



Revd. Gordon Gresswell

608 Chepstow Road

Newport

NP19 9BZ

g.gresswell@yahoo.co.uk

Home: 01633 272066 Mobile: 07570992890

New Year Message

'Now faith is confidence in what we **hope** for and assurance about what we do not see.' Hebrews 11:1

2020 has been a year like no other. A microscopic virus has humbled our human world and taken many people into dark places they could not have possibly imagined. Churches closed, full hospitals, Nursing Homes without visitors, funerals with five people present, weddings cancelled, pubs closed, planes grounded, plans not only laid to one side, but not even able to be made. Each week and month blurring into one.

'We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, so that what you **hope** for may be fully realized.' Hebrews 6:11

As Chapels, Churches, as a Circuit, we have been remarkably resilient. Taps have been diligently run; worship has continued, even in our own homes; new communication of the message of God's love have been found; finances have continued to be given and supportive of God's work and it has been a delight to see online nativity plays; podcasts; new faces and such creativity exhibited in many places and in many guises.

'For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have **hope**.' Romans 15:4

We have explored the scriptures as never before, and the Advent devotions have focussed our hearts and minds on God's eternal purposes. The scriptures have many stories of struggle, lament and a wistfulness for the past with a yearning for a better future. Job has the Hebrew word '*yahal*' to put hope in 18 times; 'Though he slay me, yet will I **hope** in him; I will surely defend my ways to his face.' 13:15; and the Greek words; *elpizo* – hope for and *elpis* – expectation, are used 83 times and point to a God, revealed in the incarnate Christ, who places his hope in us; that we have what it takes to make Christ incarnate in our lives and communities, no matter how humble our circumstances; God is Immanuel; with us.

'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living **hope** through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.' 1 Peter 1:3 'through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we boast in the **hope** of the glory of God.' Romans 5:2 with St. Paul continuing; 'perseverance, character; and character, **hope**. And **hope** does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.' 5:4-5

Whilst it is easy quoting these 'proof-texts', there is, however, an overarching message throughout God's word and revelation in the word **hope**. The first incarnation, the creation, reinforces hope always, and, though too early, yesterday I spotted snowdrops coming through. Life goes on in its cycles and rhythms and whilst ours has been disrupted; life on earth goes on, and we are very much part of this miracle. (Albert Einstein said there are two types of people; those that believe everything is a miracle and those that believe there are no miracles). I know which type I am.

So what are you hoping for in 2021?

Please feel free to share these with your family; with your neighbours; with your Church; with me if you like! For we are called to encourage and build one another up in hope.

I asked my close family what they were hoping for in 2021:

- Mum: A hug from sons and grandchildren.
- Dad: To not have to wear a mask in a shop
- Hannah: To get on an aeroplane
- Ellie: To go to work and talk to patients properly
- Clark: To have a child
- Josh: To go to the pub with mates
- Jess: To get married
- Sue: To cross the border to visit family without fear of arrest.
- Gordon: To place a piece of bread in someone's hand.

This is but a snapshot of one small families hopes for 2021. There is much more to hope for but we know that God is love and love 'always protects, always trusts, always **hopes**, always perseveres.'

May I wish you all a safe, peaceful, and *hopeful* New Year.

Gordon