

“Hope as wrench” - A sermon preached at Knox Church Dunedin New Zealand by Kerry Enright on 29 November 2015, Advent 1, on the occasion of the Dunedin-Edinburgh Sister City Weekend, the Studholme College Centennial, the Kirkin the Tartan Ceremony and the Climate Change March. Knox hosted three performers from Edinburgh, Dan Wilson and Craig Lithgow, singer/songwriters, and Kevin Williamson, poet and purveyor of Scottish culture. The readings were Jeremiah 33:14-16; Luke 21:25-36.

Hope.

For our planet, when we seem on a run-away train, a train hitched to an ideology of unlimited progress, an economic system of unrestrained growth, releasing carbon into the atmosphere, with miniscule emission reduction plans. Did you see Bruce Hamill’s excellent article in the ODT on Friday? Many are taking part in the march today.

Hope

For women in Aotearoa, with our domestic violence figures. Every five minutes police are called to investigate a family violence incidence. Did you see the white ribbon on the front lawn beside Dr Stuart?

Hope

For children in Aotearoa. As many as one quarter of our nation’s children are living in poverty. The seriousness of this is not diminishing.

Hope

For peace in the Middle East, in Syria – the Iraq war let loose forces that cannot be put back in the can, groups now fighting each other, with allies supporting groups against each other, despite the rhetoric of peaceableness.

Hope

For asylum seekers and refugees of all faiths, longing for safety, and soon longing for land.

Given the mire, hope sounds too optimistic, too positive, too enchanting, too credulous.

But without hope, what?

Trapped by inevitability;

Trapped by fate;

Trapped on a path of self-destruction?

Our hearts weighed down, as the reading states?

The gospel has eyes wide open to how things are – creation distressed.

In this passage, hope is not a gentle way of being, of steady progress, of gradual improvement, of looking on the bright side.

Hope is irrational, bloody-minded, stubborn, tenacious, disruptive.

Because, it seems, the coming of the new way, the new life, is tumultuous, wrenching, ripping, revolutionary.

Everything is passing away.

Hope holds to a vision of creation restored and reconciled, in harmony, human beings and nature in right relationship.

Hope here is an orientation, a way of standing, of standing up.

Hope here is a posture, of raised heads.

Hope here is a way of seeing, seeing signs of new life, of the new way.

Hope here is alertness, attentiveness, noticing and living into the new way, wherever there are possibilities.

Hope is not escape or spiritual drunkenness, where humankind becomes absorbed with itself.

Hope refuses to give fate the final word, the runaway train its Tangiwai, the unrestrained growth gods the final power.

So can we march, on foot or in spirit, with raised heads, for the world Christ brings?

Can Edinburgh and Dunedin, Knox and Holy Name and All Saints, Studholme and Carrington, clans and clubs be counted as purveyors of hope, bearers of hope, signs of hope?