



God is with us

“God is with us” – precious words or dangerous words?

Throughout history those words or words like them have indeed been used by nations, armies and leaders to claim a special divine privilege over and against other people.

The first Christmas was no different, when the infant Jesus was welcomed as Immanuel, which means “God with us”.

As Jesus grew and began His work of teaching and healing in a contested land, various groups and factions sought His allegiance. Occupiers, rebels and collaborators all wanted Him on their side. But Jesus resisted, not because He was indifferent to matters of justice but because He recognised a deeper calling and a deeper need.

Beyond all human divisions and differences He sees our universal need for a Saviour, someone to deliver us from our common failing of placing our particular desires and the status of our chosen group at the centre of the universe. So the peace He comes to bring through His life, death and rising from the dead is peace offered to all people, not just to some.

God *is* with us at Christmas, but not as someone we can manipulate onto our side. He invites us to His side, which is the way of life and hope in this world and the next. Christmas is an opportunity for each of us to give Jesus our allegiance and walk with Him in the path of doing justice, loving God and loving our neighbour. At this and any time of year the churches of the Anglican Diocese of Canberra and Goulburn welcome anyone who wishes to explore the way of Jesus.

May you know the comforting and challenging presence of God this Christmas, and may God bless you and those you love with safety and joy this holiday season.

Bishop Mark