

LETTERS FROM THE CHURCHES

How "Christian" is your Christmas? What is the relevance of getting and giving all this stuff? The Archbishop of Canterbury has said:

"The heart of the Christmas message is that God takes our material world completely seriously. He doesn't just send a message, he comes to live in the physical world in the flesh and blood of a real person, Jesus."

Christianity is the most material of all religions. We are given good material things to enjoy and we should be grateful for them. But the fact is that God not only made the world but in Christ walked about on it and immersed himself in its life. His experience of eating and drinking, teaching and relating to the things around him led to one of his most famous sayings: "consider the birds of the air and the lilies of the field". There is a compelling Christian case that we should have reverence for the world. Rowan Williams again said;

"If we believe that God takes the environment seriously, that he can speak through the physical things of the world, we are horribly wrong if we think we can ignore these environmental matters. The good news God sends at Christmas has to be good news for the whole world. If we start thinking about protecting our environment properly we shall be reflecting the way God himself looks at the world into which he came at Christmas."

It is increasingly essential that humanity has to find a balance between enjoying the good things of our material world and irresponsibly taking from the earth what it cannot afford to give us. This isn't easy! Part of my personal spiritual rule of life is to try to find the right balance between all sorts of conflicting demands. Christmas, when The Word of God became flesh and dwelt among us, is a good time to give some thought to how we can express God's love to the whole created world and those with whom we share it (including the plants and animals) as well as to our family and friends.

Rev John Girtchen

Churches Together - Christmas Services in Goxhill

Thursday	10th December	2.00pm	Churches Together Carol Service	at Greenfields Community Room, Westfield Road
Sunday	13th December,	4.00pm	United Christingle Service	at All Saints Church
Sunday	20th December,	6.00pm	United Carol Service	at Goxhill Methodist Chapel
Thursday	24th December,	4.00pm	Family Crib Service	at Goxhill Methodist Chapel
Thursday	24th December,	11.30pm	First Communion of Christmas	at All Saints Church
Friday	25th December,	10.00am	Family Communion	at Holy Trinity, Barrow

A warm welcome to all as we celebrate the true meaning of Christmas.

Even if we struggle to write cards and letters, most of us love to receive Christmas correspondence! The number of different designs is overwhelming and I enjoy finding the 'same' cards each year, one time cutting off the greeting part at the end of the season and recycling them by letting the grandchildren use them as Snap cards! Whilst mostly we perhaps first look to see who has signed the card sent, it is wonderful to read any also incorporating a Bible text, because that Bible verse is a further greeting from the sender, acknowledging 'Jesus is the reason for the season'. Isaiah Chapter 9 verse 6 is one of my favourites, 'A child is born! A son is given to us! And He will be our ruler. He will be called "Wonderful Counsellor", "Mighty God", "Eternal Father", "Prince of Peace" (Good News Bible).

How often it is said, "we've rather lost touch, except at Christmas". We can also lose touch with God. Christmas is a time for reconnecting with our wonderful, forgiving God who came amongst us as a tiny baby and grew up to love and care for us all in His life, His death and His glorious resurrection.

Good News indeed, but incredibly we who love Jesus can get so swept along by the Christmas extras we only catch up with the King of Kings at the last minute, just before the turkey lunch! Our worship on Christmas Day should be the pinnacle of our Advent praise rather than a hasty postscript to all the other seasonal preparations.

'Come and join the celebration, it's a very special day, come, and join our jubilation, there's a new king born today' - ALLELUIA.

Happy Advent, Christmas and indeed New Year.

**God bless, Gillian
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