

Christmas message from The Moderator



CofS

The Moderator of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland the Rt Rev Dr Russell Barr, minister at Cramond Parish Church has a message for you this Christmas Day.

Christmas is a time of enormous contrasts.

There are the sights and sounds of the Christmas markets – and there are the sights and sounds of people sleeping rough in shop doorways.

With gifts to buy and food to savour, the television adverts tempt us with the promise of Christmas cheer while the news reports are of unspeakable human suffering in war torn Aleppo or Yemen or South Sudan.

And as well as being a time when families and friends gather together, I know from my years as a parish minister the festive season is also a difficult time of year for many people, a time of loneliness and loss.

Does the Christmas season awaken a tension between our own sense of contentment and the hard experiences of others – a tension we live with all year round – but one brought into sharper focus at this time of year?

Does Christmas give us permission to acknowledge more honestly the kind of emotion that often we're expected to suppress or control – to be less guarded about compassion.

The Bible's Christmas story is about people at risk and on the edge of things.

It is a story about men and women who were far from being the movers and shakers of their day, and a stressful and unwelcome journey taken under duress by a heavily pregnant woman to a government registration point.

Tragically it ends with children being massacred and a family forced to flee as refugees.....and it all sounds painfully contemporary and familiar.

The challenge is to let the real Christmas story lead us to a deeper appreciation of life's meaning and purpose.

Although it never shies away from just how awful human experience can be, the real Christmas story invites us to see that even in the most awful circumstances, something is coming to birth which will change everything.

God shows what is possible by taking the worst we can imagine or experience, and in a Bethlehem stable God demonstrates grace and mercy will not be defeated

The way God does it is as simple as it is profound – in the painful cries of a mother laboring and the precious cry of a child newly born.

And if you hear in this story a message of hope for the world, and a message of love for yourself, it will come as a blessing and a gift.