

A LETTER FROM OUR CHURCHWARDENS

In the Christian Church our focus in December is Advent. It's the beginning of a new church year and a season of expectation and preparation, as we prepare to celebrate the birth (adventus) of Christ.

We recognise that the commercial pressures around Christmas have made it harder to sustain a sense of watchfulness and hopefulness, but the key Advent prayer remains 'Maranatha' – 'Our Lord, come'. Church decorations are simple (no flowers, just 'the holly and the ivy'). In the northern hemisphere, the Advent season falls at the darkest time of the year, and the natural symbols of darkness and light are powerfully at work throughout Advent and Christmas. We will light candles on an Advent wreath, a tradition that was imported into Britain from northern Europe in the nineteenth century. The Third Sunday of Advent was observed in medieval times as Gaudete or 'Rose Sunday', and this provides a splash of colour in the restrained atmosphere of Advent.



In Milborne Port, we will celebrate the lighting of the village lights right at the end of November, and then the village Christmas Tree Festival will be held in St John's Church from 7th to 14th December, so the church will have a week of light and beauty in Advent. The children at the primary school will have their own Christingle celebration in school and then they will come to the church a week later for their Carol Service.

Christmas time can be an extremely difficult time for so many however, with the twinkling lights and endless Christmas songs and carols being played in shops and over the airwaves. This jollity only accentuates the pain which many feel in their hearts at this time of year, so we commend the **Longest Night Service on Saturday 21st December at 3 p.m.** It is a gentler, reflective service of carols and readings, with the recognition that those present may very well find Christmas challenging.

We must acknowledge that the Church of England has been rocked by the resignation of Archbishop Welby following the publication of the Makin Report, which exposed the heinous acts committed by John Smyth and the failure of many who chose not to follow up the allegations against him. We at St John's take Safeguarding very seriously and have robust policies and procedures in place. Safeguarding, actively taking care of each other, is the responsibility of all of us.



Finally, as December begins, we are very happy to be welcoming back Rev. Rona from her sabbatical. We would like to thank all those who have helped cover Rona's absence in the past three months, particularly our retired clergy, Brian McConnell, Stuart Thomas, Diane Barrett, Frank Wright and Jane Craw.

Wishing you a peaceful Advent and a joyous Christmas.

*Nicki Edwards and Susan Wales
Churchwardens*