

Happy new year! The Church Year begins on Advent Sunday (this year 1st December!) but as this magazine is for two months, it also covers the new calendar year, from January.

Looking back over 2024, it has been another busy year for the Parish, like any year with its ups and downs. Sadly, we've lost a number of our friends this past year, remembering each with gratitude for all they brought to our lives. I've met some lovely new residents in Findon too over this year as I walk Tilly - welcome to everyone new to one of our villages! On behalf of the church, I'd like to record our thanks to Michael Drakeford, who steps down from his role as PCC Treasurer from January 2025, having worked so hard and so efficiently for many years in this voluntary but vital role. Thank you to David for joining our team in his place.

Advent is a time of preparation. Everyone is 'getting ready for Christmas', busily buying gifts for loved ones and preparing seasonal goodies to eat, but within the church the preparations go much deeper than this. Through Advent, in the four weeks before Christmas, we are encouraged to prepare our hearts to welcome the Christ child in once more, by prayerfully reflecting on our own thoughts and actions over the past year and seeking to deepen our commitment to our faith. In our churches there are no flower arrangements during Advent, just the Advent stand with candles and perhaps a little greenery. Each Sunday a new candle is lit, so as Christmas approaches, there is a little more light each week, building up to the lighting of the 5th candle at the Mass of the Nativity (Midnight Mass) late on Christmas Eve as we joyfully celebrate the birth of Jesus, Light of the World.

Christmas decorations seem to go up earlier each year in our shops and homes, then many people take them down very soon after Christmas morning! In the church, the Christmas Season continues until the Feast of Candlemas (the Presentation of Christ in the Temple) on February 2nd so theoretically decorations could stay up till then – a great excuse for not dusting! Twelfth Night is however traditionally when our trees are taken down, and that is long enough for most people. But what is left, once the decorations are packed away for another year? January can feel like a cold, dark, sad month ... but as Christians, we continue to remember God's wonderful free gift of himself for us all in Jesus Christ. Born away from home in poverty more than 2000 years ago, growing up to teach us all of his Father's great love for all of creation, culminating in giving his life for us on the cross and rising again to show the world that for all who believe in him there is the promise of eternal life. This is what we remember and celebrate each Christmas.

On 8th November in Findon Church, we were treated to a wonderful feast of folk music linked with stories and poems of Sussex by Cotillion in their concert 'Candlemas till Christmas' - a lovely way to hear of country traditions through the year. If you weren't there, you missed a great evening. We hope to book them in again in 2025 for a different programme, so keep an eye on our website and for posters in the Village in the Spring!

Colin and I, with our families, wish you all a happy and peaceful new year.

Every blessing,

Helena