



From: The Chaplain

Christmas 2016

It seems only comparatively recently that I was writing last year's Christmas Message. This year has flown by; some would say that's what comes with advancing years. Others would say it's all to do with the pace of life these days.

Whatever the reason, this year does seem to have gone quickly. In part this could be because of the changes that have taken place; momentous changes affecting not just our own country. Our country and Europe face an unknown future with unpredictable consequences following the Referendum in June, as indeed do the United States of America following the election of Mr Trump. There are elections across Europe next year and it would be unwise to predict their outcome. There are other 'unknowns'; some of which we know and some we don't know. All that can be said is that the world seems somewhat more fragile and vulnerable. Next year will call for steady hands on the tiller. For, when all is said and done, it is the wellbeing of people which is at stake; their peace and freedom, their prosperity and happiness.

What has been most alarming during the past year and which threatens the well-being of people is the rise of populism, the politics of anger, of hostility and of division along with the blatant dishonesty of those seeking power in elections which are meant above all to be free and fair. It's as though the values of honesty, decency, courtesy and respect no longer matter. People aggressively pursue what they regard as their rights.

And so it will be that in a few weeks' time many will celebrate God's coming among his people, to be with them, to share the joy and happiness, the pain and sorrow which mark life's journey. To this, one could reasonably add, to share the uncertainty which is also part of life's journey and which at the present time would seem to be all around us.

The events of the first Christmas had about them much uncertainty. For Mary and Joseph, who set out to be enrolled in the city of David which is called Bethlehem, when Mary was in the latter stages of her pregnancy, and who ended up in a stable which served as a 'Delivery Suite' because there was no room for them at the Inn.

Herod who ruled at the time was by no means a benevolent dictator and it was because of him that the Holy Family had to flee as refugees to Egypt to escape his tyrannical response to the Holy Birth. More uncertainty.

But all this uncertainty, the fear and foreboding, is set in sharp relief by the message of Christmas, of God becoming one with us, of the message of the angels, of the visit of the Shepherds and of the Wise Men. A message of peace and joy; a time for pondering the great truths; of light out of darkness, of hope out of despair, of promise and fulfilment.

*Continued over*

I wish all members of our Association a Very Happy Christmas and every blessing and happiness in the New Year



Greetings and blessing to you all,

Richard