



Dear Friends,

During this Christmas season, I have noticed a growing interest by unbelievers in Christianity. I was especially pleased to see the many visitors who came to our community carols. Several people from church invited work colleagues, neighbours, dog park companions, family and friends to the event who would normally not attend a church.

I am hugely encouraged and inspired by my brothers and sisters at RPC who invited friends and family to carols. It takes courage to do that because to invite a friend to a church event communicates to them that you are a Christian. It also is an act of love. The greatest gift we have to offer neighbours, friends and loved ones is Jesus Christ and the life he freely gives.

The many visitors to our carols isn't the only evidence of a growing interest in the Christian Faith. The Sunday after carols, a person attended church who had not been for years, even though he grew up in a Christian family that belonged to a church. Another showed up at church recently because of a personal crisis in their life. In early December, a person I have met with regularly over the past few years and is not a Christian asked me out to coffee to discuss questions he had about the Bible.

In the past, I have wondered why the wider community bothers to celebrate Christmas in an increasingly secular culture. Maybe it's the excuse to party. Or to bring families together – though sadly, Christmas gatherings can be stressful for families. Many like the culture of gift-giving. Others enjoy the Christmas tunes. Sadly, Jesus is often unseen and unheard.

There was even a period not long ago when it became culturally incorrect to say, "Merry Christmas." Many opted to replace it with the meaningless expression, 'Season's Greetings.'

So, why keep up the pretence of celebrating Christmas when you can't even use the word outside of Christian sub-culture?

I am now totally sold on our culture celebrating Christmas. Thankfully, people are less inclined to say, "Season's Greetings," and are happy to say, "Merry Christmas." More importantly, society's celebration of Christmas offers opportunities to the Church and to believers to speak openly about Jesus and to invite others to explore Christian Faith. I get surprised by how many people attend carols events run by churches. I am sure they're attracted by the bells and whistles – the performance of live music, a free feed, and fun kids' activities. I also think there may be more going on for the non-churchgoers who attend these events than we think.

Because we live in a secular culture, people like me often assume that most people are non-religious, and have little interest in religion. The Bible teaches that is not the case. Men and women are made in God's image. God has designed us to know, love and worship him. Being God's image bearers is why humans have a sense of right and wrong (Rom 2:14-15), and why they are innately religious (Acts 18:22). John Calvin writes:

There is within the human mind, and indeed by natural instinct, an awareness of divinity. This we take to be beyond controversy. To prevent anyone from taking refuge in the pretence of ignorance, God himself has implanted in all people a certain understanding of his divine majesty.

Christmas provides a helpful reminder to us that many non-Christians are open to exploring matters of faith. Not just at Christmas, but the whole year round. So, pray for those you know and love who are without Jesus to trust in him as their king, and be confident to have conversations with them about Jesus and matters of faith.

God Bless
Mark Adams