

Dear Friends

You may remember that last year the large star that adorns the church tower during the Christmas season was looking very sad. For a start it no longer shone brightly over the High Street, instead it had taken on a far more subdued and possibly rather eerie pinkish glow. While its shape had also changed, with a couple of areas that were looking decidedly saggy.

Now it has to be said that this star has served our church and community very well since being made by Peter Shersby some 20 years ago, so it certainly doesn't owe us anything. However, it was with sadness that, in view of its dilapidated state, the decision was made to replace it with a nice new, bright, star shaped star. Thus it was that earlier this year we set about trying to source something suitable. We tried, and we tried but without much luck, there seemed to be nothing out there. Meanwhile the old star had been removed from the tower and was now sitting at the back of the church waiting to be taken to the tip. It must have sat there for several months before anybody bothered to look at it properly. But then it occurred to us, the main wooden structure was perfectly sound, it was only the rope light that was fixed to it that had seen better days. All that was needed was to give the wooden frame a nice coat of paint to protect it, buy a new rope light and fix it to it properly.

Well this all got me thinking.....a lot. A good and sturdy framework is extremely important in so many aspects of life, for example the infrastructure (water, electricity, roads, rail etc) that supports our communities each and every day, the laws and civil regulations that help to protect the way of life that we all enjoy. Whether we like them or not, local and parish plans bring structure and planning for the future, while no one would ever dream of building a house without first drawing up a blueprint or plan for exactly how it will eventually look. I believe that such a blueprint is also important for the way in which we seek to live our lives. However I don't think it necessary to try and draw these up from scratch – because, just as with our star, there is one that already exists, and we are all invited to use it and base our lives upon it.

I'm sure it won't come as any surprise to learn that I believe this "blueprint" may be found in the person whose birth we celebrate at this time of year. It's a blueprint that is based on love, love not just for a few people but for all people. One that shows distinct characteristics of compassion, generosity and courage. Throughout his life Jesus Christ was not only constantly sensitive to the needs of others but always responsive to them, despite any personal cost to himself. His was a life that was also based on truth, one that spoke out against persecution, injustice and the misuse of power and of course, his was a life that he was willing to lay down for the sake of others and that includes you and me.

I don't know about you, but that makes me feel very humble and the more I look at his life the more I find I want to emulate it. I know it's not always easy, just like working the rope light around the framework of our star probably won't be particularly easy, but I'm certain that it is possible and it is worth the effort.

As you know our star is a reminder of the one that hovered over the Christ child 2000 years ago, proclaiming Jesus' birth and guiding the Magi to his side. In the same way, we hope that our newly refurbished star will also shine out as a beacon of his presence in our own village and that in so

doing, it will draw us all together and encourage us to come along and relive the Christmas story once again.

Wishing you all a very Blessed and Happy Christmas

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Tina".