

THIS MONTH'S  
COVER



THE  
PRINCE  
OF  
PEACE

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## Joy, Sadness & Hope

How will you be spending Christmas?

I always look forward to the singing of favourite Carols. There are the plans, some in secret in order to surprise, being made to help Christmas be an enjoyable time for others. There are also the many preparations, like getting out those decorations again, making the place feel homely and welcoming and, as I'm the one who enjoys doing some of the cooking in our family, spending a creative time in the kitchen long before the day arrives.

I am also, though, very conscious that, for many, Christmas will bring with it memories of sadness and emptiness. It's never the same as when you once were able to share it with those you still love, yet now have no way of doing so since they passed away. It's never the same if there are now no children around to feel all the fun and delight. Nor is it the same if some of the family have emigrated, or are too unwell to travel to meet as in days gone by. Christmas for some can be very lonely and the home can seem very empty.

### Giving – Not Getting

Have you seen that advert on television – the one with the little boy longing for the days to pass until Christmas morning? On the day itself he jumps out of bed, passes the wrapped gifts laid out for him to open, instead taking his own gift to his Mum and Dad. The pleasure of Christmas is in the giving not in the getting.

### Doing Our Little Bit

How could we give a little more hope and joy to others at this time? It's the season of peace and goodwill, so perhaps we can consider ways of sharing it, bringing something special to someone in pain or sorrow. It might be among your family, or with some close friends or neighbours – some way of spreading the true spirit of Christmas. It might be considering our support for many of the world's poorest. Who knows, if we are all trying to do the same, it may make a difference far greater than we could ever imagine.

### And So To A New Year

Once Christmas has passed and all has gone back to what passes for 'normal', some put away the good intentions with the decorations. Wouldn't it be good to continue – to get on with our neighbours, to spread a little more friendliness, to offer help wherever it is needed, to give a little more than we get.

Even churches can do this. Our parish has been in discussions with our neighbours in north Tadley, at St Mary's in Newchurch Road. Proposals are being put forward to bring us together in a united benefice serving the whole of Tadley, with Silchester included as well. If approved by the various church councils, this would be phased in over the next year or two. It will involve us in getting to understand our neighbours more and seeking to serve the community with greater co-operation.

So enjoy Christmas, give before you get  
and may the joy and hope of this season remain with you.

*Peter*