

## **Bennochy church: 24th December 2017**

Elections, Referendums, a census. Votes cast, people to be counted. Those in power say everyone must travel to their own town. Where would we go? What place do we call home? How would we get there? The airports are full. The trains jammed. There are tailbacks on the motorways. People are travelling home for Christmas.

A man named Joseph leads a donkey. On it sits his pregnant fiancée. Not many words are spoken between them. They are both deep in thought. A messenger from God has given Mary advance notice of the significance of her birth and she rejoices at what is to come. Joseph is worried. What will people think? In the unfolding drama, he feels a bit part player. They travel in silence or maybe, the occasional angry word.

Did you not book in advance? No room. We have left it too late. No room. There is a census on you know. No room. All I can give you is one of my sheds, out back. It will have to do.

The journey was an ordinary one, made by many others. We think nothing of our modern Christmas pilgrimages. Holiday destinations, visiting relatives, out for meals. By look closer, there is significance in the insignificant. Look beyond the child, see past the manger, and in the shadow of this birth, is a shape, that looks awful like a cross.

From the cries of a child to the despair of a man. To a love expressed in birth, to grace offered, by death. The journey to Bethlehem, became the walk of one man, and there outside Jerusalem, is an empty tomb.

He is *Immanuel*, the Christ child. He is, 'God with us'. Amen.