Clergy Letter: **Taking time to ‘stand and listen’ this Christmas**

Writing a clergy letter as we approach the festive season at the end of such a traumatic year is probably one of the most difficult tasks that I have recently faced. The added complication is that I am writing this in October in preparation for the magazine’s distribution at the beginning of next month and who knows what the next few weeks will be like.

How can we imagine what Christmas will be like this year? It is almost impossible to make predictions in the face of such chaos and uncertainty. The only thing that is predictable is the unpredictability of it all.

*And yet……*

One thing that I am certain of: there is a constancy in God that continues to transcend our troubled chaotic world.

God has remained loving and faithful throughout the year and whatever the outcome of the next few weeks, he *will* continue to remain loving and faithful; and to suffer alongside the suffering and be joyful alongside those who are rejoicing.

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One thing that the pandemic has done for many of us, is that it has forced us to SLOW DOWN. We rush through life in a busy frenzy and sometimes we get towards the end before we even realise what has happened.

In one of my favourite Narnia books: ’The Magician Nephew’, God (in the form of Aslan) *sings* the universe into existence. It is a slow profoundly deep song that resonates inside each one of us. I believe that that song of creation started at the beginning of time and with the birth of Jesus Christ, it was joined by another earthly voice.

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*Fans have flocked to a church in Germany to hear a chord change in a music which lasts for 639 years.*

*It is the first chord change, in seven years, to the piece called: ‘As Slow As Possible’.*

*The work by avant-garde composer, John Cage, is one of the world's longest and slowest pieces of music.*

*The piece began 19 years ago with a pause lasting nearly 18 months. The change of chord took place on the specially built organ on which the composition is being performed.*

*The Saint Burchardi Church in the city of Halberstadt started playing the music in 2001 and the last note change took place in 2013.*

*The score is made up of eight pages of music, to be played at the piano or organ - very slowly.*

*But the wait for the next scheduled chord change will be quick in comparison - with 5th February 2022 slated as the date.*

*The piece will end in 2640. (BBC News)*

The piece of music called: ‘As Slow As Possible’, might seem ridiculously slow to us and of no interest or advantage to the way we lead our lives. But perhaps it offers the opportunity to think again about the endless voice of Almighty God which began to sing at creation, became a duet at the Incarnation and will accompany us and all our loved ones through this Christmas and beyond.

Christmas may not be celebrated in all its technicoloured extravagance this year, but Christmas will STILL happen May we take the opportunity perhaps to enjoy the simpler and slower ways of marking it.