

A LETTER FROM CANON BRIAN

The singing of Christmas Carols this Christmas was for me both comforting and disturbing. Those of us who have been embedded in the faith from the time of our baptism until Christmas 2023 are deeply moved and comforted when we sing the words “Yea, Lord we greet thee born this happy morning.” However the words “Peace on earth” sung against the background noise of the wars in Ukraine, Israel and Gaza, these wars in the land of Jesus, the Holy Land, unsettled me.



In my prayers and thoughts I found myself saying, “Why Lord, why this violence and horror when you have given us your peace? You have come to reconcile humanity and establish unity amongst all people irrespective of race, religion and culture.” Sadly many in our world ignore that eternal truth and prefer violence. The first verse of “O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie!” really caused me anguish as we live through horror of the war in Jesus Holy Land. Then the words that give us hope follow. “Yet in thy dark streets shineth the everlasting light ; the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight.” These remarkable words, together with “So God imparts to human hearts the blessings of his Heav’n,” are the words that I take into 2024. I hold in my heart the truth and belief that Jesus is the Prince of Peace, God’s reconciler who comes to establish peace on earth. My prayer for 2024 is simply, that all who live in this beautiful world may come to recognise that truth and live in peace. That is our hope. If we do not have hope in our hearts, we become disillusioned and bitter.

Recently I was asked why I believed in God. What a question! What I have written above in some ways answers that, but there is more to add! It would be difficult to find any better words to answer this question about belief than those written by St John. “God loved the world so much that He gave His Son so that everyone who believes I Him May have eternal life.” So the fundamental truth of the Christian Gospel is all embracing. It concerns our relationship with God and with those around us, in the day to day affairs of living. The Gospel is not about some sort of ‘Religious sphere’ in which we respond to God. It is about the totality of life in God’s world.

This fact is of vital importance for us today. Our relationship with God is worked out in and through our relationship with each other. The only way God’s Love can be shared with others around us, is by living His love. We are called to remember as 2024 approaches, that all can share the depth of God’s love. No matter who we are the most important thing about us is our worth in God’s eyes. That truth should fill us with delight. Pray God 2024 becomes a year of peace. I will endeavour to take into the new year what I have attempted to say in this letter. God IS love. That truth comforts me on my journey. My hope is that His peace will prevail on earth because I believe, in the words of the carol, “Light and Life to all he brings.”

With every blessing in 2024

Canon Brian McConnell