

Minister's Letter February/March 2018

The Lord, be with you.

As I write this I am aware that we are almost through the first month of the New Year, and by the time you read this we will be in the second month, nevertheless, I would like to take this opportunity to use my ministerial office to accord you God's blessing this New Year:

“May God's mercy, peace and love be yours in abundance.”

The New Year can often bring a mixed bag of emotions and memories for many of us. Some may have just experienced the best year ever and look forward to an even greater one looming ahead. Others may have just trudged through one deep struggle after another, and the fresh calendar year brings desperate hope for things to be better.

Whether you've just walked through the greatest year of your life, or are incredibly glad to see the year finally over, one truth still rings clear amidst it all - you are not alone. We were reminded of this great truth when we celebrated the birth of our King - Immanuel, God with us. There are times in life when holding onto this truth is the only thing that sustains us.

My first few weeks 2018 have been filled with prayer, as I have found myself praying with and for a large number of folk, and for a wide variety of reasons. As this is my vocation it might not seem that noteworthy, but I have to say it has been unusual for so much to be concentrated into such a short period of time, and it has certainly brought prayer, once again, to the front of my mind.

It has reminded me that there should be ongoing encouragement to practice the habit of daily reading and prayer; it is a vital, but often neglected area of Christian life and service. As I thought about this, I wonder if the Scriptural text for our church, for 2018 should be - **“Devote yourselves to prayer, being watchful and thankful”** (Col 4:2). These words could be seen not only part of what we are called to do, but also a challenge.

While we perhaps know with our heads that everything that happens in the life of the church should be underpinned by prayer, perhaps we need to reclaim it in our hearts for ourselves, recognising it as the role of the many and not the few.

Often times, when we hear of the struggles that our family, our friends and indeed our world are facing, perhaps we need to not only feel our hearts moved, but moved to prayer.

When we hear the good news of others, as well as rejoicing with them in the moment, perhaps we should uphold them in prayer and offer thanks to God.

I close with the prayer of Paul for the Ephesians - 3:16-21

¹⁶ I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being, ¹⁷ so that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith. And I pray that you, being rooted and established in love, ¹⁸ may have power, together with all the Lord’s holy people, to grasp how wide and long and high and deep is the love of Christ, ¹⁹ and to know this love that surpasses

knowledge – that you may be filled to the measure of all the fullness of God.

Until the next time: The Lord bless you and keep you.

Your minister ... Mary