



St Mark's Church, Reigate

December 2021

Letter from the Vicar, Father Martin Colton

Dear Friends,

As we enter December you may be breathing a sigh of relief that this year is nearly over and looking forward to Christmas with a little more certainty than last year, although the news of the Omicron variant has reintroduced some uncertainty. It has certainly been a year of ups and downs, feeling at times like a game of Snakes and Ladders. Some form of normality is reached and then – just like with one roll of the dice – you are sliding back down and you have to start all over again and change plans. All the uncertainty we've had puts a new perspective on the Christmas story itself, because you realise how disrupting the events of the first Christmas were for those involved.

Mary and Joseph were engaged to be married; they no doubt had their plans for what their lives would look like, until the angel Gabriel turned up and sent all their plans out the window. Then, just as they were getting used to the idea that they would have a baby, the emperor ordered a census, so they had to set off away from home on the long journey to Bethlehem. Not what they had planned at all.

Or what about the shepherds, sat in their fields just doing their job until the angels appeared and sent them running into the village to find the new-born Jesus. Then there were the wise men, sent on a perilous journey to a far-off land because of the appearance of a new star in the sky. None of these people could have predicted or planned what would happen to them, but when the disruption came they went with it and in doing so they met God face to face.

We all approach Christmas with our own sets of expectations and hopes, rituals and traditions, and after all we've been through this year it may feel we want to be able to celebrate in the ways that we usually do. Whatever happens this Christmas, let it give us an opportunity to learn anew from Mary and Joseph, the wise men and the shepherds, and to allow the strange turns our lives have taken this year to lead us closer to the God who is always with us.

With my best wishes for a peaceful and blessed Christmas.