December 2026

Bishop Jackie writes...



Christmas is rarely the same from year to year. We may keep the same traditions – singing carols, going to Christmas services, cooking the turkey, giving presents – yet every year there are changes that we notice especially at Christmas time. This year we have welcomed our first grandchild, and we are excited for her very first Christmas. At the same time there are those we remember with love but see no longer. Christmas reminds us of times past – there is often a mix of joy and sorrow.

Whatever the changes personally, or in the wider world, the message of Christmas remains the same: God is with us. Jesus, the Son of God, is born in a manger, we are not alone, God loves this world so much he sent his only Son. This is why we celebrate, and why we give presents, because the greatest gift has been given to us. And we can choose to receive him, we can open our hearts with gratitude, and ask Jesus to live in us.

One of my favourite carols is O Little Town of Bethlehem. It finishes with the words: 'O come to us, abide with us, our Lord Emmanuel.' Emmanuel means 'God is with us'. At this time of year, as we make space in our homes for extra guests, or as we receive the hospitality of others, let us also make space for Jesus. The carol makes this invitation – come and stay with us Lord, abide with us, today and always.

So, we celebrate, we receive, and perhaps there is also a response to be made. Christmas is a special time for generosity. As we give thanks for the gift of Jesus, and for the many blessing we have received, might we respond with generosity to those who are in need?

As I continue to be your Acting Diocesan Bishop for this season, I wish you all a very Happy Christmas, and pray for God's richest blessings as you celebrate, receive and respond to the wondrous gift of Jesus.

Rt Rev Jackie Searle

Acting Bishop of Derby

Diocese of Derby

THE GIFT OF CHRISTMAS