

It was a joy to see almost 70 people (including several children and some dogs) respectfully giving thanks and remembering at Findon War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday. Wreaths were laid representing the villages, Findon Parish Council, Arun District Council and West Sussex County Council. Colin and I recorded a Service in church, with contributions from Evelyn and Ian Hollyhomes, with Tessa reading the poem 'The Soldier' and Ian Swales reading the list of the fallen from the three villages as usual, enabling many others to remember with us from their own homes.

Like much of this past year, it is unclear as I write just what lies ahead of us as we approach Christmas and the new year, but looking back over 2020, I think we have much to be thankful for, and much to be proud of as Village communities. While we are hopeful that there will be some form of public worship in our churches over Christmas, we cannot at this stage be certain what form this will take. There will still be online worship available for those unable to get to church, and I'd like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who has helped to contribute to our weekly recorded Services over the months of lockdown, and most particularly to thank Colin Cox, our talented Assistant Priest here, for his IT expertise and creative gifts in putting the whole thing together on our Parish Facebook page and sending it to Liz Henderson for our website.

The Nativity performances and Carol Concerts and sing-alongs we so enjoy in our schools and churches will sadly not be taking place this year, nor will our Walking Nativity, but we do plan to **sing carols** around Findon in set locations on 3 evenings. (see page 13 of Findon News for details). Another new venture is the '**Candle in the Window**' initiative and this fits perfectly with the concept of Advent as a time of waiting in the build up to Christmas Day. Many of us are familiar with the Advent Wreath, where a new candle is lit each Sunday of Advent, gradually increasing the brightness of the light, culminating in lighting a central white candle to show that Christ, the Light of the World has been born. Be creative, I'm really looking forward to seeing what you put in your window as I walk round the village with Tilly!

The four weeks of Advent have traditional themes. The people of God, whose stories we read in the Old Testament speak of hope in troubled times through following God's Law, the prophets call us to a new way of living, ending with John the Baptist's call to repent and turn back to God, the final candle being to remember Mary, whose humility and obedience enabled the birth of Jesus when she said 'Yes' to God's call through an angel. This year, let us also travel through Advent prayerfully, remembering those we love but may be unable to meet in person, those across our world for whom daily life is such a struggle, and giving thanks for all those who have helped us in our lives, and especially in this past year when there has been so much to challenge our individual well-being.

Certainly, whatever the Government decides, Christmas celebrations will be different for everyone this year, but what is (or should be) at the centre of these celebrations doesn't change; the reason for Christmas is our awe and wonder that God chose to be born in human flesh, Emmanuel, God-with-us. Jesus was born in poverty to a very ordinary, yet quite extraordinary couple, far from their own home at the behest of the ruling foreign power (Rome) and subject to the whims of a power-hungry puppet leader (Herod). We are so fortunate, living in a democracy, with the associated freedoms, but many people in our world

are not so lucky, living in fear, often lacking the basic necessities of life we take for granted here. Sad as it is not to be able to join with extended family members at Christmas this year, we can look ahead to better times. In remembering others less fortunate than we are, wouldn't it be wonderful if we were all to contribute what we would have spent on excess food, drink and (often unwanted) gifts for one another to a charity supporting the homeless in this country, or the persecuted or displaced across the world, or those who are struggling to rebuild lives after natural disaster. The list could go on.... Food for thought perhaps. There will be the opportunity to make a donation to 'Turning Tides' here in the village. Wendy Callister had the brilliant idea of using a Christmas Crib as a donation point (no beans/soup/pasta/rice though please!) and this will hopefully be situated outside the Village Shop in the run up to Christmas. Perhaps you could encourage your children to donate a packet of sweets or crisps rather than eating it themselves!

Remember, I am here for you all (not, as some think, just for those who 'go to church'!) and don't hesitate to get in touch if I can do anything for you.

May God bless you all this Christmas and through January, as together we look forward to longer days and better times.

With love in Christ,

Helena

Church Service Times: The result of a recent ballot of churchgoers in Findon about the time of the Sunday Service resulted in 100% in favour of keeping the Service time in Findon to 9.30 am. Reasons given included being able to spend more time with family as the earlier time enabled travel to arrive by lunchtime. So I look forward to welcoming you back to St John the Baptist at 9.30am as soon as we are given permission to worship together again. The 1st Sunday Worship and Praise continues to be at 10am, as does the Eucharist at Clapham and Patching churches (see the back of Findon News for details).

Covid permitting, on Christmas morning, there will be an 8am Communion Service (BCP) in Patching Church, a 10am Family Communion (Common Worship) in Findon Church (thus allowing me time for a coffee to warm up between services!) and a 10am Eucharist in Clapham Church taken by Colin. We hope to see some of you then, to wish you a Happy Christmas in person!