

# Vicar's Pastoral Letter

**Date :** November 2007  
**Author :** Rev. Peter Holzapfel, St. Mary's Church, Kempsey, Worcester.  
**Subject :** Finding hope through Jesus.

Dear Friends,

As I hope you'll be aware there's a special Gift Day for St Mary's Church on Saturday 10th November. I'll be in church all day to receive any financial contribution that you may wish to make to the work and life of our village church. I was overwhelmed with last year's response and I'm praying that this year the giving will be just as positive. But why are we asking for you to contribute? To keep the church going? To pay our way? To make sure that our magnificent ancient building remains safe and secure? Yes, all these things and a good few more **but the main reason is so that we can continue to keep hope alive within our community** because this is what the church stands for in our village and throughout our world.

The day after the Gift Day is Remembrance Sunday when we rightly give thanks for all those who died in order to ensure our peace and freedom. But what have we done with that peace and how have we used our freedom? Is this really the kind of society for which those young men and women fought and died? I don't think so because there's probably more hopelessness in our society now than what there's ever been and if we remove the church and the good news about Jesus from the equation than what are we left with? Where else can you go to find hope in our society and in our world? The car boot sale? In the daily and Sunday Newspapers? In buying a lottery ticket? In having an extension built or going on another bigger and better holiday?

None of these things and a million more will ever give you the real peace, freedom and hope that you can find in Jesus Christ. So why do we continue to look elsewhere? Why do we chase in any direction to find happiness other than the path that leads to the door and to the heart and to the love of God? I don't get many old soldiers in church except at funerals nor even many of that generation that lived through the Second World War despite the fact that many of them used to attend as children and even sang in the choir. Why is this? Is it because they saw too much blood on the battlefield to ever be able to believe in God or did many of the older folks simply get bored with it or saw too much of it as children? If this is the case then tell me this... where on earth is hope ever going to come from? If the younger generations are going to have any hope for the future then they need to build on the faith of their elders but if their elders have no faith then where do they turn? Perhaps this in part explains why we don't see Parade Services any more.

These are uncomfortable but necessary questions to ask as we approach Remembrance Sunday. It is right and good to have a packed church to honour the dead and the peace, freedom and hope for which they gave their lives. But what about the following Sunday? Will hope still be alive or did it die on the battlefield along with millions of others?

This is the main reason for keeping the church going because it's the only institution left in which there is any hope of a better future: a future founded on Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour.

Amen.

*Peter*

Rev. Peter Holzapfel

[vicar@stmaryskempsey.org.uk](mailto:vicar@stmaryskempsey.org.uk)

[www.stmaryskempsey.org.uk](http://www.stmaryskempsey.org.uk)