



St Mark's Church, Reigate

December 2023

Letter from the Vicar, Father Martin Colton

Dear Friends,

I wonder if you have ever had a moment, when you have just watched the news or read the paper and seen what's going on in Israel and Gaza, or the Ukraine or somewhere else in the world, and felt the absence of anything hopeful. It just looks like things aren't ever going to improve or get better. Yet in all that is going on, something deep down makes you feel you cannot give up on the world. I think we all as human beings have that underlying sense of the need to have hope.

As we begin our journey through Advent this year – with the prospect of Christmas fast approaching – I wonder whether we need to be reminded of the hope that God offers us through the Christmas story. Mary and Joseph, a homeless couple sheltering in dire circumstances amongst the animals and all that messiness, to find somewhere to bring their baby into the world. In that baby we see God's presence, his love and hope right there in that mess and muddle of a stable, the mess and muddle of the political turmoil of the time, and the mess and muddle of ordinary lives like ours. Yet it is also the place where we can see God's love and hope amongst us.

So in the turmoil of the world we can have hope because God was born amongst us that first Christmas. Hope for tolerance and acceptance, fairness and justice, ceasefires and the laying down of arms, because in that stable there is love and hope. Love and hope in this coming year for each one of us. Shepherds considered as outsiders found God's love and hope in that manger. The Wise Men, foreigners coming from far away to search for a King, were welcomed without question.

So let us look at our world with hope because in it, and in all we do personally, as a church and as a community, whatever lies before us, we can find God's love and his hope there.

Every blessing