



Dear Friends,

What a year it has been!

It is some-times hard to recall what our worship space looked like back in January; or to put into words the ways in which our worship feels different.

We are gradually working through a small number of technical hiccups, and in this time of Advent it feels as though the congregation has appreciated being able literally to “look at things from a different angle” - with the focus of our worship being different each week.

Some of you reading this newsletter may not have been inside the renewed space yet. If you are able, I think that we can encourage you to take a look. You will not be disappointed! The first response of most of those who step inside the space is simply, “Wow!”

We should offer a huge “Thank you” to the Project Regenerate! team for all their work over the last few years, and the last year in particular.

Thanks are also due to our team of stewards, who continue to put in a lot of work behind the scenes not least to try to ensure that the practical details behind our worship are addressed.

You may wonder why we are moving the focus of our worship each week in Advent. It is because in these weeks we are looking at the way in which each of the four

gospel writers tells the story of the birth of Jesus. Usually when we tell that story, we weave together short passages taken from Matthew’s and Luke’s gospels, and present them as a single narrative. In my preparation this year I have been hugely helped by reading Marcus Borg and John Dominic Crossan’s book, ‘The First Christmas.’ In it, they encourage us not to look at what the different versions of the story, in Matthew and Luke, tell us in their own right. We know that John’s introduction to his gospel (“In the beginning was the word ...”) gives us yet another — quite different — reflection on the significance of Christ.

And after the opening verse of his gospel, Mark appears to jump immediately to telling us of the ministry of John the Baptist, which introduces the public ministry of Jesus.

So each gospel writer tries to explain the meaning of the life of Jesus in different ways. Borg and Crossan suggest that an important part of our reflection during Advent reflection is to try to discover “the meaning of Christmas past for Christmas present and Christmas future. What does it mean for *us now* to take seriously what these stories meant for *them then*?”

Crossan and Borg point out all the different ways in which the gospel writers


CHRISTMAS
Jesus is born!

News from the Church Family

Weddings & Anniversaries:

Janet & Malcolm Pearson
who celebrated their
Golden Wedding
Anniversary on 24th June.

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Lauren Hawkeswood and
David Sarath married on
16th September.

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We remember and give thanks for the life of:

Ronald Parkinson
Mike Williamson
and
Peggy Johnson

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Any family news for future newsletters to be passed to Linda Tudor in the office.



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present Jesus as one who offers a completely different kind of authority from the rulers which the people of their day knew only too well: Herod and Caesar Augustus. In particular, they point out that Augustus was celebrated throughout the Roman empire as a bringer of peace. The peace of Augustus was brought about through brutal victories over those who opposed him — whether opponents in the Roman civil war, or conquered nations across the empire.

In Jesus a different kind of peace was being offered: peace through justice — good news for the poor — established by self-giving love.

So the nativity stories should not be regarded as compilations of newspaper reports from the 'Bethlehem Mail'. They are statements of faith, encouraging us to put our trust in God's peace through Christ.

We may look at the world around us with dismay. We may look especially at 'world leaders' and wonder what kind of leadership they are displaying. Standing up for the kind of kingdom proclaimed by Jesus is likely to be regarded as either naïve or dangerous. But it was always so!

May the joy and peace of the angels' song be with you this Christmas.

