



Greetings from Inverkip Church

Christmas thoughts from our minister, Archie and our Pastoral Assistant, Chris

From Archie

Here we are already on the run up to Christmas and with Christmas just around the corner it's going to be different this year. I hope everyone is all well and safe and that you are able to celebrate Christmas with your family and friends. Without stating the obvious it's going to be different and the same. It looks like Pfizer and Oxford have developed a vaccine that is effective for Covid-19. We will still have our Christmas movies, the round of Christmas shopping, the preparations for Christmas day, but how will it be celebrated in the midst of this pandemic. Will families be able to come together, will our churches even be open where we can meet with the sense of community that we have especially on Christmas eve? We are on the cusp of 2021 and what a year 2020 has been and there might just be an end in sight to the restrictions that Covid-19 has brought into our lives. I think everyone is looking for some sense of normality in the days ahead. So, thinking about Christmas and Christmas stories a Christmas Carol by Charles Dickens comes to mind

Everyone was excited that Christmas was around the corner, the children were happy except the old miser, Mr. Scrooge the money minded man shouted 'Bah Humbug' at the children. It was Christmas Eve, suddenly the ghost of Christmas past appeared in front of Mr. Scrooge. The ghost took him to the past and pointed to the little Scrooge, reading a book alone. When he was small his parents left him all alone. He thought to himself that he was always alone in every Christmas. He could not hold that thought anymore and in a while, everything went away just as Scrooge yelled 'Enough'. Afterwards the ghost of Christmas present appeared from the window of Mr Scrooge. The ghost took him to a poor family's house. They both peered through the window. There was no special meal on the table, but everyone was happy. Mr Scrooge thought 'How can they be so happy being poor?'. The Ghost replied 'It's Christmas'.

Lastly the ghost of Christmas future appeared and took him to a funeral. Some people were standing in front of Scrooge's grave and they were all criticising him. 'What's the point of having so much money anyway?' someone asked. Another said 'No one is coming to pay their respects to Stingy Scrooge'. The ghost made Scrooge realise that he didn't care about anyone but himself. Scrooge begged in front of the ghost, 'Please give me a chance to change my future!' And the ghost disappeared. Christmas morning finally arrived and Scrooge had promised himself that from now on he would help people. He invited everyone to a Christmas party at his house with presents for all. Everyone was in shock but they went along. Since then Mr. Scrooge became the most loved man in town.

Over and above the Christmas nativity this must be one the best Christmas stories told in many different ways from Bill Murry to the Muppets. If you were to go back into your past what would you see? This present Christmas what would you see and if you were given the opportunity to see a future Christmas what would you see?

With Jesus coming into the world we are given that opportunity to look at our past, to look at where are at present and to see our future. Our past actions shape who we are in the present. Who wouldn't like to go back and fix past mistakes? But here we are in the present what we do now shapes our future and like Scrooge there will come a day when it's our funeral. This pandemic should have changed our priorities, our focus should have shifted to what is really important in our brief lives, but there is a sense we just want to go back to what we were doing before all this happened. We have an opportunity not just to change our own future but the

future of the church. It is no longer about what we think the Lord is saying to us in these days, but what does the regulations tell us to do. Jesus came into the world so that we might become like him so let us not look back on these days and say we could have done this for the Lord. Christmas is just around the corner we will decorate our windows and as we have done write our names of family and friends on our prayer stars. WE have been given an opportunity to change not only our futures but the ones we pray for, the BIG question for us all, 'Will we grasp it?'

May you be blessed this Christmas with Christ's presence, the one who holds the future in his hands.

Your minister Archie.

And from Chris

As we fast approach Christmas, in what has probably been the most challenging year that we have ever had, let me start by wishing you all a very blessed Christmas and I pray that you are keeping safe and well. This year seems to have flown by so quickly and yet it has been a year when we have seen, heard, and experienced more trials and difficulties than we would ever have wished for. As I reflect on this past year, I am reminded of the grief and loss that many of you have experienced. As a Church, we share in each other's suffering and I know just how much people will be hurting as they come to terms with losing a loved one.

This virus has robbed so many people of so many things and everything seems to be very uncertain. When we are faced with such an uncertain future, we can have a tendency to forget the promises of God. God says "When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and when you pass through the rivers, they will not sweep over you. When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze." This is just one of His amazing promises and in the bible, there are over 7,000 of them.

This has been a year of change and getting used to a new way of living. I continue to be amazed at just how well people have adapted and the resilience that many of you have shown, has really inspired me. We have continued to work together in the building of God's Kingdom here at Inverkip and your love for others through this pandemic, has been so humbling. The response to our foodbank collection days and our annual shoe box appeal, has been amazing and your kindness will make such a huge difference to so many people. I hope you are continuing to be blessed by our online services, (find a link on Inverkip Church Facebook page) and, if you are unable to access the internet and would like a DVD copy then please contact Morag Cowe , Tel 01475 521455.

This Christmas will certainly be very different from what many of us are used to, but for us as Christians, the message will still be the same. The reason that we celebrate Christmas is that God came to earth in the form of a man in order to save His own creation and this will never change. I thank God that His message endures in this ever-changing world and I praise Him that He always remains the same.

So, as we look forward to Christmas 2020, I pray that God will continue to bless you all. I hope you will join me in thankfulness and anticipation, as we look forward to the birth of our glorious Lord and Saviour.

Many blessings

Chris

"Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift" (2 Corinthians 9:15)