

Saturday 19th December



In the sixth month of Elizabeth's pregnancy, God sent the angel Gabriel to Nazareth, a town in Galilee, to a virgin pledged to be married to a man named Joseph, a descendant of David. The virgin's name was Mary.

The angel went to her and said,
"Greetings, you who are highly favoured!
The Lord is with you."

Mary was greatly troubled at his words, and wondered what kind of greeting this might be. But the angel said,

"Do not be afraid, Mary;
you have found favour with God.
You will conceive and give birth to a son,
and you are to call him Jesus.
He will be great and will be called
the Son of the Most High.

The Lord God will give him the throne of his father
David, and he will reign over Jacob's descendants
forever;
his kingdom will never end."

[Luke 1: 26–33]

For many, God's word has seemed far away from us over the last year. Yet for many others, they have been visited by angels: hospital and care home staff have worked flat out to care and heal; local people have helped their neighbours with food parcels or little acts that show that they are thought of; key workers across the community have worked to keep life going in various different ways; mental health teams and local people have been working to support the lonely and the depressed...

These angels are not like the one who visited Mary, yet they too can give us a glimpse of God – even if the 'angels' themselves don't recognise it. God can speak to us through the acts of others: you are not alone, don't be afraid. The angel came with important news for Mary – news that is for us too. Do not be afraid. The world seems dark and frightening, especially now, but don't be afraid. The angel told Mary that she would be the mother of God, that God was coming into the world. That is for us too; God is with us.

We don't know what Christmas will be like this year, but it will be different, just as Mary didn't know what her life would be like, only that it was going to be very different. May we hear the words of the angel: don't be afraid. May we remember as we approach this Christmastime: God is with us.

*God of angels and humans
We thank you for speaking to us in various ways
Help us to recognise your voice
We thank you that you are here with us
Help us to not be afraid
We thank you for your love
Help us to share that love with others
Amen*