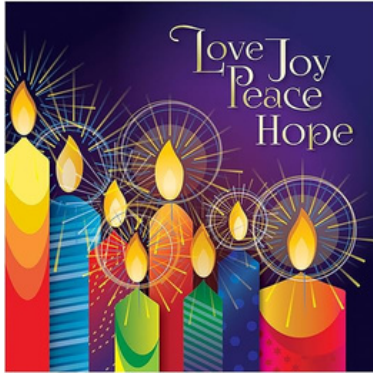

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CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

Dear Friends,

Let me start by wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Advent is such a special time of the year - a time of waiting and preparation. But what are we waiting for? The presence of GOD WITH US through the birth of Jesus Christ. But in this largely secular world, many are just looking forward to presents. Now there is nothing wrong with giving (or receiving) presents - the act of giving is an underpinning tenet of life as a Christian, though I often balk at the avarice that seems to prevail at this time of the year when, elsewhere, so many in the world have so little.

Whether you are a Christian or not, let me offer you 3 reasons why we need Jesus. Firstly, you have a past: you can't go back, but Jesus can. The Bible says, '*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever*' (Hebrews:13:8). He can walk into

places of sin and failure, wipe the slate clean, and give you a new beginning. Secondly, you need a friend: Jesus knows the worst about you, yet he believes the best because he sees you not as you are, but as he knows you can be. Thirdly, he holds the future: who else are you going to trust? In his hands you are safe and secure - today, tomorrow and for eternity. His word says, '*For surely I know the plans I have for you ...plans for your welfare and not for harm, to give you a future with hope. Then when you call upon me and come to pray to me, I will hear you. When you search for me, you will find me; if you seek me with all your heart*' (Jeremiah 29: 11-13).

Finally, in a world currently tormented by war and conflict; in a world where revenge and power often rule over compassion and love for one another; in a world where seemingly '*might is right*', we need Jesus more than ever. So this Christmas, as you deservingly open your presents, just think about welcoming the presence of Jesus into your life; it is the best present you will ever get. He is our hope for now and the future.

Every blessing
Reverend Nicki

