

Dear friends

In this season of Advent we remember the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ was and is as a light in the darkness – and surely that is a message we need to hold on to as we look towards Christmas. Although, we cannot celebrate Christmas in the traditional ways this year, the restrictions do encourage us to think outside the box, to reflect again on the needs of our community and to explore new ways of bringing joy and light to our neighbours.

During the summer months we embraced new technology to connect with each other, by streaming services and organising zoom chat rooms. It was difficult at first but we can see a number of benefits in using these new opportunities to reach out and connect, especially with the younger generations. In particular we have seen that many in our community, who may not have come to church, have nevertheless welcomed the message of God's love into their homes. In other words our mission horizon has greatly expanded and we have a new frontline that reaches well beyond the threshold of the church doors.

This is so encouraging but we need to recognise that we have no way of knowing whom we are reaching or how we may offer support. We need to find additional ways of helping people to connect in more open and participatory ways. For community is more than being connected, it is sharing a common ideal and being united in expressing what is important to us. We need to find ways of being involved as a community, which doesn't compromise on keeping everybody safe.

During this Advent season a series of nativity trails and scenes are being organised around our parishes, as a way of engaging our communities in the good news of Christmas. In Bosley, an elf hunt has been organised by Sylvia running from 12th – 13th

December. In Sutton, from 14th December, the community is being encouraged to decorate stones with images from the Christmas Story and place them on the Pleasance to form a storyboard of the nativity. In addition, from 18th – 24th December, there will be a Sheep Trail in and around Sutton, Langley and Lyme Green. Through these events we hope members of our community will feel connected and able to share together in the joy of Christmas. This will be a difficult season for many in our benefice, but it is our prayer that together we will together shine like stars in the darkness with the love of Christ.

May God bless you and keep you safe always.

John & Steph

