



There will be no Christmas Eve or Christmas Day services in the Church due to the Covid-19 situation and restrictions on numbers. We do not like to say no to anyone who may not have booked themselves in advance. However, the watch night service will be live-streamed from our linked church, Denny Old Parish Church by our minister on his Facebook page: Minister Denny Old and Haggs.

A facebook account is required to access this page.

Link: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/815604555526629>

There will be a service on Sunday 27th December 2020 and 3rd January 2021 in Haggs Church, obviously by booking in advance on the proceeding Wednesday for these services. Please phone the designated number between 10.00-12.00 and 5.00-7.00pm giving your name and contact details, to be allocated a seat.

'We hope to see you at Haggs Church in 2021 when life gets back to normal.

Until then keep safe and God Bless you and your families.'



**Merry Christmas 2020
from everyone at
Haggs Parish Church of Scotland**



A Different Christmas

Dear friends, greetings in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. When I was thinking about writing something for Christmas this year, I thought that Christmas this year might feel very different to what we're used to due to continuous global pandemic challenges and due to the restrictions being imposed and re-imposed.

But let me tell you that the true meaning and significance of the Christmas story will never change which is fundamentally about hope for a better tomorrow and that's what Christianity is all about. A year of my ministry in Denny and Haggs has passed and I never thought that the first year of ministry would be different than the normal: facing Covid challenges, discovering new ways of worship and reaching out, providing pastoral care on phones and online, no visits, meetings on zoom etc. But it has enabled us to learn new things and to live up with new normal with the hope that one day we will reach to the other end of the tunnel and that's where the Christmas story comes in and brings us the hope and Good News of eternal life.

We get updates from the government everyday and about what measures it is taking to tackle with this dreadful virus and the devastating affects it is causing on us, our loved ones and our society.

Scotland's National Clinical Director, Professor Jason Leitch, has already given rise to a flurry of wise-crack responses doing the rounds, such as: "the only way to 'do' Christmas this year is to kill the Turkey and have 20 round for the funeral."

Sadly, even that would not necessarily mean people could sit down to eat together since the 20 refers to the number allowed to attend the suitably distanced, mask-wearing service.

Every other social gathering in restaurants and hotels, are subject to the different levels of restrictions in the area. But, we do have a hope to get to the other end of the tunnel sooner or later.

And part of what Christmas is about getting together with family or with friends to share food and exchange presents. It is one of the reasons why so many people who live on their own, dread the season. Without being a part of a larger gathering, those on their own, somehow feel excluded from the 'real' Christmas - even although Christmas has its roots in a tiny gathering of just two people and a baby without any of the

table-groaning excesses we have come to associate with it. I am not sure at all how Christmas all over the world and particularly in Scotland have been associated with bigger gatherings and gifts and food.

Now, however, Professor Leitch is telling us that in 2020, Christmas will not be 'normal' - that is we may not have all our loved ones gathered for Christmas dinner, though I loved the opposite.

This year it looks like less for everyone all over the world.

A lot less, it may possibly even be just four of us.

And while for me and for many others that might be disappointing - in some cases deeply disappointing - it may actually transpire that it helps to take just a little of the load off families who find Christmas difficult at the best of times and who would face even greater pressures this year, thanks to job losses or the reduction in their income as a result of the current pandemic.

This coming Christmas could be seen as an opportunity to give everyone the perfect 'excuse' to reassess how we mark the celebrations whether as a faith festival or simply as a 'holiday'. People need things to look forward to - especially perhaps those who have been in isolation and who have missed significant events such as the birth of a grandchild or important birthdays, a family wedding, or who have had the funerals of their loved ones. But for all the humanity and especially for the believers, the Christmas message, even in a time of pandemic, is one and that is about hope.

The child, who was born in a manger, came not so that some could feast and have gifts. He came to build bridges and to bridge gaps between people and God and between people and people.

The baby's birth is a challenge to the whole humanity to dare to look beyond ourselves to the needs of those around us, in the knowledge that God considered everyone worth and has sent His Son for us..

This Christmas may not be like Christmases past, but it will still be Christmas. And we can help it to be good in a different way by caring beyond our own.

May God bless you all and Merry Christmas.

Rev. Raheel Arif
Minister, Denny Old and Haggs