



THE ARCHBISHOP  
OF CANTERBURY



ur power to bring light and hope in dark times.

Christmas Greetings to you all. Many of us will be thinking that this will be a Christmas like no other that we can recall, with the possible exception of those who remember the Second World War. Even then, in spite of bombs and shortages, there were no legal restrictions on getting together with family and friends, however hard the separations of war service were. This year is likely to feel very different. Not only may we not be able to be with those we love but, if we do manage to join family and friends, we may all feel properly inhibited about giving each other the usual hugs and kisses. For most of us, I suspect, this is the cruellest effect of the Coronavirus – we long to be with those dear to us and to feel their touch but we are acutely aware that, in doing so, we may threaten their health and they may threaten ours.

Like you, I have been affected by the constant uncertainty which has come to govern our lives. The smallest things that we used to take for granted suddenly make us pause and think. Is it safe to pick up the post from the doormat? Should we venture out to the shops? When should we wear masks? Can we pop to the local café for a cup of tea and a chat? Even the scientists on whom we rely to advise us have been feeling their way as they have learned more about this novel virus. I expect that a lot of you have learned how to use Zoom and other electronic ways of keeping in contact with people, but we all know that they are not the same as sitting down face to face and chatting. There is a danger that, quite understandably, people may give up hope.

Do not give up hope. Christmas is the time when we as Christians celebrate the birth of Jesus, the Son of God, the Light of the World. If we are feeling vulnerable in our present circumstances, let us not forget that he was born a helpless baby, exposed to all the dangers that threaten the life of a new-born. In the Gospels, we read of how he brought new life and hope to the hopeless, those who felt rejected, those who felt abandoned. He was and is with all who suffer, all who are lonely, desperate or afraid.

This will be a Christmas like no other but we all have it in our power to defy the darkness and to rejoice in our annual celebration of the birth of our Saviour. This is not just a question of putting on a brave face, keeping calm and carrying on. Every one of us can do something positive to bring the Christmas light to someone less fortunate. Pick up the phone to someone you haven't spoken to for a while and who may be craving the sound of a human voice. Don't worry about what to say – it will come to you. What matters to the person on the other end is that you remembered them and made the effort. That could be a precious gift this Christmas. You can be the bearer of comfort and joy. It is in our power to be a small light to lighten the darkness. Wherever you are, and however you will be celebrating, I wish you a happy and blessed Christmas.

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