

Crowland Abbey

RECTOR'S CHRISTMAS REFLECTION: A GIFT OF COMMUNITY



As the days grow shorter and the festive season draws near, we find ourselves caught in the flurry of preparations—decorating our homes, planning meals, wrapping presents, and filling the calendar with events. Christmas is a time of joy, of celebration, and of giving. But amidst the busyness and the seasonal distractions, it's important to pause and reflect on one of the greatest gifts we have: the gift of community.

Community isn't just about shared geography, as in the town where we live, or the neighbourhood we call home. It's not simply about being in the same place at the same time. True community is about connection—the deep, meaningful relationships that bind us together, even in moments of isolation or difficulty. It's about lifting each other up, sharing the joys and sorrows of life, and showing up for one another in ways that go beyond the surface.

As we approach Christmas, we are reminded that the very story we celebrate began with the birth of a child in a humble town—a child born into a community that, despite its humble beginnings, would change the course of history forever. Even in the most unexpected places, the love and presence of God were made real through the connections that formed the first community around that manger.

In many ways, Christmas and the New Year bring with them an invitation to reconnect—to our families, our friends, and our neighbours, but also to a deeper sense of belonging to the wider world. As we reflect on the past year, it's natural to think about the challenges we've faced as individuals and as a society. The past few years have brought their fair share of uncertainty, fear, and division, but they've also shown us something profound: when times are tough, it's community that helps us weather the storm. Whether through a kind word, a helping hand, or a simple check-in, the ways in which we support one another are what keep us grounded.

As we prepare for the Christmas season, I encourage you to take a moment to reflect on the communities you are a part of. What does it mean to be a member of this town, of this neighbourhood?

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FROM THE RECTOR



How do you contribute to the shared life around you? Perhaps the greatest gift we can give to one another this season is the gift of time—time to listen, time to offer support, and time to share in one another's lives. Christmas invites us to look beyond our own busy schedules and extend ourselves in service to those around us. It's easy to forget that Christmas is not just about receiving, but about giving—not just to our families and loved ones, but to all who share in the life of our community.

As we look toward the New Year, let's carry this sense of community forward. Perhaps we should consider resolutions that focus on how we can build and strengthen the communities around us. Can we commit to reaching out more often to a friend in need, offering more of our time to community causes, or simply checking in on a neighbour who may be alone? What would it look like if, as a town, we resolved to become even more interconnected, more supportive, and more attuned to each other's needs?

In a world that often feels fragmented and disconnected, the small towns and villages are the last places where true community can still thrive. It's where we know each other by name, where we celebrate together and mourn together, and where we share both the joys and burdens of life. It's not always perfect—like any family, there are misunderstandings, disagreements, and challenges—but it is precisely within this imperfect, loving community that we find strength, resilience, and grace.

So, as we come together to celebrate the birth of Christ and usher in the hope of a new year, let us remember the importance of community. Let us reach out, not only to those we know well, but to those we have yet to truly know. Let's build connections that go beyond the superficial and seek out those who might feel left out or forgotten. After all, Christmas is about God coming into the world not in isolation but in relationship—God with us, God in community. As we enter into this season of celebration and reflection, let's commit to living that out in the way we care for and love one another.

Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to you all.

Rev. Carolyn