

# Rector's Letter – December 2018/ January 2019

Dear Friends,

'I'm Melchior and I have brought gold for the baby Jesus,' I proclaimed from the front of the stage. This was my first Christmas nativity play. I was seven. I enjoyed my moment in the spotlight, and was pleased to find myself typecast as one of the three kings in future years.



Many of my memories of Christmas growing up are similarly heart-warming, and nothing, of course, matches the eager anticipation of Christmas Day. As a child, the story of Jesus' birth enthralled me but I suspect that it lodged somewhere between Enid Blyton's stories of the Famous Five and the footballing exploits of Roy of the Rovers in my Tiger and Jag comic in its significance for me then. It did, after all, happen a long time ago and far way in what seemed then a strange and distant land.

Now, however, I see that the event at the centre of the story is strikingly relevant in a world that seems intent on tearing itself apart. The incarnation – God becoming a human being – presents us with a radical truth that challenges the politics of national self-interest which is becoming increasingly influential here in Europe, and in North and South America.

The baby lying in a manger in our Christmas story underlines the immeasurable value of each human being. In addition, we see that through Jesus Christ we are all deeply connected. We read in the opening chapter of the Bible that we are all made in the 'image of God,' created to experience and express God's love. In the New Testament, we see that Jesus Christ renews humanity and that through him we are invited to become sons and daughters of God. The divine vision that motivated Jesus was of one human family united in love for the Father. Energised by this goal, Jesus sought to break down barriers between people, rejected stigmatising behaviour and language, and gave to his Church a global mission to share the good news of God's love revealed supremely through his life, death and resurrection.

The ontological reality – the truth of who we are - of our relatedness to everyone else in Christ resonates with our awareness that most intractable problems we face can only be addressed by working together. Only international collaboration and international bodies can tackle global-warming, an urgent issue and the possible consequence dire. The widening gap between rich and poor within countries and between nations can only be combatted by a common quest for fairer distribution of the world's resources. Responding to the cries of refugees and asylum-seekers from war-torn and drought-ridden parts of our world needs a co-ordinated response. (The sculpture on Church Path bears witness to the plight of child refugees and the hard-hearted attitude of some governments to their plight.)

Embedded in the Christmas narrative is the song of the Angels up on the hillside who tell us that the implications of the birth in Bethlehem are profound. They sing of the glory of God and peace on earth. Peace does not come without justice, and at the centre of Biblical concept of justice is a concern for the poor, vulnerable, the refugee, and the stranger in our midst.

The birth of God in a particular place and time tells us that God's love embraces all people everywhere and throughout time. May we always live in the light of this truth.

With love,

David Tomlinson

**Previous copies of Rector's Letter**

[November 2018](#)

[October 2018](#)