GOD MATTERS AT CHRISTMAS

I have heard some folks say, “What will Christmas 2021 be like?”. I can remember the disappointment when my daughter and her fiancé couldn’t visit us last Christmas and this was replicated across many homes. It was difficult missing family and friends coming into our homes, but we all had to adhere to tight restrictions so that we could combat the spread of Covid 19 and ease the pressure on our hospitals.

We are looking forward to a more normal Christmas season this year, with our church choirs performing Christmas music in our Carol services and our church organisations having parties etc. We look forward to a time to celebrate with family and friends around food, fun and fellowship.

We are so grateful for the opening-up of restrictions over these last few months, and some of us have been so privileged to have most of our church organisations up and running again. The sound of children and young peoples’ voices heard in our buildings is so encouraging; equally, seniors enjoying their morning fellowship with lunch and some MWI branches back to face to face is very encouraging. We praise God for the progress that has been made, and for those who feel they have not reached this stage of ‘face to face’ gatherings, we pray it will happen soon.

One of the main reasons Christmas is a time for giving is to remind us of the Christmas Story. Of course, it was Jesus who received the first gifts of Frankincense, Gold, and Myrrh, but Jesus was the greatest gift of all to the world.

Christmas giving also provides the chance to help those who are less fortunate than ourselves and need more support. Charity donations are often more popular during the festive period. This Christmas as we think of gifts for family and friends could I recommend the following:
• In response to the President’s Project ‘No Excuse for Abuse’, ask your local Women’s Aid Group for information regarding personal gifts for mothers and children. Maybe a personal gift for mums would be encouraging for them to receive as mothers, in these circumstances, often think of their children ahead of themselves.

• Irish Methodist World Development & Relief – ‘Gifts for Life’. This pamphlet gives alternative Christmas Gifts to help people fulfil their potential. You will get ideas on buying gifts to help the people of Ghana, Zimbabwe, East Jerusalem, Colombia, to name a few. You should be able to access this pamphlet from your church or alternatively www.irishmethodist.org or ring 0289076 7969 for information.

As we put up our Advent Calendars on the 1 December may we spend this Advent season thanking God for the gift of His Son. John 3 verse 16, “God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that whoever believes in him may not be lost but have eternal life.”

May we also appreciate family and friends and continually think and pray for ways we can help those in our community by bringing God’s love to them? Hebrews 13 v 16, says, “Don’t forget to do good and to share what you have because God is pleased with these kinds of sacrifices.”

“The warm glow of Christmas giving has deep roots, deeper than most of us thought. Have a Happy and Blessed Christmas”. (Anon)

Joan Strong
All-Ireland MWI President