



**N**ewsletters are always written in advance and, while on one level it is odd to be writing this in September, it is rather appropriate that I write this on the eve of the Cathedral's dedication festival. On that day we celebrate the inheritance of this place and its community, and as an organisation the Friends have a unique place in that inheritance. This gives me the chance to thank you for your part - practical, social and spiritual - in sustaining Salisbury Cathedral.

Second, if at all possible I hope that you will be able to join us in keeping the seasons of Advent and Christmas.

Third, I wish you a happy 2018, which will be a year of some note for the Cathedral as we look forward to the appointment of our next Dean, who will probably be in post by the middle of the year.

Fourth, I've been mulling over that unique status of the Friends and how that relates to the festival of Christmas.

If the Friends were a person rather than a corporate body, at nearly 90 he or she would be truly venerable by now. And in some ways our organisation is a creature of its time between the wars, organised in ways then typical but not of our day.

Language, culture, ideas, unwritten assumptions - all these things are never quite the same as they were at any point in the past. And the Christian Church, now nearly two thousand years old, and our Cathedral, founded nearly half that long ago, are entirely familiar with the challenges of constantly adjusting to the changes of time. It is never a problem simply to be old, but only if one is incapable of adjusting as may be necessary.

A phrase I have heard all too many times over the years is 'Christmas is

for children'. I simply do not subscribe to this. Yes, it's for children. But it's also for youth, middle and old age - because it isn't about us, it's about God, and his transformation of humanity. God, who is beyond time and space, joins us in them and so invites us to burst their bonds with him. And so we can't confine the vast majesty of celebrating God's incarnation into children's fare alone.

Therefore I'm rather pleased to find myself writing to you, the Cathedral's

Friends and my friends too, venerable as we are, at this so called 'festival for children', which is always in danger of tipping over into a feast of nostalgia. Just as we Friends don't exist simply to celebrate the 1930s, our Christmas celebrations should invite us to look for the things of God all around us, and to marvel at his unimaginable presence now.

A happy and blessed Advent and Christmas to you!

**Edward Probert, Acting Dean**