

Dear Friends,

Advent is here again and this year we are being encouraged to “Hush the noise” using the advent programme from the Methodist Church.

This year’s programme is based on the hymn “It came upon a midnight clear.” which starts with a picture of a clear midnight sky at Christmas – which feels very Christmassy to me!

However the carol soon starts to challenge our world’s perspective and challenges us to notice what is going on around us. Christmas dreams of are not just for one day (or twelve days!) but they are for all time. The peace that God longs to bring to our world in Christ is so often spoiled by attempts to grasp hold of things for ourselves or those we know, excluding others.

How can we let go of all the messages which urge us to make this Christmas even better by spending more – buying bigger or more expensive foods and presents?

When I look at the shops or see the adverts which bombard me, I see a great energy trying to make us buy a happy Christmas for my family and friends – and even myself. However, the true message of Christmas referred to in the hymn is to lift the load on others – to support one another and to resist the evils of war and violence.

The hymn finishes with a picture of a world which might still be in God’s power to bring to all if we are able to be attentive to God’s will for us... in order to do that perhaps we will have to hush the busyness of our lives a little, to seek the peace we long for.

We may not be much closer to a peaceful world this year than last as a world, but hopefully (and hope comes with the baby in the manger) we can be encouraged as we discover more about the Prince of Peace this Christmas.

With best wishes for a blessed Advent, and a happy Christmas and New Year when it comes.

Stephen