

## Pastoral Letter.

Dear Friends,

‘Maranatha! Come, Lord Jesus’, are words repeated countless numbers of times in this season of Advent, leading on to Christmas. The key features of Advent are the watching and waiting; the expectant longing for the fulfilment of the promise made by God: that the Messiah would come to lighten the darkness of those living in the shadow of death (Isaiah 9:2). Jesus Christ came on the first Christmas to fulfil this promise and he will come again as ruler of the world. So we celebrate Christmas, even as we continue to wait with expectation and anticipation for his return.

Our expectant waiting is heightened by the sense of hopelessness and despair covering our world today. Someone describes it as: *light going out of life, and the feeling of sinking into a dark and bottomless pit, with the need to be rescued*. Today we hear the deafening cry for help and rescue from the family who fled their homeland for somewhere deemed to be safe, only to be brutalised and dehumanised, we hear it from the young man who has lost the will to live, and from the lonely elderly couple who have no family and no longer know anyone in the neighbourhood in which they have lived for over sixty years. We hear the cry from a parent waiting for justice for an only child who was murdered, we hear it from the child born and raised in a war zone and from the farmer and his family who suffer because of environmental changes and unfair trade patterns. The list goes on.

Friends, we all long for a better world where suffering, unfairness, inequality and injustice are ended. We wait expectantly for the day when good will finally triumph over evil, and love over hatred. But we must acknowledge that, even though the world is a place of hopelessness and despair, it is also one of hope and promise, for at Advent and Christmas we are reminded that God sent Jesus Christ, his only son, to bring us light and hope in the midst of darkness. So, don't give up hope – *if you lose hope, somehow you lose vitality that keeps life moving, you lose courage to be, that quality that helps you go on in spite of it all* – Martin Luther King Jr. Christ will come again in the final Advent when God's kingdom will be established on earth. Until then let's overflow with joy, hope and inner peace, and be a part of the faithful who share hope and light with others in the world.

Wishing you a happy Christmas and a good New Year.

Every blessing  
Irene John