

Dear Friends,

The book by Charlie Mackesey, *The Boy, the mole, the fox and the Horse*, is a wonderful book of short phrases of wisdom and pictures which help us to think and reflect. It is a book which follows the friendship of a boy, a mole, a fox and a horse. One of the pictures is of the four characters sitting in the night in a big, open space and the phrase 'home isn't always a place, is it?'

I wonder where we find our sense of home? Is it the building in which we live? Is it the town from which we come? Or is it a feeling of being at home, maybe with others, or a contentment from our own space?

As we come into December, we move into the season of Advent and then Christmas. We are looking ahead with anticipation in a season of waiting where we are preparing to celebrate the birth of Jesus. Those who are preparing for a birth of a baby go to a lot of time and effort to make the welcome for the child as good as it can be. Nurseries are decorated, clothes bought, along with the various pieces of equipment which are needed. The child is either born at home or comes home at the relevant moment. In this sense, we often find home as being a specific place.

Jesus was born in a stable, not a palace. He was born in a borrowed room, not at home. He was wrapped in swaddling bands, and didn't have a huge wardrobe waiting for him. Jesus was born in Bethlehem, yet Mary and Joseph came from Nazareth. When Jesus was born, he came to the world as God in human form. For this time, his home was to show others that the Kingdom of God had come near in the person of Christ. For Jesus, home wasn't a specific place at all.

Jesus' home remained with God the Father and is active today through the Holy Spirit. Jesus sought to show others that home was a place of peace and contentment. Resting in the hands of God is to be at home. It is to know the wholeness and completeness which comes only through him.

As Jesus was laid in a manger, his love for the whole world shone out to it. The angels shared the message of his arrival. The shepherds and the magi came to worship him. They knew that home wasn't a physical place but they knew, through their encounters with him, that they had found an expression of home. As they encountered Jesus, they experienced salvation, and shared this with others.

As we come to Christmas this year, do we feel at home? Are we resting in the hands of God? Are we willing to recognize and share the encounter with Jesus we have so that others may know his love for themselves? Whether we are at home or travelling to friends and family this year, I hope that all goes well as we make the plans and prepare everything for the festive season. Let us also stop and recognize that Jesus invites us to be at home with him, wherever we are.

May I wish you a joy-filled Christmas season,
God bless,
Chris