“The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined.” (Isaiah 9:2,6)

As the year draws to a close, December invites us to pause and remember the heart of Christmas: God so loved the world that He gave His only Son (John 3:16). Beyond the festivities, this season proclaims the good news of Jesus Christ, born in Bethlehem as our Saviour, bringing hope, peace and joy to all who receive Him.

“For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace.”

December is a season of hope, renewal and divine promise, pointing us to Christ, the light of the world. The birth of Jesus, celebrated at Christmas, fulfils God’s promise of salvation and calls us to spiritual growth and renewal. Key biblical events, such as the Feast of Dedication (Hanukkah) and prophecies from Isaiah, deepen the understanding of December’s spiritual significance. December encourages us to meditate on God’s faithfulness and to await with joy the return of Christ. Engaging with the nativity story and Advent traditions helps us to appreciate both the historical and the spiritual meaning of Christmas: Emmanuel, God with us.

December also symbolizes a time of reflection and anticipation. The winter solstice, occurring around December 21, brings the promise of longer days and new beginnings. In scripture, winter often signifies a period of waiting and preparation. For instance, just as the earth

rests during winter, believers prepare their hearts for the coming of Christ and spiritual renewal. This time encourages meditation on God's faithfulness and the hope of restoration. Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ, the centre of the Christian faith. The nativity story, found in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, reveals God's promise to humanity. Angels heralded His birth, and shepherds and wise men came to worship Him. This is far more than a historical event; it is the fulfilment of Old Testament prophecy, such as Isaiah 7:14, which foretold Immanuel, meaning "God with us". Families mark the occasion by attending church services, singing carols and sharing meals, reinforcing the message of love, forgiveness and salvation through Christ.

So, this Christmas, may you know afresh the love of God made known in the birth of His Son. Whether you are gathered with family and friends or spending a quieter season, I pray that the peace of Christ will fill your heart and home.

A prayer for you all from Gillian and I;

Heavenly Father, thank You for sending Your Son, Jesus Christ, to be our Saviour. As we remember His birth, fill our hearts with Your peace, our homes with Your love, and our lives with hope in Your promises. Draw us closer to You this Christmas and always. Amen.

With my warmest wishes to you and your loved ones for a blessed and joyful Christmas and a happy, healthy New Year.

Every peace and blessing,

Rev. James Trowsdale