

It will never be the same. The world has changed. That's it! Ever said anything like this?

It seems to me that such sentiments could be echoed as we move into a New Year. Just reflect on a few of the characters and situations that made up 2017:- the Brexit vote, Donald Trump inaugurated as President of the United States, Kim Jong-un oversees North Korean Nuclear Programme, Aung San Suu Kyi and the Rohingya Muslims, Hurricanes Irma and Maria devastate the Caribbean...

It does seem that last year we experienced some world-changing events but a person's view will be coloured by their particular political stance, concern for world events or whether they were directly affected or know someone who was.

As a church we have been faced with some dramatic events....

- We finished a very successful year of celebrations to mark 150 years of St Oswald's on its current site. Celebrating with the Archbishop at our final service of celebration was a real blessing. We have much to be thankful for.
- Over the last 2 years we have been carefully working toward launching a redevelopment project (150+ Project) for the church and site. This has included a survey of Fulford commissioned by the church, public meetings and a number of visits by members of the PCC to view work undertaken by churches which have had to address similar areas to the ones we are faced with. Sadly, things were overtaken when barriers needed to be erected below the Rose Window and new lighting had to be installed for safe access to the church hall using the south path around of the church. **Further public consultations and publicity brochure are still to be done.**
- Advent Sunday December 3rd was designated as a Pledge Sunday when members of the church had an opportunity to respond to the formal launch of 150+ Project, and their support of it. At the time of writing this letter pledges of £70,000 have been offered. This is such an encouragement to the Project work.
- Along with other parishes in York Diocese using the 'Leading your Church in Growth' material means the implementing of the reflections of members of the church. Yes, we have buildings that need attention but we must not mistake the church to be the buildings in which we meet; rather the church is the people of God who gather for worship and who seek to serve our community of Fulford.

All the above and the other headlines that could be added mean that for many as they face 2018 things have changed.

Part of my Advent preparations for Christmas included a book 'In Touch With God' by Michael & Rosemary Green with additional reflections by the Archbishop of York.

One particular day looked at the Old Testament character of Nehemiah who, following on from Ezra, had experienced the destruction of the Temple and the city walls of Jerusalem. Nehemiah worked to rebuild the fabric of Jerusalem (which included the walls) but also he focused upon the people, their relationship with each other and with God.

It seems to me that the story of Nehemiah gives us a template for a personal and corporate response to the situations we face as we enter 2018.

This demands making it a priority to put God at the heart of what we are planning and be the reason for what we do.

As a church the LyCiG prayer is regularly used. It expresses both our dependency upon God and a willingness to work with Him. I have also included a prayer from the Advent Book.

The LyCiG Prayer

"God of mission, who alone brings growth to your church, send the Holy Spirit to give vision to our planning, wisdom to our actions and power to our witness.

Help our church to grow in numbers, in spiritual commitment to you, and service to our local community, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen."

"Lord, when I feel events are overwhelming me, help me to remember that you know me intimately, you sustain me and you will never forsake me. Amen."

Whatever your feelings of the past year, and your concerns for this new year, may you be assured that by drawing alongside a loving God we can know His peace and guidance in all we do.

A Happy New Year to you all.

Yours in Christ