



From Bishop Nicholas...

Christmas is going to be different this year. We all know it even though we don't know exactly how it will work out at home and everywhere.

This year churches have become very good at working with the provisional and adapting plans at the last minute but it is hard to make sure that everyone is included. This Christmas it will be difficult to make sure that everyone knows that church continues to be available for the whole community. I am looking forward to seeing how we all do it. Necessity is the mother of invention!

I wonder what this looks like from God's point of view? It's probably not that different to usual. The world is making a bit of a mess of God's beautiful creation. There have been some lovely examples of people caring for each other better but we haven't even used the crisis of a global pandemic to build better international relations and God can see there are other challenges coming at us - the economy, climate change and the environment, and all those issues facing people about the balance between me and us and who we mean by us.

From God's point of view it looks pretty obvious that we human beings need to do more together which is why he sent his Son to teach us a few simple truths about what it means to be human. At Christmas, light came into darkness, love came among us and peace was offered to a fractured world. From God's point of view if people lived in response to that it might be exactly what is needed now as always!

So here we are going into Advent and heading for Christmas. We have all the ingredients of a story we know well and have told often but our circumstances this year are different. It might just be that we hear it fresh and feel it's power new because the Christmas story is not just a retelling of what happened when God came among us in Bethlehem just over 2,000 years ago. The point of the story is what God does now.

The hope of Advent that leads to Christmas is of our seeing the glory of God come among us full of grace and truth. The hope, and the challenge this and every year, is in how we live in response to such a precious gift.

*+Nicholas Sarum*