

## Letter from the Vicar - December 2009

### View from the Vicarage

I must begin this month by saying a big 'Thank you' to everyone for their prayers and good wishes, their support and their understanding in this first year of our time here in the Five Alive Mission Community. There have been some amazing things happen in these last twelve months and I go in to my second Christmas here with a huge sense of gratitude for all that God has done, and for all that each of you have and are doing for our Churches in these villages. There is plenty to celebrate in the life of our communities.

It's nice to have something to celebrate, in a world that so often seems dark and miserable. Which brings me on to what I want to say for this month. In case you've not noticed — Christmas is nearly here — and I couldn't get away without a few thoughts based on the festive season. Christmas is a celebration, yes we all know it's commercialised and overdone, and the shops can't wait to get us to part with our cash — but at the same time it's still a celebration of love of hope and of joy.

The Christian Faith is honest about how hard the world can be, about the presence of sin and evil in the world — about the darker side of human nature that is apparent so visibly in our news reports and in some of our experiences. At the same time, though, we believe that God's love is stronger than any evil or sin, that, as it says in perhaps the most well known verse in the Bible "God so loved the world he sent his only begotten Son — that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but live forever:' (St John's Gospel Chapter 3 verse 16).

This is our celebration at Christmas, that God's love is stronger than any other force. Christians believe that God's love is not a theory, not something reserved for philosophers or theologians, it's real and can make a difference to us every day — and the way it became real was that God himself became human and lived as one of us, dying and rising to new life in order to take away the power that sin and evil have over us. Christmas is not the end of the story it's just the beginning, and to hear a little more about this amazing story you can come to one of our many Church events, or to carols in the pub, or to the various Christmas celebrations and hear it, or talk to Christians in your village about what this means.

The story of Jesus Christ is a great story, one of hope and peace and love and joy. It's one that says again and again that God's love is always stronger than anything else in the world; starting with the accounts of Jesus' birth that we celebrate at Christmas time and leading through the life of Jesus and his death on the cross, followed by the life that comes from death as he was resurrected by the power of God. As the Gospel of St John Chapter 1 verse 5 says "The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness could not cover it." To find out more about this light — ask.

God bless you, and merry Christmas to you all, and of course a happy new year.

**Alastair**