

# Christmas message 2019

Christmas began in an unusual style in Wokingham this year. As we gathered for the traditional carols near the Town Hall as part of the Winter Carnival, we clustered on the steps of the building. There was no room for a larger podium as we surveyed the continuing pavement works all around us. There was no carnival parade through closed streets, so we enjoyed a laser light show instead. Wokingham had improvised a good welcome to Christmas despite the works.

It reminded me that Christmas is a time when our great traditions have to adjust to modern realities. What endures is the spirit of Christmas. We look forward to a time of giving, when we think more of those in need and those members of our family and those in the circle of our friends that need some extra mid winter care. It is good to think less of the daily work worries, and more of what we can do to brighten the lives of others.

The Wokingham community has many generous and caring people who do work a little magic for the rest. I have heard great singing from the choral societies, seen the plans for a lively living advent calendar, and know of charitable help being planned for those in need. I would like to thank all involved,. I would also like to thank all who serve the public throughout the year in different ways. There are many who ensure we are kept safe, can be treated when ill, can buy our daily bread and ensure our water and energy comes on at home when we need it.

My hope for this Christmas and the new year as is we can make more progress in putting behind us wars in the Middle East that have so disfigured that part of the world for so long. It is not in our power to stop all the insurrections and civil wars, but it does now seem possible for us to intervene less militarily ourselves, and to work with the UN and other interested nations to promote more dialogue and less bombing. I also look forward to next year when the centre of Wokingham is complete with its new shops and new pavements.