

Return/Not overcome

Isaiah 52:7-10; John 1:1-14

There has been a lot of inconsequential chatter in the lower reaches of journalism about, 'Christmas is cancelled' this year. I would begin by saying, "It's not, we're here." I would continue by saying, "It's not, Jesus is here!" which is much more important.

Christmas is not cancelled. What I have seen and heard around our community in this hardest of years is quite the opposite. People ringing bells on doorsteps at 6pm on Christmas Eve; people making an extra effort to telephone or email or face-time or Zoom loved ones across the country and around the world; people making extra donations to food banks and clothing stores; people putting up extra lights. Christmas is not cancelled.

One of the loveliest was an idea from South Morningside Primary School where I am one of the chaplains. One of the teachers thought it would be good for the children to focus their thoughts on those who might be on their own, or feeling lonely and isolated this Christmas. The classes made up little boxes of kindness and asked the Church to distribute them. The responses have been lovely, from people who appreciated the thought and the fact that they were not forgotten. In the agony of this year, there is also glory, but Christmas is not cancelled.

As Christians, Christmas is where we come from. It is where we find our identity as follower of Jesus. It's where we remember that God has fundamentally chosen to be amongst us as a vulnerable baby. It's one of the most powerful symbols of what our Christianity is about. In this country, when we are so often so tongue-tied about expressing our love, here, at the heart of our Christmas faith, is a baby. Unable to express its love, in need of our love, reaching out to us. Love came down at Christmas indeed, the moment when, all over again, God says to the people of the world, "I'd like to come and spend forever with you."

Though it's not the way we would wanted to have done, yet with the prophet Isaiah we can listen for the feet of him who brings good tidings, and wait for the return of the Lord. Though the

darkness might still feel heavy and thick all around, yet we can say with John, 'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.'

The Lord will return, and we will not be overcome! Christmas is not cancelled.

I am struck by the poignancy and power of this Christmas, and all the 'what if' questions so many of us have wrestled with all year. Yet still, on this day, and at this time, the Christ Child has come to be with us. This is the good news. On Christmas Day, the Christ Child is with us. This is the truth of our faith. Christmas is not cancelled. It is here, it is now, it is us, it is Him!

In the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit

Amen