

New Year's Day

St. Ninian's, Castle Douglas & Christ Church, Dalbeattie
SC011079 & SC010918

<https://dcdchurches.org.uk/> tel: 01556 505894



Elijah in the Desert, Daniele da Volterra circa 1545¹

PAX

Dear friends in Christ,

I wonder what this New Year will bring? Each year brings new aspects to our lives - some more welcome than others. As you will have heard on Christmas Day and at our Carol service: 'This time last year, Ukraine was a peaceful country and women in Afghanistan could still be educated and hold important jobs'. How life can change! Since the pandemic there appear to have been many changes to life and the world is not as I used to know it. Perhaps, you would agree with me?

The story of Elijah in the Desert (1 Kings 19: 4-8) is one that speaks to me, increasingly, in these difficult days. I wonder if you are familiar with it? If not, perhaps you would like to look it up.

¹ https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Daniele_da_volterra,_elia_nel_deserto,_1545_ca.jpg

To my mind it is a story that is filled with Hope and Love, from a God who cares. All provided at the very darkest moment in Elijah's life. When Elijah feels he cannot go on. Indeed, he wishes he was dead! Admittedly God's angels do not provide a three course meal in a famous restaurant, but they do provide what is needed for the journey! A journey that will last another 40 days and end with a personal encounter with God in "*a sound of sheer silence.*" (1 Kgs 19: 12b)

How is your relationship with God/Jesus? Faith can be difficult to sustain at times and perhaps the world and life in the 21st century are just too much. Money is short. The things that we have taken for granted for so long appear to be changing in ways that we may not be so content with. There is the ever present fear of another virus coming to visit us, from some other part of the world. Where do we go? What can we do? All we can do is 'trust in God'. Not so easy when the Church has been proved to have feet of clay and appears more concerned with administration and finance. (All very important and doubtless causing us all headaches.) Faith is what we are about and God gives us food for the journey. He gives us Hope! The revelation of Christ comes 'in Church' at Christmas, and has done so ever since the birth of Jesus in Judea. In making our Communion we are nourished through the mystery of Jesus' Body and Blood, and are transformed into Christ. This food can take us far. For God's presence is a Joyful presence. This can be seen in a recent book collaboration between the Dalai Lama and Desmond Tutu, *The Book of Joy*. We just have to allow ourselves to feel the Joy of God's presence in spite of the situations we may find ourselves in. There is always Joy! There is always Hope! I recently discovered this wonderful quotation from Thomas Merton during my Advent reading:

*"Always the old trouble, that the devil and our nature try to persuade us that before we can begin to believe we must be perfect in everything. Faith is not important as it is 'in us.' Our faith is 'in God', and with even a very little of it. God is in us."*²

In the busy year that lies ahead of us, my prayer, is that you and I will make time to listen to Jesus in the Silence of our lives, and nourish our Souls in a deeper Communion with Him.

May God bless you richly as we begin this New Year.

Christopher

Rector

² Thomas Merton, September 30, 1963, *Dancing in the Water* 5: 20

Scottish Episcopal Church Diocese of Glasgow and Galloway

Christ Church, Dalbeattie

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NOTICE OF 2022 ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The AGM will take place at 2pm on the

Wednesday 18th, January, 2022

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A Reading For New Year:

In Louisville, at the corner of Fourth and Walnut, in the centre of the shopping district, I was suddenly overwhelmed with the realisation that I loved all these people, that they were mine and I theirs, that we could not be

alien to one another even though we were total strangers. It was like waking from a dream of separateness, of spurious self-isolation in a special world. . . .

This sense of liberation from an illusory difference was such a relief and such a joy to me that I almost laughed out loud. . . . I have the immense joy of being man, a member of a race in which God Himself became incarnate. As if the sorrows and stupidities of the human condition could overwhelm me, now that I realize what we all are. And if only everybody could realize this! But it

cannot be explained. There is no way of telling people that they are all walking around shining like the sun.

Then it was as if I suddenly saw the secret beauty of their hearts, the depths of their hearts where neither sin nor desire nor self-knowledge can reach, the core of their reality, the person that each one is in God's eyes. If only they could all see themselves as they really are. If only we could see each other that way all the time. There would be no more war, no more hatred, no more cruelty, no more greed. . . . But this cannot be seen, only believed and 'understood' by a peculiar gift.

Thomas Merton, [Conjectures of a Guilty Bystander](#)

Please find below the Diary for January on a separate sheet for your convenience

