

**This meditation is in three parts during the service.**

**The old year that is past : a meditation before our Lord**

As we look back on the year that is closing, it is overwhelmed by the trauma that was brought among us by the virus. It has taken control of the news, our lives, our families, our activities. It has proscribed our activities and limited our horizons; weakened our bodies and undermined our minds. It has profoundly highlighted what is important in our lives.

It has brought us new friends. It has brought us new insights into who we are as individuals, and who we are each for one another. It has brought out great feats of loyalty and love, duty and respect, especially by the staff of the NHS, the staff in the care sector, and all the essential services who have given their all and maintained our society through all the pressures of the year.

- We honour and respect those in the front line who have lost their lives in the fight against the disease. And also those who have daily gone to work, sometimes in the most dangerous of settings, driven by their sense of duty and their compassion for those in their care.
- We honour those among our own congregations, our families and friends who have played their own unique parts in fighting the disease.
- We offer our own anxieties, for ourselves, our family members involved and those whom we know personally.
- We offer our thanks for the love and support we have each received during the year, for our own conditions and those of our families and friends.
- We offer our thanks for the love and support given especially among our congregations, in so many diverse ways. We honour especially those who have acted as pastoral carers and telephone supporters during this year.
- We offer our thanks for the love and support given to others in the community, by the members and friends of our churches, in the Meeting Place, the Lunch Club, the Guild, Busy Little Hands, and through the generosity of our members to so many worthwhile and needy causes, in our town and in the wider world.

We remember especially with joy and sadness the lives of those of our members who have passed away this year. We celebrate their lives, and their love and achievements, in their families, in these churches, and name them now in alphabetical order:

Norma Brearley, Vera Brookes, Geoff Dixon, Bettina Hill, Bettina Hill, David Hurrell, Alexandra Jenkins, Harry Mangham, Jean Matthewman, Arthur Rowland, Brian Throssell, Garwin Throssell, Jacqueline Wade, Bryan Walton. Lord, remember them.

## **The turning of the year : a meditation before our Lord**

Though we cannot put the past year out of minds, let us think of the point we have reached in our lives as the year turns.

First, we go into the new year, knowing the current restrictions, but looking forward to a vaccine that will protect us from it and enable us to emerge from its restrictions.

So at this time it is right that we give thanks for the brilliant minds and hard work of all those who even at this midnight hour, are working in the fields of science and medical advancement. We give thanks for the researchers, the thinkers, the human guinea pigs, some known to us here. We give thanks that we live in a world where the old ignorance of the causes of disease has gone, and the wonders of this world are explored and exploited for good; a world not ruled by ruthless and selfish power or superstition, but where men and women dedicate their lives and their actions to our physical salvation.

Second, this midnight hour is a moment that is truly momentous, as we break our ties with the European Union. We give thanks that we live in a democracy, where each person has a vote, and a chance to shape the future. And now, whether we voted leave or remain, whether we are angry, or hurt, delighted and expectant, hopeful, fearful, regretful, vindicated or betrayed, we are a nation that still believes in the will of the people. So at this moment of change, we pray for all those whose lives will change, for good or ill. We pray for all those who have to work out what our new future means, and how it will work. We pray that we will be able to work together, not just for personal goals and wealth, but for the health and prosperity of everyone in this nation; for justice and respect for the law; for fairness and the defeat of poverty; for respect and partnership in government. For a new future, where the better angels of our nature prevail.

## **The new year that is ahead : a meditation before our Lord**

So we look forward to new and different year. We celebrate the turning of the minds of the world to a new environmental perspective. We give thanks for the work of scientists and activists like David Attenborough and Greta Thunberg; for those who care for the natural world, like Chris Packham, and for those who make decisions to turn our world around, for the renewed commitment in the new administration in America, and our own new green plan here in the UK. As we emerge from the pandemic, may the race for environmental change lead us each to play our own part.

And finally, as we look forward to emerging from the pandemic, we pray that we may be able to celebrate our faith in the Gospel of love here in church, together. We pray that we may be able to hold on to the insights of the past year, and the new friends we have made. We pray that we may discover the joy in worship together. We pray that we may be able to be fed by our loving fellowship in the flesh, and that the old world with its rush and bustle will not again take over our lives and remove from us these human blessings.

As we look out from our existing church fellowship, may we cling close to those who have found us this year, and reach out to others, so that they too may know the power of the Love of God, and the joy of fellowship with his living saints. May we each play our part in sharing the Gospel of Love and peace with those who knock on our door. Amen