Bulletin for Sunday 20th December 2020

Season's Greetings! Many of you have sent me cards, and I want to say a huge thank you, and wish you all a very, very Happy Christmas! I'm aiming to get one more Bulletin out before the 25th, with a Christmas order of service which you could use on either Christmas Day or on Sunday 27th. More details of Christmas services at the end of this Bulletin.

Hymn: Joy to the world, the Lord is come! (R&S 135)

Prayer: You chose an angel to convey the message,

but yourself became fully one of us - dependent on the love and care of your mother; so we light a candle to prepare for your birth....

We ask your blessing on everything we do, and everything we bring to you or give in your service, today and every day. In Jesus 'name. Amen

followed by The Lord's Prayer

Readings: Luke chapter 1 verses 26-38

<u>Reflection</u>: Can you remember being a teenager, and how it felt? I know it was a long time ago for most of us, but I find memories of that time in my life come back surprisingly clearly. Mary was just an ordinary teenage girl, engaged to be married, with a very simple and predictable life apparently ahead of her.

But God knew her to be an extraordinary young woman: brave enough to be open in a strange and difficult situation; caring enough to carry, protect and nurture this unplanned baby; and strong enough to support and encourage him throughout his life.

Joseph's encounter with an angel, and agreement to accept this unborn child, occurred considerably later - by then Mary was heavily pregnant. Joseph was committed to Mary and to the family as a whole, but Mary's commitment was to this precious baby. From that encounter with Gabriel, to the stable in Bethlehem, and onwards through his childhood and later his itinerant ministry, she nurtured and supported him... right through to the cross - and beyond. The New Testament tradition suggests that she played an important part in the little community which became the early church.

A really extraordinary woman, called and used by God. We give thanks for her, for her tenacity, her hope, and her love. Amen

Hymn: The Angel Gabriel from heaven came (R&S 139)

Prayer: God of compassion and understanding

we pray for those who find Christmas exciting...

and those who find it lonely and difficult; we pray for those who will spend Christmas

unwell, in hospital, or missing someone they love.

May each become aware of your presence:

Emmanuel, God with us, who chose to be born like us... We hold before you our communities; and all those we love....

In Jesus 'name we ask all our prayers, Amen

Hymn: Tell out, my soul, the greatness of the Lord! (R&S 740)

<u>Blessing</u>: May we be open to the wonder of God's presence;

and may the blessing of God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit,

be with us and with all those we love

this week and always. Amen

There will be worship at Petworth and Billingshurst this Sunday (20th), and Christmas worship in all three of our churches on Christmas morning, at the earlier time of 10.00am. Please let your Church Secretary (Brenda, Gerald or Maureen) know if you are coming.

There will not, however, be worship in any of our buildings on Sunday 27th.

Anyone coming to services in church please remember a mask and very warm clothing!

We sadly can't sing carols when we meet in our buildings, but we certainly can on Zoom. There will be a WSAM Carol Service for all members and friends of our churches at 6pm this Sunday (20th December) with traditional carols and the story of the nativity. All welcome - the more the merrier! Usual Sunday at Six login or details from me.

On Wednesday 23rd December at 6pm, again on Zoom, Billingshurst have a Carol Service of their own, hopefully including some of the Junior Church.

After Church Coffee Zooms are still taking place at 11.30 on Sunday morning, and the Advent Discussion Group will have their final session on Zoom at 7.30pm this Monday.

Anne Lewitt