

Pastoral Letter

Dear Friends,

Another Advent Season is here! As we prepare to celebrate Jesus' first advent, whilst looking forward to his second, let us do so with joy and hope, sharing whole heartedly in the good news of the Season. Indeed, good news is what the angels brought on the first advent – this is a sentiment echoed in the words of the hymn: *Hark! the herald-angels sing 'Glory to the new-born King'*, written for Christmas, by Charles Wesley and included in his brother, John Wesley's, collection of 'Hymns and Sacred Poems', 1739. The words of this amazing hymn remind us that: *Jesus the incarnate deity is our Emmanuel – God with us.*

Friends, we are living in a time of world changing events, and no one remains unaffected, so, *Emmanuel, God with us*, is our assurance. In a world of turbulence and brokenness, where things shift and change at an alarming rate, and where Peace and Goodwill are often in short supply, the important message that the herald of angels brought then continues to be relevant now: *Hail the heaven born Prince of Peace! Hail the Sun of Righteousness! Light and life to all He brings, risen with healing in His wings – Jesus Christ is God's good news, not bad news, to the world. His coming speaks of the triumph of God's love over evil. Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace, is the one born as one of us, God in the midst of us, the light in our darkness. He is our certainty in times of uncertainty – the one who remains faithful even in crisis times.*

As Christians, this season comes as an encouragement for confident trust in the Christ who is our Emmanuel – the God who is still with us, and who promises a future that is going to be better than the present. In the future a new heaven and a new earth will come, and everlasting peace and justice will reign. This is reason enough to be joyful and celebrate. May this season be a genuine celebration of the Christ who brings wholeness and newness of life, not just for Christmas but for eternity.

May the Prince of Peace be with you this Christmas and in the New Year.

Every blessing,

Irene John