hope to hold one on Sunday 20th December at 4pm. As things stand, we will not all be able to join in our favourite carols, but a small choir will sing some, interspersed with seasonal readings.

Christingle with a Difference

On Christmas Eve church will be open between 3 and 6pm. Families are invited to make their own Nativity scene in a shoe box and bring it to church to be displayed around the Lady Chapel Altar. Whether or not you do that, you are also invited to visit church and receive your own Christingle.

Bethlehem Midnight and Christmas Morning Eucharists –

At 10pm Christmas Eve and 10am Christmas Day. Please watch out for publicity as to how we will deal with extra numbers.

Part of a prayer we often used in the smallest of my previous parishes has stayed with me:

Jesus Christ is the light of the world: a light no darkness can quench.

A very happy and blessed Christmas from Christine and Fr David