

Sermon, 25 December 2020 - The Revd Canon Dr Malcolm Grundy

This is it! Christmas Day has arrived. All the Advent preparations are behind us. In the practicality of life all the cards have been sent, all the presents bought, wrapped and delivered. Now we receive our presents also.

Today especially we give thanks that in the birth of Jesus a new light came into the world. It is the greatest ever Christmas present.

In our life of faith and thinking about the past year there are many presents we can give thanks for.

While we cannot worship in large numbers, we have learned to use the great present of Zoom. In this way our community has held together, and we have been able to send messages and remain a real community.

Within our Zoom services, as well as being thankful for the present of Ben's skills, we have had some creative and very moving sets of intercessions.

In this last year we have improved all our communications as a congregation. The Friday mailing, with its devotional thoughts, creative commentaries and news bulletins has been a real innovation.

We will begin a new year with a new vicar and we look forward to opening the many presents which Liz will give us.

I have loved listening to other people preach and the present of their thoughtful and often thought-provoking sermons has enriched my and all our thinking.

We have lost dear friends from our congregation and we have been reminded of the presents of many different kinds that they have given to us.

For all these gifts, and many more, we give thanks on this Christmas Day.

Most of all we give thanks for the increasing knowledge of Our Lord which we have gained by receiving and sharing all these gifts.

Christmas is a time for remembering and for giving thanks for all the things which have shaped the faith we have which has grown from its beginnings in the story of the birth of this infant in a Bethlehem stable.

Who have we become in this Corona Virus-filled year? My hope is that the presents we have received will have taken us out of our old selves and moved us on in ways we would not otherwise expected.

Just recently, I watched the funeral of one dear friend and colleague on Zoom. He could have taken many big jobs in his life but chose to stay in demanding parishes and to be a support to others. The preacher spoke of him as a person who was 'Grace personified'.

I hope that the Christmas present we would want to give back to Our Lord is that we have tried to become something of the same.