

Curate's Letter – Dec 2019 - Jan 2020

Dear Friends,

As I write this I am currently expecting my first child, due to be born in April next year. It is a time of beginnings and endings. As many people have told me, “Life will never be the same again!”

When I look at the Christmas story again, I wonder afresh about Mary. For her, the news of her pregnancy meant that life was never going to be the same again. For her too, the changes were unpredictable, and the future uncertain. However Mary did know some things about the baby she was carrying. Unlike a modern mum, she was not able to hear her child's heartbeat, nor see each half of the baby's brain on the scan, nor have black and white images where she could marvel at little fingers and toes. And yet, at the angel's pronouncement, Mary knew things that many modern parents do not. She knew her baby's gender – way before the 20 week scan! – she knew his name, and she knew his vocation. Where many parents can only wonder what will become of their child, Mary was given a special insight into this most special baby – though I wonder if that only gave her more questions to ponder, such as how and when and why?



At Jesus' birth, it was clear that Mary's life was never going to be the same again with the abundance of strange visitors who turned up at the door. It was clear that things had changed when her child's existence put them at the risk of a despotic tyrant, and she had to live with the reality that terror was never far away, as many families live in the world today. It was clear too that her life was forever changed when she heard the words no one wants to hear: a sword will pierce your own soul too. The baby she held in her arms would be the very reason her heart would break, and the very way it would be mended.

We will revisit these stories over the Christmas season and see again the snap shots of all those whose encounter with the baby changed their lives. It is so easy to read them as all-too-familiar texts and to cease from wondering about these people: wondering about their faith, their lack of faith, as well as the uncertainties that they faced in their lives. It is all too easy to reduce these people to a one-dimensional image of faith and to lose the fact that they were flesh and blood, like you and me. And it is all too easy to sentimentalise the child in the manger, and to lose the powerful of the truth of Jesus whose birth brought insiders and outsiders together, rich and poor, young and old, men and women...people whose lives were never the same again.

As we reflect again on Christ's birth this Advent and Christmas time, let us be ready to read and to wonder, to listen and to imagine, to learn and to delight afresh at the wonder of the Christchild in our midst. May our lives never be the same again.

With love,

Rachel