

HOPE



Achinleck
CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP

Serving Christ, Serving the Community

Without hope, how can we cope?

Earlier today my wife met a woman who said, **"I'll be glad when this year is over."** It has been a tough one for her and her family. Maybe you feel the same. 2023 has brought you a whole lot of sorrow, heartache and loss. Possibly at times you wondered if you would ever see the end of the year!! The pressures too much, the burdens too heavy, the pain too severe and the hurt too deep. Broken relationships, shattered dreams and physical illness have all knocked at your door bringing with them immense challenges that have stretched you to your limits.

It has also been another tough year for our old creaking world!! War continues to rage in Ukraine, although the death and devastation there, sadly, seems to be largely overlooked by the media as they focus on the incredible death and devastation in Israel/Gaza. Natural disasters are almost a constant occurrence, floods in Libya, earthquakes in Morocco, Syria and Turkey, volcanic eruptions, wildfires, droughts, etc... Human suffering and misery, destruction and despair are everywhere!!

Our leaders, nationally and internationally seem to be powerless at the best, and totally incompetent at the worst, to deal with the multitude of crises.

Is 2024 likely to be better, unfortunately, probably not!! Personal struggles, national crises and global disasters will no doubt persist.

So, how can we cope if there is no hope? What is the answer when there doesn't seem to be an answer?

Praise God there is **HOPE** and an **ANSWER** and it is in the heart of the message of Christmas. The birth, life, death and resurrection of **Jesus Christ offers hope to all mankind**. The message at His birth, which was conveyed to a few humble shepherds on the hills around Bethlehem, was, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth **PEACE**, good will toward men." (Luke 2.14)

PEACE – is that possible in a world like this? How can I know peace with all that is going on in my life? How can there ever be peace between all the warring factions and nations and tribes in the world?

If we take a step away from all we experience and see around us and ask ourselves, **"What is the underlying cause of all this suffering and strife?"** The answer lies in the breakdown of

the most important relationship we were created to enjoy. **That is the relationship between man and God.** Man was made for God – man's true joy, peace, hope, well-being and life is tied up in God. If we are living at enmity (i.e. not in a right relationship) with God then we are failing to live as God intended us to live and that leads to all the breakdowns, the sorrows, the problems and issues we face in life.

God is Holy, yet He is Love. Imagine a society of holiness and love. A society without sin and selfishness. That is what God intended. However, **we know our world is not like that, we are not like that.** We are sadly, sinful and selfish. If there was no sin, nor selfishness, what would our world look like? Vastly different from today's!!

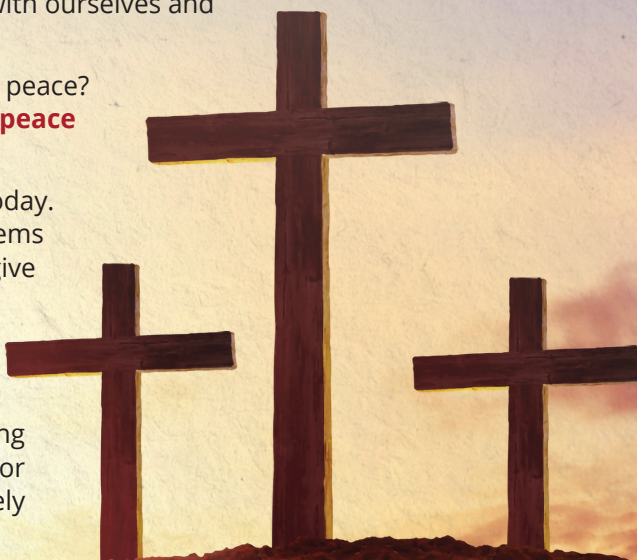
Jesus came to bring peace, to make peace and to offer peace. He came to restore the relationship between God and man.

Colossians 1:19-22 :- "For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell; And, **having made peace through the blood of his cross**, by him to **reconcile** all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven. And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now hath he **reconciled**, in the body of his flesh through death, **to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight:**"

Through dealing with sin, the cause of our alienation from God, when He died on account of it on the cross, He is able to reconcile us to God – i.e. bring us into a right relationship with God, which then becomes the basis of our peace with God, with ourselves and with others.

How do we experience this peace?
We receive it. Jesus says, **"My peace I give to you.."** John 14.27

You can receive it, by faith today.
It won't remove all your problems and sorrows, etc but it will give you a basis from which you can cope with them all and, through it all, have an inward calm and an absolute hope of something better in the future and for eternity for you and ultimately the world.



MEET A MEMBER

ASHLEY

HOW I BECAME A CHRISTIAN

I grew up with no real thought that there was anything greater than humanity. I was just floating through the stages of life with **a constant feeling of no purpose**. I didn't really think about my future, I was in my last year of school with nothing planned.

I eventually got a boyfriend who was a Christian, and I used to look at him in disbelief at **how he could possibly believe in God**. He started inviting me along to some church meetings and over time I gradually **started to feel HOPE**. One day, while talking to a friend I had a moment of realisation that the messages I had been hearing at church had an effect on me, and I was beginning to believe. It wasn't long after this that **I put my faith in the Lord and surrendered myself to him**.

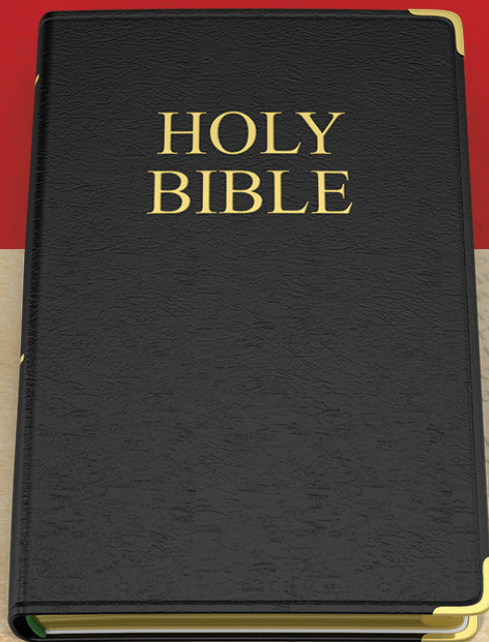
I found this quote to be the perfect example of Jesus' love - "The overwhelming wonder of God's infinite love is this: While I was broken and a failure, God came to rescue me. He came to love me, to redeem me, and to heal me from sin. Where I failed, Christ succeeded on my behalf. Where I distrusted, Christ was faithful. Where I proudly resisted, he humbly surrendered. Through his obedience, he bridged the chasm between my darkness and his light. On the cross, God's Son took my place and became a sacrifice for all my failures. In his resurrection, he triumphed over all my destruction. And he now stands as my victorious Redeemer, offering me—and all who will simply receive him—his forgiveness and vindication. Christ clothes my shame and brokenness with his righteous and holy life." — Becket Cook

I can confidently say that after trusting the Lord Jesus, my life has changed more than my previous self could have ever thought possible. It certainly hasn't always been easy, but **I know God has a plan for me** and he has a plan for you also. I know he always prevails. The word of God stands forever, he will never fail you.

Psalms 106:1 says **"Give thanks to the Lord, for he is good and his love endures forever."**



Ashley



SPECIAL Free Offer

Throughout this newsletter you have read quotations from the Bible. If you would like a **free copy of the Bible** please feel free to contact us.

You are invited to come along to our

Christmas Service

Sunday 24th December at 12.30pm

**Carols, Christmas Message.
Lunch Served after service**



ALL WELCOME

NEVER TOO BROKEN TO FIX!!

In February, my husband Robert started having a few chest pains. He was taking more and more indigestion tablets thinking that might be the problem. Eventually, one weekend, he couldn't ignore the signs anymore and decided it might be a good idea to call the doctor.

Soon, we were on our way to A&E for a typically long, frustrating wait!!!

Long story short, after about 9 hours, it was confirmed that everything was pointing to a heart attack and after 4 days in hospital, he was home with a few more pills added to his already large collection and a wee spray to take if he had any more chest pains. **The waiting game began....**

Finally, after months of waiting for an appointment, we had a video chat with the surgeon. He explained the procedure, highlighted the risks, confirmed that stenting wasn't an option, and the best outcome was a triple heart by-pass. He then did a 360-degree turn when he discovered, apparently, for the first time, that Robert was in a wheelchair. We were gobsmacked, and Robert felt a little discriminated against. The surgeon who had just told us the bypass was the best option was now suddenly unprepared to **"fix his heart and leave the rest of him broken"**.

To be honest, it made me feel a wee bit angry. Robert's body has failed him over the years, and chronic pain has really taken its toll physically and mentally. Now **his heart is broken, too, and the person qualified to fix him was refusing to help.**

No doubt Robert could probably have looked after his heart better. He does love a chocolate biscuit or two and a wee fry up. However, his mum had a triple heart bypass operation when she was quite young, so there is obviously something hereditary going on as well. Jeremiah 17:9 tells us, **"The human heart is the most deceitful of all things and desperately wicked..."**

So, we have all inherited a spiritual heart issue.

Jesus is really the only person qualified to deal with our heart problems. Thankfully, He doesn't worry about fixing our heart and leaving the rest of us broken.

When He sees our broken hearts, He wants to heal us completely. He is a loving Saviour who has a heart full of compassion. There is nothing that is too hard for Him, no brokenness too much for Him to mend. There is no blockage that can't be removed to allow God's love to flow freely into our hearts. God doesn't weigh up the cost and leave us wanting. He doesn't shortchange us or give us less than the best outcome. He wants to save us and give us a new life. No recovery is too complicated or risky for Jesus!!!

Psalm 34:18 :- **"The Lord is close to the broken-hearted and saves those who are crushed in spirit."**

Our heart is a pretty vital organ, and it has been quite scary to see Robert's heart fail him. 8 months of anticipating the possibility of another heart attack, which could be fatal, has taken its toll. We weren't entirely hopeful that the one stent being offered would have a huge effect as he would still have two very blocked arteries restricting blood flow into his heart. At each twist and turn along this journey, we have felt a bit crushed in spirit. However, **"My flesh and my heart may fail, but God is the strength of my heart and my portion forever."** Psalm 73:26

The wee spray Robert was given to use when he feels breathless and has chest pains, helps to open the arteries and improve the blood supply to his heart. At times over the last 8 months, I have seen him struggling with chest pain, and had to remind him about his spray.

This made me think about the work of the Holy Spirit on my own heart. My physical heart might work fine, as far as I know, but **spiritually, my flesh and my heart fail me all the time**. Doubts, fears, disappointments, anger, and bitterness can block the flow of God's love in my heart. I know these blockages are causing me pain, but I forget to take the "wee spray." I don't allow the Holy Spirit to open up the arteries and improve the blood flow to relieve the pain and allow God's love to flow. I often find myself, like Robert, breathing through the pain on my own, or sometimes I just think the "wee spray" won't make any difference anyway. **I can wonder at times if some things are just too broken to fix**. Maybe the damage is too much, or the fear of more disappointment causes me to doubt, so I live with the blockages and restrict the flow of God's love to other parts of my life because I fail to take heed to Proverbs 4:23 :- **"Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it."**

Since his heart attack, Robert's quality of life has been severely restricted, and he hasn't had the energy to do even the simplest of things. I have also become very aware recently that when we don't guard our own hearts, and the enemy attacks, the outflow of our lives is poor as well. We don't have the energy to do the simplest of things. We feel breathless, lethargic, anxious, and severely restricted in our daily lives. Everything can seem like a mountain to climb, and we get exhausted just thinking about doing the simplest of things.

If these lessons from Robert's experience have touched a "cord in your heart" then put your trust in the perfect, Divine heart surgeon who promises, **"I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh."** Ezekiel 36:26.





FOOD BANK

Are you finding it difficult to make ends meet?
 We provide a food bank in the hall at Park Road at 2pm every Thursday & at The Hub, Furnace Rd Muirkirk at 11am every Friday

Good News Service

@ 12.30 Every Sunday

Lunch served after service
 (all ages welcome)



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COFFEE MORNING

Why not drop in for coffee, cake and chat the 1st Monday of each month from 10am

Tea, coffee, cakes and biscuits.

All free of charge.




Friday @ 9.30 - 11.00
 (term time only)
 Please contact Ruth on
07940 355 882
 for details.



For times of other meetings see website

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