

Thursday 21 December 2023



Bishop Martin's Christmas Message



The continuing war in Ukraine, the war between Israel and Hamas in the land of Jesus' birth, continuing conflicts across the world, as well as what seems increased polarisation and acrimony in our own country. All are crying out for the angels' message of peace and goodwill.

In my imagination I can hear the angels' message to the shepherds, on that first Christmas night. But I hear that message with a distinctive clarity and urgency this year. Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace and goodwill to all people. The angels' message has resonated down through the ages. We are reminded of it each year, and not just in church.

'Peace on earth' is in our Christmas cards, and we see it used by a host of charities, and it appears in shop windows, in the titles of books and songs, all touching a longing we have for peace and goodwill. The message pinpoints and challenges so much of what is wrong in our world, and calls us to imagine and strive for how things could and should be.

And this year the message seems to challenge and call us with an even greater intensity. Peace and goodwill both seem in short supply, just as they must have seemed to those shepherds living under Roman occupation. The intensity and urgency of the angels' message calls us who long for peace and goodwill to act. And so we must do what those shepherds did. They left their hillside to go to see what it was the angels were proclaiming, and so they discovered a new born lying in a manger.

For me there is no more powerful moment in the drama of Christmas than to find ourselves with the shepherds, joining Mary and Joseph to gaze at the infant. We find ourselves there as we sing carols, or in our community's or church's crib scene, or simply as we allow ourselves a few moments to ponder the Christmas story. And what do we see? What do we see that can once again rekindle our work for peace and goodwill? We glimpse in our hearts what our minds can hardly fathom, that it is God who is born as this human baby. The creator of everything and all of us, becomes one of us. And when we look at this new born child, when we gaze at his face, we respond first of all as any of us do when we see a baby. Our hearts melt, and we see with wonder and compassion, wishing only for this baby's care and protection. And as we gaze at this child, we know somewhere in our hearts that this who, astonishingly, is the creator of everyone, holds before us every child who has ever lived and will ever live.

That is the start of peace. To see in his face the face of everyone. And as we gaze, we are drawn more deeply into the truth of being human, and to see that there are no strangers, but we are all kin, his kin, his family. That is the start of goodwill, to see our kinship in everyone. And kinship is literally the foundation of kindness. We cannot change other people, but we can be changed ourselves. And Christmas is for that, for being changed over and over to look on one another with wonder and compassion, with kinship and kindness. To not only believe that peace and good will are possible, but to become people who make it so.



Notices

Happy Christmas and best wishes for the New Year from all at the Diocesan office

"I would like to take the opportunity to thank everyone for the enormous amount of work you do to support parish churches throughout the diocese, and as you serve our parishes, schools and communities. Your work is extremely valuable and I fully appreciate that this can be challenging, and I am truly grateful for all that you do. Looking forward into 2024, a key aim is to focus on continuing to improve the support and engagement offered by the diocesan office team and I look forward to working with you in 2024. On behalf of the team at the Diocesan Office, may I wish you a Happy Christmas and New Year".

Gary Peverley, Diocesan Secretary.

Diocesan Office Christmas Hours:

The office team will be closed from Friday 22 December at 5.00pm. The office will re-open on Tuesday 2 January 2024 at 9.00am.

In an emergency:

- For clergy property emergencies please refer to the housing handbook.
- For clergy emergencies considered to be possible insurance claims, please complete the claims form at: PIB-Insurance.com and email the details to property@cofesuffolk.org
- For safeguarding please refer any immediate concerns for the welfare of a child or adult at risk to the Police. For advice/support please contact Thirtyone:eight using the usual helpline number—0303 003 1111.
- For press matters, Prominent is contracted by the diocese to manage any potential negative reputational risks that may arise from media coverage. Please contact them on 01473 276127 or 07403 401387.

PLEASE NOTE: THE NEXT ISSUE OF ENEWS WILL BE SENT ON THURSDAY 4 JANUARY 2024.

Vacancies

[Finance and Operations Director](#) | Diocesan office | Closing Date: 29 December

[House for Duty Priest](#) | Lakenheath with Santon Downham and Elveden | Closing date: 5 January

[Female Chaperon & Choir Assistant](#) | St Mary-le-Tower | Closing date: 11 January

[Team Vicar](#) | The Forest Heath Team Benefice | Closing date: 2 February

[Chaplain and Leader of Youth Orientated Congregation](#) | Debenham High School | Closing date: 8 February

[Rector](#) | Walton and Trimley | Closing date: 11 February

[Director of Music](#) | Woodbridge

River Church, Ipswich are recruiting various posts - all details at:

riverchurchipswich.org/vacancies

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