

A Christmas Reflection from a St Mary's Churchwarden (Charles Wilson)

NO FEAR is still a popular thing to have emblazoned on a T shirt, it seems. I thought it went out 30 years ago, but apparently not. Bikers are especially prone to buying them. Some variants speak of "nothing to FEAR except fear itself" and others make obscure references to spiders, which are lost on me. (I just ask Julia to pick them up).

I thought of this as Christmas is approaching. You see, I really need to heed the message "No Fear". It's so easy to get caught up in the pressure of lots to do that it seems more of a treadmill, and less about the greatest celebration the world has ever known. My mind can too easily think about the extra work involved, or even fulfilling Mrs Wilson's modest expectations of writing some Christmas family news, rather than ponder upon the things that actually uplift and thrill me. Fear Not Charles! You know you simply love the various Carol Services and other events we have at St Mary's. I do. There's such a variety of experience for children, and adults alike. Do check out the busy Services page! And not forgetting the superb English Arts Chorale on Sunday 10th December at 4.30pm (£12 tickets at Threads).

Of course, no one was more shocked than Mary when the Angel Gabriel showed up. Can you imagine what it was like for her, a young girl? You will remember what the Angel said to Mary, "Fear Not" was his word of reassurance. Good thought, Angel!

We do a 'Secret Santa' arrangement for presents in our (large) family. The adults each buy one present for one other adult, and receive one themselves, all to a fixed price. So I'm thinking about what to give one of my sons, who himself has little time and many children. A friend reminded me the other day of a mischievous prank I played on a Clergy friend some years back. I emptied a bottle of Gordon's gin (easy), filled it up with water, and then got a graphic designer friend to overlay "40% Proof" (nowadays it's only 37.5%) with "100% Spoof". I then gave it to Revd Michael for Christmas.

Unfortunately, he failed to notice the discreet label change and decided this would make a superb present for his own Father, a retired and wealthy businessman, who drank rather more than him. The first that Michael knew of my "joke" was when his father rang in the New Year, somewhat peeved. He didn't think it was funny at all. Not Amused. Perhaps I'll try to get my son David something useful and unfunny. Better ask his wife then, and be obedient to her command!

Going back to spiders, have you noticed how many there were this year? Does anyone know why? Is there a 'Chris Packham' in the village who might know? Actually, Julia and I share together the duties over the spiders. She picks them up, happily in bare hands if small or gangly, something I won't do; but when we find a big, fat, black variety she delegates the task to me – nothing a dustpan and brush can't immobilise and relocate. "Fear Not" I keep telling myself. It could be worse – like Bats in the attic. More on that another day perhaps...

We wish you all a very Happy Christmas - and an encouraged heart in the New Year!