



**St Andrew's Parish Church Guernsey**  
**4<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Advent – Sermon for 10.00am 20<sup>th</sup> December 2020**  
**Bible Readings: 2 Samuel 7: 26-38, St Luke 1: 1-11 & 16**  
**Given by Rev Juliette E C Robilliard**

**Take your partners please!**

Have you ever danced a tango? In my youth I danced a few classic dances but not that one: having observed the moves I think dislocation of one or more limbs would be highly likely! I imagine, however, that at least one couple on '*Strictly Come Dancing*' has danced the tango. To prevent falls, the lead partner needs muscle power and hand-eye coordination to support the other partner in all artistic movements and dextrous lunges. It illustrates how that other partner needs to trust the lead implicitly both in the small steps, as well as the great. Today, both bible readings feature two people who were, so to speak, prepared to tango placing absolute confidence and trust in God, as their lead partner.

**The shepherd king**

First, let's consider David, the ordinary shepherd boy who answered the call to serve. Over the course of his life, he had climbed the ranks of human power and authority to be at the opposite end of the social scale from where he started. We heard that the experienced soldier and king had settled back in his royal residence contemplating the fact that he had rid his kingdom of its enemies and there was peace in the land. For all that, he wasn't completely content for while he lived in a comfortable palace God's Ark of the Covenant reposed in a temporary tent and so he determined to do something about it. God, however, had other plans and intervened sending a message via the prophet Nathan that the job of building a place for the Ark to reside in would not be David's. Whereas he had been tasked with, and secured, the physical Promised Land for God's people, the task of divine accommodation would be the task of another. It is a wise person who acknowledges the limits of their own capabilities and the boundaries of the task to which God has called them to perform: it is not failure to relinquish a job for which one lacks the aptitude handing over to others who are so gifted by the Holy Spirit, as this empowers them to be of service in God's kingdom.

**The Virgin Mother**

Now let's consider Mary. Similar to David, she too had doubtless come from an unremarkable family living in an average village or town. Not for her to choose her path in life but to be acquiescent to her parents' direction and wishes. The visit, therefore, of the angel Gabriel must have been utterly mind-bending as well as his message culture-busting. To be informed that not just a mere mortal but that God himself had selected her to be the mother of his Son, would have been breath-taking. Mary would have been astute enough to realise that in her day being a young

virgin and becoming pregnant without a husband, would have signalled her out for the gravest censure within her society. That's challenging enough, but unlike the prescribed and practised moves of a Tango no one had been called on to fulfil her role before so, what that would mean in the fulness of time, she could only pause and ponder. Notwithstanding all of the counter-arguments Mary's commitment was absolute 'Here I am, the servant of the Lord. Let it be to me according to your word.' From that moment, Mary was destined to hold a particular role in divine accommodation. We too are ordinary people, so how grateful we can be that when God calls us to serve him, he matches the task to the temperament and talents he has created in us.

### **Encouragement each step of the way**

With the benefit of scripture, we know that eventually Mary became even more famous than her ancestor David. Greatness, however, was still in the making, so how abundantly comforting it must have been for Mary to learn that her older kinswoman Elizabeth, who in that era had carried the social stigma of childlessness for decades, was also blessed and bearing a child. Mary then went to visit Elizabeth to receive that support. God never leaves us unsupported but offers us help if we seek it out.

### **Messages from the past for the present and the future**

Although, our journey through Advent is drawing to its close, let's carry with us the essence of those reminders from scripture. When life is uncompromising and serving God seems challenging let us continue to trust God as our lead partner recognising that when he calls, he also equips us for his service. Christian service isn't about trying to be the whole body of Christ individually, rather, we are part of the whole serving by God's grace and leadership. May we be ready to serve, not sitting back hoping someone else will step up to the mark nor ignoring the call hoping it will go away. God calls us individually in the full knowledge of whom he is addressing and why: it's not an accident but part of his divine plan. Calling and commitment go hand in hand. God always commits to support us fully, which both David and Mary understood. May God strengthen our resolve to commit to his service in gratitude for his love. Amen.