

**St. Margaret's Community Church of
Scotland Dunfermline**

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12th December 2020 Newsletter

What is the word that jumps out at you when you think of Christmas? To me, this year in particular, it is "hope."

Our daily readings on Facebook have been in the book of Ecclesiastes from the Old Testament written about 3000 years ago. In that book, King Solomon is trying to understand the essence and meaning of life for the majority of people in this world. Here is his conclusion in chapter 9:

The living at least know they will die, but the dead know nothing. They have no further reward, nor are they remembered....everything is decided by chance.

No hope whatsoever in that! When you die that's the end of it and everything that happens in this world is all a matter of chance. These words could so easily have been spoken by Richard Dawkins!

Christmas is all about hope and transformation.

First of all, it is a statement by God that He exists and that He cares about the World and the people in it.

Second, it is the beginning of the life of a Person, Jesus who is God the Son, who is going to transform the destiny of individuals like you and me.

Third, it is a statement about **how** God is going to change our destiny – it is in the name given to Jesus – "God will save!"

God will save us from what? He will save us from the penalty, guilt and consequences of our sins.

That sounds a bit old fashioned for today's modern world but it is one of the core realities for the experience of the child of God – it is central to our hope – it is what He came to save us from.

But what about what He came to save us for? He came to save us to become His children – His New Family. He came to create a new people who would live together in hope, unity and love.

He also came in order to bring to us Eternal Life. A new life – yes, of hope and expectation. The Christian is living in a new life and experience of God. God is with us, within us and for us. The hope He brings us at Christmas is forever. Nothing is left to chance because God is orchestrating everything in order to make certain the hope that He brings us.

Neither is the physical death of our bodies the end of our existence – it is the beginning of a new life – the very life Jesus promised:

Do not let your hearts be troubled, believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house there are many rooms and I am going there to prepared a place for you – words of Jesus – His promise of hope.

Then there are the words of Paul who speaks of the new condition of the believer beyond the death of the physical body:

Our bodies are buried in brokenness, but they will be raised in glory. They are buried in weakness, but they will be raised in strength. ⁴⁴ They are buried as natural human bodies, but they will be raised as spiritual bodies. For just as there are natural bodies, there are also spiritual bodies.

Hope from beginning with no end!

Iain

Intimations

Services will be at the normal times on Sunday – Facebook will go on at 9am, Zoom at 9.45 and the Main Service at 11am in the Church.

Zoom Service on Wednesday

Christmas Concert. We are going to have this on Zoom – bringing in the best in Christmas music from around the world – this will be from 7pm on 15th December. If you would like to be linked in please look out in your inbox on Monday for the invitation to join it on Tuesday evening – I will open the meeting from 6.45.

I had thought about having home baking for everyone and charging a ticket price – we will not do it this way, but we will have a break when you can have a cup or glass of something and a wee time to chat.

Christmas Gifts

A huge thankyou to everyone who dropped off Christmas gifts – the front of the Church was “festooned” with presents – they will all go out to people who might otherwise have had little or nothing this year.

Christmas Offering

Thank you to everyone who has given so far to the special offering – the figure so far is in the region of £2000 and this will help enormously in helping us make our contributions to Edinburgh this year.

JAM Stall

There has been a JAM Christmas table in the Vestibule to raise funds for the Church. The goods and gifts have been of superb quality and very imaginative and hard work – so far over £700 has been raised for church funds.

HOPE

I am not a connoisseur of great art, but from time to time a painting or picture will really speak a clear, strong message to me. Some time ago I saw a picture of an old burned-out mountain shack. All that remained was the chimney...the charred debris of what had been that family's sole possession. In front of this destroyed home stood an old grandfather-looking man dressed only in his underclothes with a small boy clutching a pair of patched overalls. It was evident that the child was crying. Beneath the picture were the words which the artist felt the old man was speaking to the boy. They were simple words, yet they presented a profound theology and philosophy of life. Those words were, “Hush child, God ain't dead!”

That vivid picture of that burned-out mountain shack, that old man, the weeping child, and those words “God ain't dead” keep returning to my mind. Instead of it being a reminder of the despair of life, it has come to be a reminder of hope! I need reminders that there is hope in this world. In the midst of all of life's troubles and failures, I need mental pictures to remind me that all is not lost as long as God is alive and in control of His world – James DeLoach