

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

As I write, it is a beautiful day but it is also very cold! This winter is already proving tough for many and it feels like it is going to be a long couple of months. Although we are approaching the joy of Christmas, for many this will not be a time of year to celebrate. The cost of living rises, a Christmas without loved ones who have died, fears about heating a home and paying for enough food, worries about what is happening around the world, especially in countries known and loved, and perhaps a general feeling that this country is not a happy place at the moment can all conspire to steal our joy.

Firstly, if that is you: **please contact us**. We have a hardship fund that we can use to support those who are in need. Do not be afraid or ashamed to reach out.

Secondly, let's be really aware of those around us this Christmas who may not be feeling the joy of this time of year and are instead feeling all the stress, pain, anger, and worry. As those who follow Jesus, we have the ability to bring the light and peace of Christ to those who need it most and we can be **bearers and sharers of hope** this Christmas.

We hope you can join us for our Christmas events and services and that you feel able to invite others along to. **This year, we are asking everyone to invite at least one person to at least one event**. The formula can be really simple: *I'm going to this event; it's going to be really good; do you want to come?*

There's a few family events on Monday and Friday next week as well as the Christingle on Christmas Eve. Our carol service will be on Wednesday 21st at 6:30pm and is followed by a community meal: **please bring a celebratory dish to share at this meal**.

There is something for everyone: we hope you will enjoy the Christmas period and feel able to invite others in too.

Looking forward a bit further, 2023 is going to be an important year for us. The [Minster Community process](#) will take time and energy from us all, especially those in leadership. The PCC met 10 days ago to discuss and start the **local conversations**. We will all be able to participate in these in the New Year through our midweek groups (in January), other gathering spaces (e.g. café and smaller leadership groups), and on **Sunday 5th February** during our all-age service.

We are really keen for everyone to have their say during this process so please take time to engage with the opportunities we have. The Minster Community process is about all of church life and is an important and community-changing time of discernment.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter and as always, let me know if there is anything I can do or if you want to talk further. May the joy of the angels, the eagerness of the shepherds, the perseverance of the wise men, the obedience of Joseph and Mary, and the peace of the Christ-child be yours this Christmas.

Ed

May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word. [2 Thessalonians 2:16-17]

Rev. Ed Down, Minister for the Conventional District of Hamilton.
vicar.hope@gmail.com; 07541 904042.