

Christmas Greetings 2020

This is the second version of my Christmas message, as there has been such a fundamental change in the government's approach in the last few days. The rapid escalation of Wokingham, West Berkshire and much of London and the south east into Tier 3 to be followed almost immediately by a further move to a new Tier 4 means many of us have very few options this Christmas. I will now work on over the holiday period. My planned little break at a local hotel to enjoy someone else's cooking for a change and a visit to family has gone. I will press the government for better compensation for people and businesses stopped from working, and for better ways of managing the NHS and limiting the spread of the infection.

Like many people I put up my tree and decorations early this year, as we all need some colour, light and hope in what has been a worrying year, darkened by the pandemic. I spend so much more of my days at home talking to you all through email, conference calls and my website rather than dropping by in person. I find it is uplifting to remember freer times at Christmas through the decorations and an occasional background of great Christmas music. It is a pleasant punctuation of a busy working day to add something to the tally of cards or the range of Christmas ornaments. I find it brings me both memories of happy Wokingham Christmases past, and hopes of happy Christmases to come post covid.

I am also more than ever conscious that there are some who have been isolated too much and are fighting loneliness as they seek to shield themselves from the virus. Where we know of people on their own it will mean the world to them if we pick up the phone, take to the zoom or find any other safe way to get in touch. Many extended families have contacted each other more during these long days of lockdown, teaching young and old the joys of smartphones, pads and laptop led video chats. Grandparents have heard their grandchildren sing over zoom and seen them dance through their smartphone. On line and hybrid shops will do a good job and roaring trade this Christmas delivering presents around the country, with relatives keen to see reactions when they are opened from their separate homes.

Most have done their bit to control the virus and to keep their friends and families together. Parents have had more time at home with their children where they have been working from home themselves. I think many will find a way to relax and to enjoy some of the features of a normal Christmas within the new legal restraints. We owe it to each other to capture the Christmas spirit in an unusual anti covid 19 style bottle.

I wish to say a big thank you to heroes and heroines of the CV 19 crisis, to all those who did go out to work to help the rest of us. There were those who had to keep the power and the broadband running, to grow and deliver our food, to care for those in hospital and care homes who did have this very contagious disease, to equip and train the nation in the skills needed to live with lock down and to deliver all the things we needed. There are countless unsung hard working people who have served us well during this

constrained year. I hope like me you have sought to use local self employed and small business where possible, as many of them have had tough times. Christmas is a good time to say thank you. The words matter a lot. Cards or presents can embellish where appropriate.

I wish you and yours the best possible Christmas. For a young child this is an especially magic time. CV 19 should not come in the way of a child's joy, anticipation and excitement about presents, Christmas food and the family atmosphere that surrounds it. So ban all talk of covid and politics from Thursday, wrap up the presents, put on the lights, prepare the feast and let Christmas begin. You will have fewer people in your home to celebrate, so get on the phone or zoom to share experiences with those you wanted to be with you. We all want our children and grandchildren to have happy memories of Christmas 2020. Many of us will still enjoy some of the childhood feelings as we spend the day with those we care most about, or find a way to talk to them where they are.