

Letter from the Vicar

Friday 18 December

My Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

A lot seems to have happened during the last week – some good, some not so good. For instance, on Monday a small team of helpers came down to St John's to install the Christmas trees ahead of this weekend's Festival. I am most grateful to all who helped with this and to those who decorated them on Wednesday, and I'm sure you will agree that the reduced number we have this year look stunning. We have been very fortunate again that all the trees – both inside and out – have been sponsored, and through them we can bring a little light, hope, and joy to our wider community.

On Monday afternoon we welcomed Yrs 5&6 from South Hill Primary School to their Carol Service. 120 children filled the air with singing, excellent reading, and a joy and enthusiasm which could melt any cold heart. This was followed on Tuesday morning by a Nativity 'Assembly' at Heath Lane Nursery School where I shared the Christmas Story with 30+ pre-school children (a tough audience to keep engaged but met with success) including my own Abbie. Carol also 'Zoomed' into Pixies Hill School on Friday for their virtual Carol Service. Working with schools has been very different this year but the friendship we have forged, and the prayers we have offered, will see us through these strange times.

On Thursday came the news that the whole of Hertfordshire would be going into Tier 3 restrictions from the early hours of Saturday morning. This, along with our own monitoring of the rise in infections locally, prompted the decision to cancel the *Christmas Market* idea whilst we have *Outside Carols round the Trees*. The regulations stipulate that organised outside carol singing may take place in a churchyard – lucky for us that this is what we were intending! Sadly, we won't be able to offer you a mug of gluhwien to keep you warm but you are most welcome to bring your own. The new Tier 3 restrictions will also have no impact on how we offer Public Worship over the coming days. We have planned for everyone to be socially distanced – hence the ticketing. We know congregational singing is not permitted so have arranged for a choir to sing at each service except Christmas morning when we will use recorded music. We know we need to reduce touch points and have planned *Christingle in a bag* for those who have booked to join us. And we are making recordings of our services available on our website on Christmas Eve for those unable to join in person.

On Sunday night we will have our Parish Festivals of Lessons and Carols. I know the choir and musicians are working hard to make this a pleasurable experience for everyone. This year we have invited Key Workers to read the Lessons in a tribute to the way they have kept us going this year. I hope you will be able to join us in person or virtually when the service is aired on our website on Christmas Eve.

I hope to be able to write to again ahead of Christmas but as always I trust you are all well and keeping safe. I leave you with my prayers for each of you; keep safe; and remain secure in the knowledge of our God who loves us, cares for us, and enfolds us in his arms.

In Christ,



The Reverend Michael Macey

Vicar

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