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Who is my Neighbour?

Happy Christmas! I hope that the past few days have been good for you and that they have gone as well, if not better, than you expected, and that they were full of Christmas cheer, the season of goodwill.



Some people now turn their attention to the New Year. What are your hopes and dreams for 2018? What might the New Year bring? For you and the people you know? Your neighbours? For Petersfield? For the UK? For the world?

2000 years ago, in a country we now call Israel, a local leader asked a visiting 'celebrity' what he meant by the word 'neighbour'. The second person told a story about someone who was robbed and left for dead. He was ignored by others who would have been expected to have helped him. Instead they crossed to the other side of the road and hurried past. But then someone rather surprising did provide assistance. He bandaged the other man's wounds and provided the best medicine that he could. He put him on his donkey and took him to an inn. He paid for the other's stay, and left money to cover expenses while he carried on with his journey. He clearly felt deep sympathy for the other man.

These two men would not normally have associated with each other at all. In fact, in that culture their connection would have been unthinkable. Yet the point of the story is that your neighbour could be anyone you have a connection with, however unlikely that might currently be.

The storyteller, the visiting 'celebrity', was called Jesus. He encouraged the local leader to treat his neighbours the same way as the man in the story had. And that's the challenge for us as we approach 2018. Will we treat others with such care and respect? Happy New Year!