



Read the Archbishop of Canterbury's Christmas letter to church leaders around the world.



Archbishop Justin Welby in the Democratic Republic of Congo, October 2019. (Picture: Ray Wells/The Sunday Times)

Around the world the Church proclaims with joy the coming of the Lord Jesus: looking back to his incarnation and forward to his second coming in glory. Around the world Christians rejoice that Jesus Christ, Emmanuel, is God with us. Through him we have life, and have it abundantly.

Year by year we dwell on the mystery of the Word made flesh, a mystery that is both encapsulated in a moment in time and of eternal significance, a mystery that reveals God. In Jesus Christ we see and experience the love of God to us through the presence of God with us. In Jesus Christ God comes among us in a form that we can recognise and with which we can engage.

As St Basil the Great preached in a homily on the Nativity:

God on earth, God among us. No longer the God who gives his law amid flashes of lightening, to the sound of the trumpet on the smoking mountain, within the darkness of a terrifying storm, but the God who speaks gently and with kindness in a human body to his kindred: God in the flesh.

God who takes flesh in Jesus Christ saves humanity by his self-emptying and condescension to become one with us. Jesus comes, as he says in St John's Gospel, that his people might have light - the light of life.

We live in a world, however, where life is fragile and where countless people's lives are threatened by war, disease, climate change, poverty and natural disaster. Earlier this year I visited the Democratic Republic of Congo where people live between the twin threats of an ongoing war and the tenth outbreak of Ebola. I found there a church in good heart: proclaiming the good news of the coming of God in Jesus Christ and caring for those in need. The church there is working, in the power of the Holy Spirit, to bring hope of life in all its fullness.

In South Sudan, too, we see the effects of a long war that has claimed thousands of lives and left thousands displaced. This year, at the invitation of Pope Francis, South Sudan's political and religious leaders visited Rome for a retreat. Along with the Pope and a former Moderator of the Church of Scotland I prayed with and for them, for a lasting and just peace that can enable, enrich and encourage human flourishing in that land. Pope Francis and I plan to make a joint visit to South Sudan in 2020 once a government is in place.

The flourishing of human life within the integrity of all creation is God's will for his world. God, in his incarnation, lifts humanity up to him. And we, who are lifted up, are called, in turn, to loving service of the world he came to save.

May Christ, who by his incarnation gathered into one things earthly and heavenly, fill you with peace and goodwill and make you partakers of the divine nature this Christmastide and always.

In the peace of Jesus Christ, our Lord,

The Most Reverend and Right Honourable Justin Welby

Archbishop of Canterbury

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