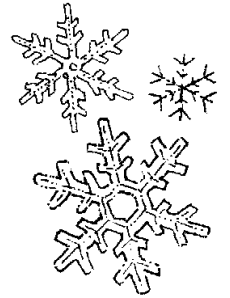


## A message from Revd. Malcolm Strange



When choosing the carols for this year's Christmas services I began reflecting on the 19<sup>th</sup> Century writer Christina Rossetti's poem, 'In the Bleak Midwinter' which is now a well-known and much-loved Christmas Carol. I can assure you we will certainly be singing it at all the Carol Service held in the five Fromside Benefice churches this year for sure.

It seems many years since we had a crisp and frosty winter on the scale of 1947, 1962, 1976, 1982, 1996 and 2010 and even more years since we had a proper White Christmas. The last substantial one was 2010, although 2022 is officially the last one we had as it only needs one flake of snow to land on a UK weather station for it to be officially called a white Christmas.



I guess at the time that Rossetti wrote her poem people were used to harsher winters, after all the Thames used to freeze over, with the Frost Fairs being held on the ice, well into the 19<sup>th</sup> century, during a period that was known as the 'Little Ice Age'.



Whilst global warming is rightly forcing us to reflect on the impacts of severe weather patterns caused by, amongst other things, our excessive use of fossil fuels, the truth is that the real focus of Rossetti's poem is not really the weather at all, but an exploration of the story of Jesus birth, the meaning of the Incarnation and more importantly how we should respond to this eternal truth.

In a world that is in such a mess, with conflicts raging, politicians and leaders taking up extreme and somewhat uncaring positions, with increased poverty and large numbers of people struggling on the margins of society, this carol does bring an extra challenge to us all this Christmas in how we respond and care for each other.



For me the required response is so beautifully captured in the carol's final verse. 'What can I give him poor as I am? If I were a Shepherd I would give a lamb; If I were a Wise Man I would do my part, yet what I can give him, give my heart'.



At the heart of Christian Values is the call for us to love one another, which is not a bad aspiration for us all whatever our faith, and for the believer, living our lives this way is how we can best give Jesus our hearts.

Happy Christmas Everyone  
Fr Malcolm