



A Christmas we didn't expect

We have just heard the news that we are to enter into tier 3 lockdown for the run up to Christmas. Many people now tell me they feel fed up. One lady said she usually gets invited to so many Christmas dinners/lunches/get-togethers that by Christmas day she starts to think "Oh no, not another one!" I felt a bit like that about carol services last year, particularly as the number of these went into double figures, but right now I would love to join you for mince pies and mulled wine or to sing *Away in a Manger*. A politician, on the radio, said "it's just one Christmas" but what if it is our last with a loved one? Every Christmas is special, even the ones filled with tears and sadness and nobody wants to spend Christmas alone or without a particular special someone. This is a Christmas we really did not expect.

It is important to grieve our losses and to take those feelings to God. We would take grief and sadness to anyone else that we have a close relationship with, so why not to God, our maker, our redeemer, our sustainer; but once we have taken it to God, let us be prepared to let God lead us through the darkness that we really did not expect.

This time last year, I had not heard of Zoom and now I am conducting services, PCC meetings, talking to youth group 'Under Construction', attending seminars and more via this platform. Human beings have an amazing ability to adapt. This is a gift that should be celebrated as much as our traditions and through these celebrations there may be a possibility of new growth, new ways, new traditions. This year our services will be a little different as we have to factor in cleaning and quarantine times for the church.

We will not be able to hold a Christingle service for the number of people we usually get into St Michael's church. **So, we have decided to give out packs to each of the children of Mottram and Broadbottom schools for them to create their own Christingles. Instructions for these are on the next page of this magazine.**

We are also creating a Living Advent Calendar. 24 homes and businesses have agreed to create an advent window for people to go out and look at. Each day a new window will be created somewhere in the parish and these windows will be available to see until Christmas. A list of the addresses and themes of the windows that you can go to see are on page 3 of this magazine. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all those people who have agreed to create a window – a decoration they really didn't expect.

Which leads me to ask if tradition; following what we have always done, is really what Christmas is all about? A young girl was visited by an angel, who told her that she would have a baby – she was expecting to get married and live a normal married life. Her husband-to-be was expecting to marry a virgin and was then 'told' in a dream to stand by her and raise someone else's child. Shepherds in fields were expecting nothing more exciting than chasing off a few wild dogs when they were confronted by, not just one angel but a host of them. The wise men were expecting the birth of an earthly king, in fine splendour. Then a tiny baby arrived and he changed, shook up, uprooted people's lives and he still does today. Maybe this Christmas, we let him change, shake up and uproot ours. However you choose to celebrate this unexpected Christmas, I pray that Jesus brings you joy and peace this year.

God bless,
Cait

Making your Christingle

You will need an orange.

This represents the world.

Take a piece of red sticky tape and fasten it around the middle of the orange. This is to symbolise the blood of Jesus, which he shed for all the world.

Ask an adult to cut a small cross in the top of each orange (place it on a tray to catch the juice) and lay a square of silver foil (75mm/3in square) over the cross.

Place the candle on top and wedge it firmly into the orange. The foil will help prevent hot wax running onto your hand and also help to reflect the light. This light is to remind us that Jesus is the light of the world.

Load four cocktail sticks with sweets and insert them into the orange around the base of the candle. The four cocktail sticks represent the four points of the compass or the four seasons of the year. The sweets represent God's gifts to us.

Store the Christingles upright on a tray in a cool place. It may be necessary to take off a thin slice to form a flat base.

Light your candle and place it where people can see it, but **make sure it is not near any curtains or furnishings that may catch light.**

There you go!

You may like to share in this prayer:

Loving God, we pray for your children in the world who are sad and lonely.

We ask that this light may shine for all in our homes and community,

To let each person, who sees this light know that they are loved by you

And are never alone. Amen

You can find out about the Children's Society and how to donate at www.childrenssociety.org.uk





The Living Advent Calendar Windows

Date:	Address:	Theme:
1 st	The vicarage, 30a Broadbottom Road	Mary and the Angel
2 nd	7 Stalybridge Road	The Magnificat
3 rd	Mottram School	Peace on Earth
4 th	Broadbottom School	Winter Scene
5 th Saturday	21 Broadbottom Road	The Census
6 th Sunday	11 Lodge Court	St Nicholas
7 th	W. Brindley's Funeral Directors, 46 Market Street	Christmas wreath
8 th	The Well Pharmacy, Mottram	Partridge in a pear tree
9 th	14 Broadbottom Road	Candles
10 th	3 Church View	Joy to the world
11 th	1 Home Farm Avenue	Dove of Peace
12 th Saturday	6 Dale View (behind 19 & 21 Church Brow)	Donkey
13 th Sunday	55 Market Street	A lamb
14 th	6 Waterfoot Cottages	Christingle
15 th	7 Waterfoot Cottages,	Christmas tree
16 th	Broadbottom Preschool, Community Centre, Market Street	Post box
17 th	7 Church Brow	Shepherds and sheep
18 th	127 Broadbottom Road	Bethlehem
19 th Saturday	72 Market Street	Angels
20 th Sunday	24 Bucklow Close	Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh
21 st	1 Summerbottom, Broadbottom	Wise men
22 nd	15 Lodge Court	The star
23 rd	8 West End, Broadbottom	Carol singing
24 th	9 Broadbottom Road	The stable