



From the Methodist Manse

Dear Friends,

Driving along a country lane in North Yorkshire as dusk was falling on a cold November day, I passed a Parish Church, its distinctive shape heavily silhouetted against the waning light of the blue-grey sky. Glancing across the churchyard to the church building my attention was drawn to a small window in the sanctuary through which could be seen, piercing the gloom and fast-approaching darkness, the small but penetrating glow of the sanctuary lamp – a reminder that in the midst of darkness and death Jesus, the Light of the world, is alive and present with us. What a symbol of hope and joy.

At Christmas we make a lot of the symbol of light, from Advent candles, candlelit carol services, the many biblical references to darkness and light, lights on the Christmas tree, not to mention the colourful displays outside many homes and in shopping centres, to the actual celebration of the birth of Jesus as 'the Light of the world.'

What a wonderful symbol light is, and what a tremendous responsibility and opportunity is ours as Christians, those who live in the light and by the light, to share that light with those around us. With the world as it is today, people could perhaps be forgiven

for being less than hopeful about the future. Sometimes it does seem as if darkness will have its way, spreading chaos and uncertainty. But for the Christian this can never be anything other than a fleeting impression because the light has come: 'The Light shines on in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.' Jesus is our light, Jesus is our way; and as we embark upon yet another New Year I remind you of the words quoted by King George VI in his Christmas broadcast of 1939:

'I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year,

"Give me a light that I might tread safely into the unknown."

And he replied,

"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the hand of God; that shall be to you better than a light and safer than a known way."

May this be your experience during the year that lies ahead.

The Lord be with you.

*John Bown
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Methodist Church*

**COMMON
GROUND**

In this edition John Bown writes our leading article. It also appears in the magazines of Bromley Methodist Church & Bromley URC