

Dear Friends,



Christmas blessings! Yes, even in the midst of another tough government announcement, the heavenly announcement this week is '**God is with us!**' I consider the reality of a 'deconstructed Christmas' in our reflection this week and the hope we share in Jesus. Also, in this email is information about our Christmas services and a reminder of all that is going on in the life of our church.



Connecting people to Jesus Christ and each other.

Reflection: Deconstructed Christmas



You may have seen the crib set out in the church porch, or you may have one set up at home. I wonder who is in it? Most crib scenes will feature wise men and shepherds nestled in with Mary, Joseph and Jesus making for a stable-packed Christmas gathering. Yet perhaps this year, if your figures can be separated, we should dislodge them from their usual place to see Mary and Joseph alone with the new-born Jesus. It seems to me this deconstructed scene would be more fitting to this year's Christmas, as well as more biblically accurate.

The latest news of restrictions over the Christmas period brings a depressing end to a tough year. The reality is that Christmas is going to be hard for many people this year as the usual gatherings we associate with a 'Merry Christmas' are now forbidden. The effect will be hard to watch and experience with problematic family choices and people inevitably left out and alone. However, it does remind us that Christmas for many people each year is not a jolly affair. It can be a time of great loneliness and strained relationships. Christmas this year will perhaps be a great leveller and in our FOMO (Fear of Missing Out) culture we will find we all miss out on something. Though we may experience this Christmas as a testing time rather than a 'merry' time, in an odd way this can bring us closer to the real truth of Christmas. The truth is the birth of Jesus was a faith-testing time like no other for Mary and Joseph; the truth is they were alone without family or friends around them as our Saviour made his way into our chaotic world; the truth is that the first Christmas was so radically different from our modern experience that perhaps this is actually the first year we have ever glimpsed something of 'the first Christmas'. Then, the story of our Saviour's birth is newly illuminating, inciting new meaning into the announcement of a God-with-us and new authenticity for a God who embraced loneliness, poverty and struggle to make his great love known to us. If there are difficult moments this week, I pray your eyes and imagination can turn toward a deconstructed crib where Mary and Joseph hold onto Jesus, the hope of all humanity. Here, God's loving response to a broken world is captured by this party of three, where, 'the hopes and fears of all the year are met in thee tonight'.

Christmas Services

Services in church this week:

Christmas Eve – Crib Service at 4:00pm in Church. **Please book in advance, see below.**

Christmas Day – Carols and Holy Communion at **9:30am** in Church

Sunday 27th December – 10:30am Morning Worship in Church

A reminder that a face covering must be worn in church. Thank you for your patience in this.

There will be no Holy Communion and the church will not be open for private prayer on 24th December due to the Crib Service and needing to Covid clean.

Booking for the Crib Service: If you would like to come to the Crib service, we are asking that you would book in advance, this is so that we can make best use of the space we have whilst maintaining safe distances. Please email your name, telephone number and the number of adults and secondary aged children in your family group (to aid us with space allocation) to: christchurchpreston@gmail.com. Please come in good time, we will hold booked spaces until 3.55pm but may fill places if others are wanting a place after this time.

Online services– If you haven't had chance to watch them yet there are currently two Christmas services on our YouTube channel "ChristChurch Preston": a lively "Café Church" style carol service and a more traditional carol service.

Let there be light...and music!

Each evening this week until Christmas Day (Monday-Thursday) we will be lighting up the church and playing Christmas carols over the external speakers from 5 – 5.30pm as an announcement of the Good News of Christmas within our community. We hope it will be a sign of God's presence among us and bring some much-needed cheer.

Please note there will not be an email next week, we will resume them in January, but if you have any personal prayer requests please do continue to send them in to us.

We really hope you all have a blessed Christmas and know the close presence of Jesus our Saviour through this time,

Every blessing,

Liz

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