

Moderator's Christmas Message



The gift of hope in difficult times

It is almost Christmas time – a time of hope and joy. And yet... does it feel like that?

We live in very unsettling times with many feeling the stress of trying to make ends meet, to find a place to live, to have food to eat, to have access to healthcare, to have any sense of security, and to feel cared for.

There are neighbourhoods fighting nature as they clean up from the last natural disaster and fear for when the next one will come along.

And there is deep distress and heartbreak of overseas wars and conflicts that rage onto our screens; images of children dying touch us deeply as we prepare to celebrate the birth of the Christ child.

We weep and feel anger seeing so much destruction and death, and there seems no end in sight.

In our own country there is uncertainty that comes with a change in government policies. We remember and affirm that our Church has a commitment to Te Tiriti o Waitangi in its Book of Order, and in its practice, with our relationship with Te Aka Puaho, which we value highly.

When we recall the Christmas story – not the sanitised version – we remember that Jesus was born into a world of danger and uncertainty. Then too there were disempowered people, poverty, the killing of children, political persecution, oppression, seeking of refuge, and homelessness. Jesus grew to know what it was to be human in uncertain and troubling times. And in amongst it all, he brought hope and compassion.

In our uncertain and troubling times, how do we bring hope and compassion in the face of all that speaks against it? There seems to be such a polarisation of views and attitudes among people that is very divisive.

There is a need to live out our faith by showing compassion to those who are stressed, angry and fearful. There is a need to listen in a respectful way to those who express strong opinions that we may find challenging. There are times when family members, as well as fellow Christians, have disagreements and hold different ideas and we must look for those things we hold in common, open our hearts, remember our shared values, and know when to engage and when to step back.

I was recently sent this short quote, “Celebrating what we hope for together is better than fighting over what we believe separately.”* There are many things that we hold in common: the preciousness of life, the abhorrence of violence, the right of every person to live in peace and safety with the necessities of life, to be free of oppression, persecution, and suffering. The need for justice, and for peace building and not destruction in places of war and violence.

As followers of Christ we are to be bearers of hope in this world. We may approach this in different ways, yet if we all do what we can in our particular context, it has a cumulative effect which makes a difference in our society.

Christmas is our time to actively share our story of hope in the most unlikely of places. A story of life transformed through the incarnation, Christ the light of the world.

“The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it.” (John 1: 5)

I wish you and your families a blessed and hope-filled Christmas, through Jesus the Christ.

Rose

Right Rev Rose Luxford
Moderator
Presbyterian Church of Aotearoa New Zealand
moderator@presbyterian.org.nz

* Steven Charleston, “Ladder to the Light: An Indigenous Elder’s Meditations on Hope and Courage” (2021).