



St Mark's Church, Reigate

December 2017

Letter from the Curate, Reverend Anna Moore

Dear Friends

Merry Christmas, Friends!

As a child I can always remember the run up to Christmas Day, being so excited. The expectation of Christmas through the eyes of a child was magical and was not complete without the Muppet Christmas Carol! The ending still gets me every time!

As an adult however, I've become more aware of the complex pressures that Christmas brings. Rather than being a time of great joy and real celebration, many people struggle through it - some will fight back tears as they think of family members who aren't with them. Some will worry financially, conscious of not being able to afford expensive gifts for loved ones. Some will spend Christmas cold and alone, unable to put the heating on, eating not a roast dinner by a roaring fire, but rather the warmed-up contents of tins donated by a food bank.

Despite the pressure and expectation that surrounds Christmas Day, the Nativity still brings a message of love, joy and peace to those, who for many reasons, are struggling at this time. Jesus was born in the only place his parents could find shelter; a stable, not in a warm and well stocked home. They were vulnerable and alone, but the love and actions of those around them, namely the innkeeper, meant Jesus was delivered safely in their time of need. The birth of Jesus reminds us that God comes to us and is among us, even in the most difficult circumstances.

2000 years on, God continues to make his presence a reality to those who are struggling through the behaviour and actions of those around them, namely **US!** During this festive season, do you know of someone who is lonely, or bereaved? Have you met a person who cannot properly provide for themselves? Be a present, by making God's presence known to them this Christmas - by simply being a friend.

Christmas is an inspirational time when we celebrate God's love for us; our caring God who is relational and not a distant deity. But this aspect of Christmas can often be marred as we try and live up to the expectations of others around us. Television and tradition pressurize us to have the perfect meal, after opening perfect gifts with the perfect family, then all sitting round to watch a film in the afternoon (sound familiar?). But is this what we **want** or what we've come to **expect**?

The giving and receiving of Christmas gifts and cards gives a heart-warming feeling, especially when someone is not expecting it! It can be the perfect way to let people know you are thinking about them, and care about them. To quote the muppets:

“It's in the giving of a gift to another,
A pair of mittens that were made by your mother,
It's all the ways that we show love,
That feel like Christmas”

‘It’s all the ways that we show love . . . that feels like Christmas!’ Gifts do not have to equate to monetary value, or what others expect: why not try some alternative ideas this year;

Give hand-made presents - and think or pray about the person as you make them.

Give gifts of charity (e.g. you can send someone a card saying that you have given to UNICEF so that they can immunise a child).

Visit friends or relatives instead of sending cards; this can mean the world to someone.

Best of all, giving of ourselves, our time to those in need, just as God did 2000 years ago.

This Christmas why not challenge yourself to:

Explore the values of the Magnificat - 'He has lifted up the humble and filled the hungry with good things'.

Meditate on the simplicity and meaning of the Incarnation, with the freedom, joy and peace that is offered in the coming of the Messiah; a precious gift, freely given to us, the family of God of which we are all members.

May you be blessed with peace and joy this Christmas, and for those who will find this time a particular struggle, remember God is with you – in the love and caring actions of those you meet.

Merry Christmas!

Anna.