

CLERGY LETTER

Dear Friends

Graham & I have just returned from a short break in Dorset. With warm sunny weather (yes even in November), lovely rolling countryside dotted with thatched cottages and pretty villages, the beautiful Jurassic Coast, sandy beaches, crystal clear waters and many places of interest to go to, this is a part of the world that we never tire of visiting.

However, I have to admit that this time there were a couple of hours when we started to wonder if it was really going to be worth it. The problem was the A31 – a series of road works and accidents meant that it took us considerably longer to reach our destination than we had anticipated. Indeed, to be honest, had it not been for the fact that we were over half way there and had already paid for our accommodation we may even have considered turning round and giving up. I'm really glad we didn't as we had a lovely time.

December is the month when the Christian Church thinks about journeys taken by various individuals just over 2000 years ago. We think about the journey that Joseph and Mary made from Nazareth to Bethlehem 80 miles away. A journey that would almost certainly have been made on foot (there



is no mention of a donkey in the Bible) and would have taken at least 4 days – probably several more given the advanced stage of Mary's pregnancy. It was also a journey with a fair amount of uncertainty waiting for them when they reached their destination – but it was a journey that

they both had the courage to make.

Of course they weren't the only people travelling to Bethlehem at the time. There were also the wise men – it is likely that they had set out as much as two years before (why else would Herod have ordered the murder of all baby boys aged two years and younger?). They had no idea where they were going, how long it would take them to get there, what sort of terrain they were going to have to negotiate or what they were going to find when they reached their destination. They simply saw the star, recognised it's importance, got together the provisions they thought they were most likely to need and set off on a journey they were determined to make.

Then we have the Shepherds, for them the geographical distance they travelled was a very short one, they were pitched just outside the city. But when you bear in mind that at the time Shepherds were considered the lowest of the low and

almost outcasts from society, the fact that they were the first to be chosen by God to visit the baby meant that this was an incredible journey that they would have been overjoyed to make.

Then finally, we think of Jesus himself – the one who made the longest and most exacting journey of all. A journey from immortality to mortality, from power and authority to the vulnerability and helplessness of a new born baby, from the security of his place in heaven to the insecurity of life as a humble and persecuted Jewish man from Nazareth. Yet, this was a journey that he lovingly made.

All different journeys, made by different people from different strata's of society and for different reasons, each one requiring different characteristics and motivations. But all journeys to the same destination - a humble animal shelter where God

chose to come to earth in human form for the benefit of all mankind. All journeys taken by individuals who undoubtedly thought that their travels had been well and truly worth it.

We will be having lots of different services to celebrate all of this during the run up to Christmas and we would love it if you decided to make the journey to join us. We don't mind who you are or what might be motivating you, we don't mind if your journey is a short one or a longer one, physically, emotionally or spiritually and we certainly won't try and force you to repeat the journey if you don't want to. But we hope and pray that whatever your reason for coming along, you will find the whole experience uplifting and worthwhile.

With love and Blessing to you all for a very Happy Christmas



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