

Christmas cheer behind the mask

Last month I wrote about the joy of some normal things returning. We hope, of course, that this will continue, as we have some lovely normal things planned this coming month at St George's Church and around the village to mark and celebrate Christmas together. I dearly hope and pray that many of these things that we have missed will go ahead as usual this year.

We do, of course, have to be careful because (as we keep being reminded), the virus has not gone away. We are now living in this strange and often confusing time when many things have returned to normal but Covid infection rates are very high. I am aware of more people right now who have tested positive for Covid than I was throughout last year. So, the issue is still there, but so too is the need (and the want) to get back to some normal things.

For our church and the community, these normal things include: the Advent carol service (Advent Sunday is the 28 November); the switching on of the star on the church; the carol services for various local schools at church; 'Carols in the Café' for the shop volunteers; the candlelit parish carol service; the Toddler Group Christmas event; the crib service; the 'midnight' service; and the Christmas Day services. All these things we dearly hope will go ahead. Cast your mind back 12 months, though; do you remember the disappointment (and upheaval) of the last-minute cancellation of so many Christmas events and the imposed travel restrictions? I sincerely hope we do not have to go through that again.

One thing that we have decided still cannot go ahead this year - regrettably - is the village lunch in the Memorial Hall on Christmas Day. Those it is predominately for are, in many cases, in a vulnerable category themselves, so, we see this as too big a risk. However, if you are going to be alone on Christmas Day, and would like a visit, give me a call and we will see what we can arrange.

In order to ensure that we, as a village community, can join together in the annual events and services (that perhaps in the past we have taken for granted) and in order to be able to go ahead with these things, then we may each need to take responsibility now to reduce the spread of the virus locally. Perhaps for the next month there is a benefit for all of us in respecting social distance once more; of wearing face coverings once more in confined spaces; and to continue to respect the wishes of others - who, for all we know, may have unseen vulnerabilities. It is all about respect and valuing everyone in our community.

If I see you before Christmas, it may well be behind a face covering; but there will be a smile behind the mask, and also a wish that you are able to enjoy a happy, healthy and peaceful Christmas. God bless.

Revd David