**A Christmas Message from our Parish Priest**

*“While they were there, the time came for the baby to be born, and she gave birth to her firstborn, a son.  She wrapped him in cloths and placed him in a manger, because there was no guest room available for them."  Luke 2:6-7*

What a nightmare situation that these first-time parents faced.  The Christmas story.  To notice the very *ordinariness* of how God chooses to come; to be illegitimately and mysteriously born in a mucky stable for goodness sake, with a bunch of foreigners and ‘riff-raff’ for company.  The very detail we *do* know from the gospel writers says something amazing; here’s a message that’s good, no GREAT, news for all people whose faces wouldn’t naturally fit!

We are invited, indeed strongly encouraged, to become God’s children.  Sons and daughters of a whole new order of things; witnesses to God’s love for the world he made and has always passionately loved.  In Jesus is the glory of real human living; the chance to have life as God always intended it to be.  And we’re all invited to join in.  He promises to transform frail, grey lives and bring instead colour and vibrancy, hope and purpose.  Much, much more than survival and merely making it through.

Christ didn’t even come to invite us to just attend church services on a Sunday or special festival days; but to share in his wider purposes to bring justice and peace, forgiveness and grace to a needy world.  To enable us to take part in the adventure of living and share something of what he’s like.  No matter where we are in life, no matter what condition we find ourselves in, no matter how far we might have strayed away, or messed up, or how unfaithful we think we are.  God pursues us with a love that can forgive, restore and transform us.  So we celebrate a love that never stops bringing its light into the darkness.

*A prayer.* ‘Heavenly Father, you gave us this world and a freedom of choice with how we live on it and in it.  Help us as we go through this New Year, that is nearly upon us, using that freedom to help those who are worse off than ourselves, to do those things that will help our earth so that we can ensure that our children, their children and the children to come can enjoy what it has to offer.  And as we face the political difficulties of the times ahead, help us to be caring, unselfish and generous with ourselves to all that we meet’.  Amen.

I pray that you have a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

God Bless

Revd Ken