



From the Rectory

December 2025

Another Church year has passed and in a few weeks we will once again remember the humble birth of a baby in an obscure location more than 2,000 years ago, a baby who would grow up to change the world in his short life, a life which is the foundation of our Christian faith. Prophets had foretold of the coming of a Saviour over many centuries – you can read about this across the Old Testament – but when Jesus was born, the first people to hear about it were shepherds on a hillside. Jesus Christ, Emmanuel (God with us) slipped into the world just like you and me, a world under foreign occupation and oppression as are parts of our world today, his birth announced by angels (God's messengers) to a few very ordinary people, born not in a palace, but in an animal shelter, because all the inns were full.

Almighty God became human as Jesus, yet also as God's Son, fully divine, come to teach humanity to love and respect one another instead of abusing power and perpetuating hatred, but sadly most people failed to listen then and still don't listen today. Jesus grew up to bring God's healing and forgiveness to all who turn to him in faith, and through his death and resurrection revealing the path to eternal life.

So, as you prepare to celebrate Christmas, in whatever way you are accustomed to, remember that it is the birth of Jesus, Son of the Living God, that we celebrate, not all the commercial trappings that seem to grow earlier and larger, more expensive, every year. The gifts we give and receive are (or should be) a token of the love and respect we have for one another, but the greatest gift of all came all those years ago, laid in a manger because there was no room in the inn. The last verse of the carol 'In the bleak midwinter' asks and answers the perennial seasonal problem – *What can I give him ..?* All that Jesus asks of you and of me, this and every Christmas, is to 'give our heart'. This costs nothing financially, but can feel costly as we seek to become less self-centred and more focussed on Jesus, following his example and teaching.

This is the last time I will write *From the Rectory*, as I retire at the beginning of January. My body tells me it is time, but my heart longs to continue as your Vicar. The 13+ years I have served here in the Parish of Findon, Clapham and Patching have been a joy and I feel truly blessed to have been called here. I will continue to hold you all in my prayers this Christmastide and on into the new year. I thank you for making me and my family so welcome, for your friendship and all the support and encouragement you have given me in my time as the Parish Priest and I wish you a happy Christmas, a peaceful and fulfilling new year and every blessing for the future.

With love in Christ,

Helena