

Christmas 2011

Dear Friends,

*“Behold I bring you good tidings of great joy for all the people.”*

This is the way the angel announces the birth of the saviour to the shepherds. Rejoice, good news for everyone!

The multitude of heaven praises God, and the shepherds, with awe and curiosity, go to see “this thing that has taken place”. After finding the sign of the baby in swaddling clothes they tell as many people as they can, and they worship.

What is your first memory of Christmas? Is it a memory of gifts, of family, of food, or a combination? Does praising God figure in that memory? My strongest early memory is of being in the Christmas pageant at our church in Hamilton. It is not one of unalloyed joy; there is a background undercurrent of worry or fear or loneliness. Perhaps this is the way memory works for all of us. I can probably remember the more difficult Christmases better than the happy ones. And yet. ‘rejoice, good news’ for everyone is the message for all time: not just for shepherds or wise men or first century people but for everyone in need of a saviour. Perhaps we are in need of liberation from those very sad or unhappy memories. Surely that would be good news!

Throughout time the response to ‘rejoice, good news’ has been awe and praise. Glory to God the heavens proclaimed. This could be the shout of all oppressed and enslaved people: whether in the physical sense by the cruel circumstances of where one is born, or by addiction, abuse, disease, or despair.

Glory to God, the Saviour has come!

May you experience all the blessings of Christmas

The Rev Fran Kovar

The schedule of Christmas services is enclosed along with an envelope for your praise offering.