

Martin's Message

Dear Friends

In William Shakespeare's well known play "A Midsummer Night's Dream" there is a verse that reads, *"Four days will quickly steep themselves in nights; Four nights will quickly dream away the time; and then the moon, like to a silver bow now bent in heaven, shall behold the night of our solemnities."* Whilst reading this I was struck by the words dream and heaven. The character of 'Puck', whom Shakespeare describes as a shrewd and knavish sprite, delivers a closing address directly to the audience suggesting it had all been a dream; *"That you have but slumbered here while these visions did appear... no more yielding but a dream."*



For many of us we would probably want to liken 2020 to have been a dream and shortly we would all wake up from our slumber. But the reality is that we have not. Lately, we have probably been experiencing information overload, which is no doubt increasing our anxiety even further, as we look to those in authority to take the lead and offer us all reassurance. Our lives for the last nine months have been immersed in isolation with our lives put on hold, as we face new challenges with further lockdown restrictions. Then we add to the mix our imminent departure from the European Union. Life seems ruthlessly constricted. Hope seems stifled

In his book 'A Grief Observed', C S Lewis speaks freely of confessing, his pain, rage, and struggles to sustain his faith and in it he finds the way back to life; *"Grief is like a long valley, a winding valley where any bend may reveal a totally new landscape"* Grief as defined in the dictionary speaks of misery, anguish, distress and agony or trouble, annoyance, irritation but to name a few. For many the start of the new year will not be met with optimism but we can be assured that we are not alone upon this journey called life, with its many streets and avenues to lead us down the wrong paths. Jesus is the one who will meet our problems with some new part of God's future - he will burst into our present - into our mess and grief - he will bring good news, with hope and with new possibilities - and the key to all this as it was then and is now; is faith. *"Come and See"* Jesus says - four at the heart of our Christian faith we lead him to the place of our deepest grief and sorrow – *"Come and See"* is his reply, as he leads us through the sorrow to the place that now dwells in light and love and the resurrection glory.

The question for us all in 2021 is.....What are our hopes and dreams for the coming year for the Area and ourselves? What events and messages are we going to proclaim? We need to be prepared for the challenges ahead. Let us be thankful for one another and all that has been achieved in 2020, especially in the way the church has remained actively present and a source of hope for the communities we serve. To quote David Jason from his new book 'A Del of a Life', we look forward to the *"journey not the destination"*

"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house" Matthew 5: 14-15

Shalom

Martin