

Dear Friends

Firstly, I should like to wish you, your family and friends a very Happy Christmas.

This period of time since March has been unlike anything we have previously known. The restrictions placed upon travel, meeting others, entering shops and places of hospitality and even our churches have caused frustration, loneliness and depression. Worst of all has been the terrible loss of life, the suffering endured by many because of this cruel pandemic and the great sadness following the death of loved ones including many whose task was to heal and support people in need especially the elderly.

William Shakespeare wrote "Now is the winter of our discontent" [Richard 111: Act 1]. He could have been describing our world in 2020.

In his well-loved book "The Lion , the Witch and the Wardrobe" C. S. Lewis speaks of a world in which "it was always winter but never Christmas".

Of course neither Shakespeare nor Lewis were writing about the meteorological season. Instead they were using a metaphor to express the suffering and sadness of the human condition at that time. But Lewis who was at one time an atheist had found faith – a faith that offers hope and comfort through the great event of Christmas. This is why the Christian Church recalls the life-changing theme of the Incarnation every year at Christmas. The Incarnation tries to put into words the astonishing idea that God entered our dark and wintry world, to bring us to a better place. Instead of passively accepting a hopeless end, we are invited to celebrate an endless hope.

So Christmas is not cancelled despite this horrid pandemic which no doubt has many more months to run. The hope that Christmas brings can sustain us in the economic hardship many are going to face in the near future along with many difficult political issues in a very uncertain world.

The haunting Christmas story can resonate with our deepest feelings about life and remind us that there is something immensely important beyond the borders of our experience.

The birth of Jesus tells us that despite our "winter of discontent", there is always the light, the love and the life of Christmas revealed in the Christ Child.

With Christmas blessings and every good wish for a peaceful New Year

Gerald Moule