

Deck the halls

*Deck the halls with boughs of holly,
fa la la la la, la la la la,
'Tis the season to be jolly,
fa la la la la, la la la la*

Have you decked your halls with boughs of holly yet? That might not be the way we choose to decorate our houses for Christmas these days. We might be more tempted to go for those lights from John Lewis than pluck holly out of the back garden. But whatever design choice we opt for, we decorate our houses in expectation of the Christmas festivities.

Part of 'decking the halls' in preparation for Christmas is putting up the Christmas tree. Once you've selected the perfect tree, it's time to decorate it. If you're anything like me, you've accumulated a lot of Christmas tree decorations over the years. Out comes the box from the loft and each one is carefully unwrapped. Some represent precious memories; others are less sentimental. There is that one glass

bauble given to you by Great Aunt Jessie, and not to your taste, but it will be noticed if it's not given pride of place on the tree. You secretly hope it has met with an accident over the months in storage!

The problem with all those tree decorations is that there are too many for one tree to hold. You hang more and more onto the tree until it is overcrowded and in danger of collapse. We can do the same with our hopes and dreams about Christmas too. We hang so many things onto Christmas

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that it can't stand up under the weight of our expectations. The perfect presents, immaculate house, delicious dinner, happy family ... can Christmas take the load of all we might wish for it?

'Tis the season to be jolly... goes the song, and I imagine most of us would love a holly, jolly Christmas. But can Christmas stand up to the weight of all that jolliness? Family tensions, difficult circumstances

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and complex relationships mean we've all probably known Christmases that have been less than jolly. As Christians, we believe that Christmas can hold the weight of much more than jolliness. The tinsel and trappings can't bear the weight of our hopes and dreams for Christmas, but the reality behind it can. The birth of a baby in Bethlehem offers not just jolliness, but love, light, peace and hope.

Will you come and look past the decorations and see what Christmas has to offer you this year? We would love to invite you to our Christmas Services. We have something for everyone, from traditional carols to contemporary music, from celebrations for all ages to times of quiet reflection. Let's look past the tinsel this Christmas to see the truth of the gift God offers us.

Rev Dan Wells

**Can Christmas take
the load of all we
might wish for it?**

*'Tis
The
Season*



The light of the world

On the final Sunday afternoon in October, around 100 local primary-aged children and their parents gathered at church for a Light Party, a positive alternative to the

increasing trend of celebrating Halloween. Instead of tricking and treating and scary costumes, children enjoyed a fun time with arts and crafts, games, bouncy castles,



face painting and plenty of food. Many dressed up in Disney and Superhero costumes, and all left with a goody bag!

It was great to host such a big event, our largest since the Covid lockdown in March 2020. There was a real buzz

around the place as we thought about and celebrated the truth that Jesus is the light of the world, a light that shines in the darkness. In these difficult days, this message of hope is one we all, both children and adults, particularly need reminding of.

Chaplain Tom

Tom Rutter is Chaplain at Holy Trinity School and Christ's School. Find out how life has been for him during Covid times ...

What have been some of the challenges of the last 18 months or so?

Initially it was isolation: how can I be a Chaplain remotely when I'm used to seeing people face to face? So, I had to find inventive ways of keeping in touch with staff and students. For a while I produced an emailed 'Thought for the Day', which meant I was able to connect with people I wouldn't normally meet. As Chaplain I sometimes hear bad news, and to handle this while also supporting people in pain, I needed to make sure I took time to look after my own health and wellbeing.

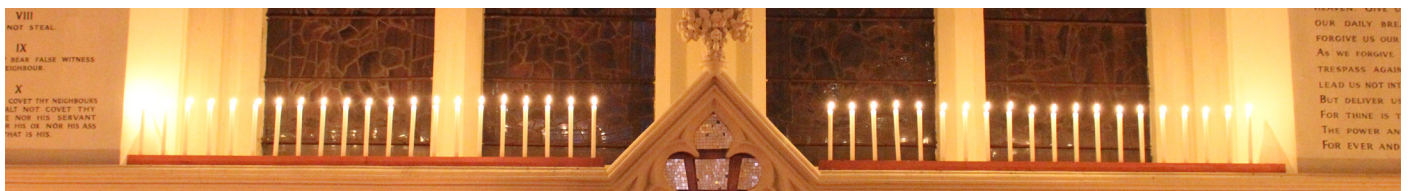
And encouragements?

Zoom meetings with other Chaplains, sharing our burdens and

standing alongside each another. My bike! Cycling is energising, helping me put my worries in perspective. Especially in the early days of lockdown, it was wonderful to be able to pray and worship God while riding safely on much clearer roads. And a song called I believe by a friend, Sam Cox, has become an anthem for me - "Even through the darkest night I know you won't forsake me, even in the valley low your goodness never fails me."

Has a particular Bible verse helped you?

Genesis 26:18 speaks of Isaac reopening the wells dug in the time of his father Abraham but stopped up by the Philistines after Abraham's death. This helps me acknowledge the pain of recent times but also inspires me to look to a faithful God for wisdom as my own ministry reopens as restrictions ease.



Welcome to HTR Dates for your diary!

Are you new to HTR? We'd love you to join us at any of our events, but especially for our special ones over Christmas. Or how about joining us at any of our regular weekly Services on Sunday mornings and evenings, and on Wednesday mornings? Holy Trinity Richmond is an Anglican parish church, with strong links to the local community.

You'll find full details of our Christmas Services and events on a separate postcard invitation.

Given the challenges of forward planning in a Covid world, we're not listing any 2022 dates in this edition, but our Weekly Update email will give details of specific events and activities as we firm up dates. If you don't yet receive this and would

like to, [contact the Church Office](#). We will update our [church website](#) regularly, where you can find lots of information about how to be involved with us at HTR.

 020 8404 1112

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