

Thoughts from the Manse 20<sup>th</sup> November 2020

We are rapidly approaching Advent and the time to prepare for the coming of Christmas. Normally, for many families this means planning the family get togethers, the shared meals and creating endless lists of things to buy and do. This year it all seems more uncertain and there has been talk of Christmas being cancelled, but that just cannot happen for Christmas is not the parties



and the over-eating, it is not even the getting together, although sharing is at the heart of the message of Christmas. Christmas is remembering the birth of a baby whose life and ministry was to change the world, and whose death and resurrection is the hope of the world. We cannot cancel that, and we don't even need all the razzamatazz to have Christmas. Many Christians spend Christmas alone, but it is likely that this year even more will do so.

I have been really worried that the government will bow to pressure and all the talk this week of being careful now so that we can have Christmas has done nothing to ease my mind. Scientists are urging caution, reminding us of the spike that resulted from a lack of care in the days before this second lockdown, and warning that for every day of eased restrictions we will need five days of further lockdown, and real pressure will be put on an overstretched care system.

However, I have another dilemma. I am challenged that only last week those celebrating Diwali had to do so in lockdown and earlier this year Eid was similarly affected around the country and I ask myself why should Christmas be different? After all we have already celebrated Easter in Lockdown. I have already made my plans for services on Zoom, and the opportunity to do some different things is exciting. As a family, we are saddened that we will not be able to share Christmas with family and that Norman's mum will be on her own this Christmas but we are all being careful as there are health risks to consider and a responsibility to one another.



Jesus, whose birth is what Christmas is about, challenged us to love one another and that means caring for one another, which this year means not taking risks with other people's health by doing things which will increase the infection rate. Christmas will still happen, and we can use this time to spread love rather than the virus. Surprise a neighbour with a mystery shopping parcel; phone a friend and have a chat; buy a gift for the [Salvation Army Appeal](#) or the [Luton Woman's Aid](#); donate to the [John Lewis Give a little Love challenge](#), they are matching donations up to £2million to provide support to families in need this Christmas.

Whilst our church buildings may not be ringing with carols this year, we can still decorate windows and leave some lights on in the days leading to Christmas. More, we can each decorate one of our windows that can be seen from the street to cheer passers by and remind people that Christmas is still happening, just a bit differently this year.



WE can put Christmas into our communities wherever we are, WE are the church.

