

Bishop Martyn's Christmas Message 2021

Oliver Cromwell famously tried to abolish Christmas. Lenin similarly told his secret police that they were to shoot anyone who didn't turn up for work as normal on Christmas day. More recently in our own times we've had various local authorities trying to replace the word "Christmas" with "Winterville" or "Winter Light Festival". All these attempts to abolish Christmas have failed, there's something deep within us that wants to be able to celebrate particularly at this time of year, and yet now as we face yet another COVID Christmas it may feel to us as if all these historic attempts to abolish Christmas have failed, but have now reached their climax as COVID tries to put paid to our celebrations. But my simple invitation to you this Christmas is to focus less on what we can't do, and more on what it really means to celebrate the story that lies behind Christmas. Somehow pairing it back to that simple story and hearing again the angels singing, the shepherds partying, the wise men bringing gifts, all these simple expressions of the story which lie behind our traditions. But going back to that story will I hope, help us to focus on the real message of Christmas, which is that God has come among us. Emmanuel, "God with us", the Word made flesh come to live among us, and that promise later on in the Bible that nothing can separate us from the love of God in Jesus Christ. Whatever your circumstances this year, whatever you can or can't do I hope you will go back to that simple story and know God with you, may you be able to know God's joy, and God's peace this Christmas time.