



December 2018

Dear Friends,

There is something a little odd about having to write a Christmas letter on the weekend when I have been watching fireworks and have just marked Remembrance Sunday. These days you don't see many bonfires and the major firework displays rarely make any mention of the history of the celebration. This is regrettable to my mind as traditions are important and like Remembrance Sunday help to give us our national identity.

We now prepare for one of the greatest festivals - Christmas, a celebration of light in the darkness, of God's goodness and his intervention in human history. Christ's birth changed the world forever and faith in him changes lives to this day. Through the centuries, traditions have evolved to celebrate his birth and many of them still speak to us of the good news of the angels. It's important that we make a stand against anything that seeks to obscure the real message of Christmas, whether it be the dreaded 'happy holidays' or 'season's greetings' in cards or the replacement of nativity plays with pantomimes (though I do enjoy taking part in a good pantomime!). All these modifications, perhaps imperceptible on an individual level, unite to undermine the traditions of Christmas.

Strip away all the clutter of our Christmas traditions, much of which we rightly enjoy, and you have one simple question. If the shepherds and wise men truly bowed down and worshipped the new born king and if all those who followed him in later life were correct; those who were taught by him and who witnessed him after the darkness of Calvary and in his resurrected state were right in their conviction that he was the Son of God, a belief that led many of them to martyrdom, then how should we respond this Christmas?

For those who either don't believe a word of it, or who just can't face thinking about it, I simply say, have a great holiday, enjoy family and friends, pop a cork and make merry. To those who are open to exploring further I say, do all those things, but in addition, come along to church for one or more of our celebrations, listen to the message of the angels; it's good news from across the ages, and it might just be for you.

To those who have already received the good news from Bethlehem into their hearts I simply say 'O come let us adore Him'. Christmas brings light into the darkness of troubled lives and a turbulent world. It speaks to us of a loving Heavenly Father who sent His own Son to show us a better way. I can think of no better cause for a celebration than that.

Happy Christmas and Happy New Year!

*Rev'd Nicki*