

Are you ready?

Katharine Smith *reflects on* Luke 21:25-36

Today there are wars throughout the world and powerful oppressive regimes. There are disasters causing untold distress and suffering: earthquakes, tsunamis, droughts, flooding, famine and disease. We may feel helpless in the face of such things, but can we imagine what it would be like if these events multiplied and intensified, so that it seemed that our world really could end very soon? Would we not feel faint in our fear and sense of foreboding?

The message of Jesus in today's Gospel is that we are to be ready for such times. We are not to do what some do when they are unable to face the reality of their lives – living wastefully and irresponsibly, numbing the pain with drink or drugs, or simply burying our heads in the sand in the hope that it will all go away.

The words of Jesus will certainly not go away – they are eternal and we are to focus on them, not allowing anything to muffle his voice. We are to be ready, we are to stand with our heads held high, firm in the belief that these signs surely mean that Jesus, the Son of Man, is coming in power and glory and brings redemption with him. This is the wake-up call of Advent – let's listen and respond to that call. ☺



Lord Jesus, speak to us the eternal words of your love and redemption, so that we may live with courage and faith and be ready to stand before you when you come again in power and glory. Amen.

Fuel Poverty

Part 3 – stewardship

by Lee Tulfer

The fuel poverty crisis – the result of doubling energy prices – has shown up the extent of our dependence in the West on fossil fuels to heat our homes and keep the lights on. As well as being a challenge to society about how to support those who cannot afford to keep warm, it is part of a bigger picture. Switching to more

sustainable energy production improves our energy security – the war in Ukraine was a major factor in the current crisis. The pensioner who cannot afford to turn on the heating, eats cold food to avoid using the stove, and stays in bed wearing a coat and gloves is part of a bigger picture.

Fuel poverty is about people – our sisters and brothers in Christ, for whom we have a responsibility – but it is also about the future of the planet which God has entrusted to our care. ☺

Advent

Part 1 – the writer who invented Christmas

by Julian Smith

Our traditional Christmas is often thought to have its roots in the writings of Charles Dickens. The feasting and merriment of *The Pickwick Papers* have become merged with the story of the transformation of the miserly Scrooge to produce what we have today. But it can be said that the true inventor of Christmas was actually the American author Washington Irving, whom Dickens knew and read avidly. Irving's accounts of the customs of a rural English

Christmas, and his stories of Christmas at Bracebridge Hall, with its fun-loving Squire, inspired Dickens.

Both Irving and Dickens saw Christmas as a time of wonder and transformation. If the cold heart of Scrooge could be thawed, there would be hope for the world and humankind.

Today, as we begin our Advent journey, we long to hear again the angels' song and renew our hopes for peace and goodwill: "O hush the noise ye men of strife and hear the angels sing." ☺

“ You keep us waiting... You, the God of all time, want us to wait / For the right time in which to discover / Who we are, where we are to go, / Who will be with us, and what we must do. / So thank you... for the waiting time.”

John Bell (born 1949), hymn-writer and Church of Scotland minister