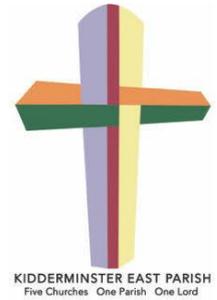


Dear All,

Believe it or not, we have reached the end of 2020. And what a year it has been! It began pretty much like all other years with the term *Coronavirus* only meaning anything of significance in a far distant part of the world. We all made a mental note to add the situation in Wuhan, China to our Parish Prayer meetings and prayers of intercession!



And then fairly quickly things changed, and it looks likely that the change will continue for a significant period of time in 2021. We're not sure that we will be singing that line in the old Christmas favourite "Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas" that goes "Next year all our troubles will be out of sight," with any great sense of belief this Christmas because we think that, in our heart of hearts, we realise that we will have many hard situations and troubles to face in 2021.

Even in the best of times, we live in a world that is dominated by change, however this year the changes have been particularly difficult and in many ways frightening. Therefore, it is especially important this Christmas and New Year that we prayerfully reflect on what *hasn't* changed for us:

God's incredible love for us; that hasn't changed.

God sending His Son to be born and to die for us; that hasn't changed.

Our need for God's love and forgiveness; that hasn't changed.

Our future is still in His hands; that hasn't changed.

His love is deeper and wider than our deepest and widest fears; that hasn't changed.

We all need the love, prayers and support of one another; that hasn't changed.

At the time of writing the Government has just announced further restrictions on what we can and can't do over Christmas and many people will talk of Christmas being "over" at the stroke of midnight on December 25th. Can we encourage you to buck the trend and keep on celebrating Christmas all the way through the season until Epiphany (Twelfth Night)? Perhaps that will be by joining us in the readings for Morning Prayer (see the newsletter) and their associated videos (on the Parish YouTube channel), or simply by taking time each day to thank God for Jesus and those things that haven't changed.

Finally, can we as a clergy team thank you all for being the people and the Parish you have been throughout a very changeable 2020. Thank you to those who took part in and arranged our Zoom services, to our Preachers, our Readers, our Churchwardens, our DCCs and PCC, our Homegroup leaders, our Prayer teams, our Maintenance Teams, our Office Staff and those others who have helped to keep the Parish moving along on a really difficult road. Thank you to those people who have done all sorts of things that perhaps no one else knows about but which have been necessary. Thank you for your patience, understanding, support and above all your prayers.

Next year all our troubles won't be out of sight however let's remember that neither will any of us, nor our troubles, be out of sight to God.

With our prayers for a blessed Christmas and a peaceful New Year.

Robert and David