

## **Your rector's letter**

*Dear friends,*

### **Christmas 2018**

The famous Christmas markets in Germany are in fact only held during Advent and break up the day before Christmas Eve. When the markets pack up the focus shifts from the dreaded shopping to the joyous message of God living among us. I have discovered that for a lot of Wivenhoe residents – not for all though - this is how they experience Advent and Christmas. On Christmas Eve the good news of the nativity story outshines all commercial adverts in our letterbox, inbox, on mobile devices, television and radio.

Not everyone will find Christmas a joyous time. Whatever brings sadness into people's lives – poverty, loss, illness or loneliness – we as Christians have the calling to lift up a struggling person. Christmas cannot be a happy feast for us if our neighbour feels isolated. We could drop a card, grab the phone or ring the doorbell and invite them to the church this Christmas and if one has the means, offer them a lift.

St Mary's has chosen two Christmas charities this year: the boxes of blessing of the Mothers' Union ('Christian women' as they call themselves) in our link Parish in Namalamba in Uganda, and Beacon House in Colchester. Elsewhere in the magazine Rosemary Murchie and Austin and Elisabeth Baines have written a short article about these causes that are close to their heart. An envelope is enclosed here if you wish to donate.

Besides thinking of others, give yourself also the space you need to celebrate the birth of Jesus. When you are back home after the Midnight, Crib or Christmas Day service, find a moment to close the door behind you and kneel in front of the stable. This may be the moment that you allow Jesus to be born anew in you. You'll sense how close God is in his encounter with you.

### **Tidings**

This is my last letter for this year. And the last one in the current format of Tidings. From next month onwards your magazine will have a different appearance, with a focus on news, the diary, short articles and of course, the obligatory tide times. The magazine will be distributed for free to all current subscribers. And there will be 30 extra copies for those who like to collect one in church. Yes, there is no fee to pay. If you wish, you are welcome to make a donation towards the printing cost. But the basic principle of Tidings remains that it is a publication of outreach and the church is

prepared to donate time, skills and money for reaching out to you and the entire community by means of this periodical.

### **Thank you John**

In my column of the first new Tidings next month I will introduce the editorial team and thank the people who have been giving their time and talents to Tidings in the past years. Allow me to already mention here John Williams, editor of Tidings. John is the kind of person who doesn't want to be in the spotlights but contributes immensely to the life of our church. Being the editor of Tidings is only one of several engagements. We said thank you to John and Anne Williams at Harvest Lunch in October for their loyal support to St Mary's, respectively as Tidings editor and catering team coordinator. John has written an article in this issue for the last time as editor. A huge 'thank you', John.

I also like to thank Graeme Martin, who coordinated the advertising, Roy Murchie who managed the distribution and for his willingness to continue, and Marika Footring for proofreading my letters (if I made a correct count, this is the 105<sup>th</sup> letter that went through her hands). And a sincere 'thank you' to all deliverers, helpers, and those who contributed in one way or another to the Parish magazine. We hope that they will continue to support our publication.

On All Together Sunday in November we read this poem that remembers all those who give themselves unnoticed to the service of the church and community. By way of saying 'thank you' to the people I mentioned above, I copy it here.

Wishing you and your family a blessed Advent and an uplifting Christmas. *Erwin*

### **A last beatitude by Malcolm Guite**

And blessed are the ones we overlook;  
The faithful servers on the coffee rota,  
The ones who hold no candle, bell or book  
But keep the books and tally up the quota,  
The gentle souls who come to 'do the flowers',  
The quiet ones who organise the fete,  
Church sitters who give up their weekday hours,  
Doorkeepers who may open heaven's gate.  
God knows the depths that often go unspoken  
Amongst the shy, the quiet, and the kind,  
Or the slow healing of a heart long broken  
Placing each flower so for a year's mind.  
Invisible on earth, without a voice,  
In heaven their angels glory and rejoice.