



Dear friends and parishioners,

One of the courses which I have been on in recent years was on religious education – the latest report from the C of E endorses four “values” which we need to incorporate within our teaching and learning. Love wasn’t one of them. “Where is love?”, I asked through gritted teeth. The course leader had the grace to look slightly embarrassed. “They decided that love was too big,” she said.

Love is too big – that is what lies behind a baby born to an unmarried mother, sleeping and crying in animals’ food in a filthy feeding trough, becoming a refugee before he could walk. That love is too big is the angels’ song to the disrespectful shepherds, held in low esteem by the society of the day. That love is too big is the dawning realisation of the foreigners who bring gifts and know straightaway that they cannot return to Herod, and that they may have already and inadvertently threatened him whom they have come to worship. Love is even too big to be contained by death on a cross.

Whatever happens to us as we go through life – and we cannot know – there is one thing which overflows through the story of Christmas, and that is love. We hear our voices lament, as did those who wrote the psalms thousands of years before us, “Why doesn’t God do something about it?”; and as we look at the crib and the cross we know that he has. In our grief and pain God cries with us, as Jesus cried at the grave of Lazarus, his friend; in our joy and celebration God smiles with us, as the infant Jesus looked deep into the eyes of Mary his mother; in all that happens God is with us – breaking through the false beauty and glitter of the commercial Christmas with a strange, compelling beauty all of his own, calling us to realise the greatness and glory of his love, love which can overflow through us, if we but let it.

This is what makes Christmas special.

With my love and prayers for a happy Christmas and a blessed New Year for all of you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nicola" with a stylized flourish below it.

Nicola Lenthall