

It always seems strange writing this for the January edition looking back at the celebrations of Christmas, when, at the time of writing, we've not even 'done Christmas'! What I do know for certain: that it will have been different. I trust though that through all the uncertainties you still managed to find a way of enjoying Christmas, with family or friends (socially distanced, of course), and were able to get along to or engage with many of the church services and hear afresh the hope in the Christmas story.

Despite the influence of COVID-19 on many of our plans, both family plans and on church services, Christmas is still a time of light coming into the world and of hope. We celebrate the birth of God's Son together, and remember all that this means, if we let the story into our hearts. The days are starting to get longer, there is more light. We are at the beginning of a new year; putting the old one behind us. It can be a new start, not 'more of the same' if we approach it in that light.

We've just had the exciting news of one of the vaccines being approved by the MHRA, which is being administered in this country. This is really good news for all of us. Hopefully, by the time this is published, other types of vaccine will have been approved for use too. Then we can really start to look forward, with hope, to a better year than last year. One that is healthier for us all: physically, mentally, financially, and socially. We are, after all, as human-beings made to be in society, in community with one another. When we start to come out of lockdown, we must not forget some of the good things that this pandemic has shown us: caring for one another; looking out for one another; being concerned for one another. The Bible calls it: "loving your neighbour as yourself". (Maybe there are some other truths hidden in the Bible too!).

With the busyness of Christmas behind us, please don't think that January is going to be quiet. In church we will be celebrating: Epiphany (on 3 January), the Baptism of Christ (on 10 January), and Candlemas, the Presentation of Christ in the Temple, on 31 January. And then, before you know it, it will be Ash Wednesday, on 17 February. There is still plenty to celebrate (and/or remember) together in the coming days and weeks. Maybe 2021 is the year when that promise you make yourself every year of a new start really happens. There is hope; there is light. Throughout all this, there is still God. Come and worship Him together. Happy New Year; may it really be a new one for you.

Revd David Commander, Rector