



The message on our church's Christmas banner, posters and folders this year is,

'Light up Christmas this Year!
Celebrate with us.'

It is first, an encouragement to us all, whether churchgoers or not, to let the true light of Christmas – the Christchild – light up our lives, our homes, the community and the world in which we live. And second, it is an open invitation to anyone and everyone to come and celebrate this special and wonderful occasion with us at BMC by sharing in our Christmas Services.

With all Christian churches we are open in our belief that God came to this world in Jesus, and we are unashamed in our celebration of this each year. Christmas has been observed by the Church in varying degrees since the late 6th century, and has been celebrated in our own country with much excitement, fun and merry-making, particularly since the introduction of various German customs in the 19th century by the Prince Consort, and the influence of Charles Dickens. Christmas, is part of our national heritage. It is observed religiously by Christians, and the attendant celebrations are enjoyed by many, many more.

How sad then to hear of some Local Authorities, embarrassed by the fact that Christmas is a Christian festival, and by the offence they imagine it causes to those of other faiths, either banning or re-naming the festival so as not to cause offence.

My belief is that it is not so much those of others faiths who are offended but a small minority of secularists. And they try to hide behind the imagined feelings of those of other faiths.

When the Church Leaders of this country were planning the Millenium Celebrations a few years back they were very sensitive to the feelings of those of other faiths. It was the Leaders of those other faiths who assured them that there was not a problem, and that they hoped that in some small way they would be able to share in those celebrations also. I think the same is true now.

'Light up Christmas this year!
Celebrate with us.' As Christians we believe the light of God came among us in Jesus, 'the light of the world.' That is why we celebrate. Then may his light so shine in and through us that we will have the heart and the goodwill to encourage any and all of other faiths and of no faith, if not to believe what we believe, or worship who we worship, then at least to join with us as God's children in celebrating our common humanity and the joy, peace and goodwill of this season.

May the love, joy and peace of the Christchild be yours when the great day comes.

John Bown
Minister at Bromley
Methodist Church.

COMMON
GROUND

In this edition John Bown writes our leading article. It also appears in the magazines of Bromley Methodist Church & Bromley URC