

Dear friends,

As I sat down to write the letter for this month, the words of the last verse of the Christmas Carol, 'O little town of Bethlehem', came to mind!

'O holy Child of Bethlehem, descend to us we pray;

cast out our sin and enter in: be born in us today.

We hear the Christmas angels, the great glad tidings tell:

'O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel'.



And what wonderful words they are for us. The Lord coming to be with us and to change us too!

I don't know about you, maybe it's a vicar thing, but for me the month of December passes by very quickly. With the Christmas preparations, services, carols, plans, presents, decorations, get-togethers, socials, and whatever else comes along, the month is really full and can easily carry us along without our feet touching the ground! And then it's January. New year. New start. New plans. New year's resolutions... perhaps?

Advent – Christmas – Epiphany. The three church seasons we'll journey through in December and January, bring with them opportunities to pause, to reflect, and to renew our thinking. But you know, we are so busy and sometimes miss the opportunity to take that time out to really reflect on what these seasons are all about.

Advent – the season of expectant waiting.

Christmas – the season to celebrate God's saving work in the world, in the birth of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Epiphany – the season of newness, of encounter.

For some, these seasons bring stress, worry, debt, the nightmare of choosing the right gifts, hoping for everything to be just perfect, perhaps missing a loved one, for the first time or the twenty-first time.

In all of this, we need to remember why we are celebrating and who we are celebrating!

Jesus is the 'Reason for the Season' after all.

At the centre of these three festivals is a little baby, placed in a borrowed manger, in a borrowed stable. There wasn't even a cradle to rest the baby Jesus. It wasn't grand. It wasn't fancy... but it was amazing! This true story is amazing. Perhaps such an idea might release us from some of the pressures, financial and otherwise that this time of year brings.

Elsewhere, in the Focus, is a list of all our services and events throughout the festive season. You will be most welcome at any or all of them!

'O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel'.

May God bless you this Advent, Christmas and Epiphany.
Keith

