

## Words from the vicar of Dolwyddelan

Dear Friends,

November is a melancholy month. Perfect for those of us who love to draw the curtains, stack logs onto the fire and allow the cat to curl contentedly on our lap. Even more so this year as there is much to shut out. The world goes on hating itself and its neighbour. I am 'troubled' in the Irish sense of the word. My heart is troubled by the continual fighting and violence that seems to never end. When will we ever learn to live in peace and let others live in theirs?

The particular struggles we see unfolding in the Holy Lands are not new, yet it is a whole new horror for those living it. We prepare once again this year to remember the birth of Jesus, the very incarnation of what God is always doing amongst us, in human form, into an occupied land. And a child shall lead them. It seems not much has changed. What can we do from such a distance? It seems wrong this year to sing such things as 'Silent night, Holy night, all is calm all is bright.' Or 'O little town of Bethlehem, how still we see thee lie.' The Holy Lands are far from Silent or Still. Yet for me it makes it all the more important to remember that even into this very human tragedy we can still offer a sense of hope that the future might be different. We must never give in to the terror or violence others seem to think is either necessary or justified. We should neither allow ourselves to be seduced by the voices of the supposed powerful.

Easy words from a warm(ish) living room in North Wales. Living them out is not so easy, particularly when persecuted for speaking up when others demean or dehumanise. Finding a third way when binary options seem so starkly opposed. Remaining resolutely partisan on the side of peace. Enough. We have seen enough. Yet still it goes on.

I have to remain hopeful that there are those who would see an end to this violence. There are those who are willing still to work with all their neighbours for solutions to the world's issues. I have to remain hopeful when those who have suffered at the hands of enemies rise to say 'no more' rather than raise yet another cycle of revenge. I have the hope that there are generations who have lived together peacefully and will do so again. For into a world which longs for the sword of the powerful to drive out oppressors, the greedy or evil it is the child who comes to hold the earth's pain. We can celebrate the birth of a child. Particularly at the darkest moments in the year and in our lives we need to remember that there is light. If you are struggling to find a little light this advent look out for the Holy Land Trust - a non-political organisation working for peace between neighbours in the Holy Land.

Every blessing to you for Advent, Christmas and into the New Year.

Stuart Elliott.