

Rector's letter Jan 2018

Dear friends

I am writing this letter on the day when parliament was supposed to be voting on the Brexit agreement between the UK government and the EU, but which was postponed by Teresa May in the expectation of a massive defeat. By the time you read this, things may have resolved themselves and the way forward for the relationship between Britain and the rest of Europe may have been settled – but I somehow doubt it. Thus these are times of crisis for our country, and we all need to be praying for our leaders.

However this is not the 1st time nor will it be the last when we face difficult times as a nation, and I am reminded, therefore, of the words George VI quoted in his Christmas message to the nation in 1939, when the nation had recently gone to war with Nazi Germany and the future looked uncertain at best and bleak at worst.

*I said to the man who stood at the Gate of the Year,
"Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown."
And he replied, "Go out into the darkness, and put your hand into the hand of God.
That shall be to you better than light, and safer than a known way."*

We stand at the gate of the year that is 2019, and the future is indeed unknown, and we would like a light to show us the way, but what we **need** is perhaps different from what we would **like** – what we need is to put our hand into the hand of God and trust Him that whatever the outcome for our nation over Brexit, whatever the political, economic or social turmoil we may experience, our loving God journeys with us into the future, and because He does, we do not need to be fearful. The Psalmist puts it this way:

¹*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble.*
²*Therefore we will not fear, though the earth give way
and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea,*
³*though its waters roar and foam and the mountains quake with their surging....!*
⁶*Nations are in uproar, kingdoms fall; he lifts his voice, the earth melts.*
⁷*The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.*
⁸*Come and see what the LORD has done, the desolations he has brought on the earth.*
⁹*He makes wars cease to the ends of the earth.
He breaks the bow and shatters the spear; he burns the shields^{with} with fire.*
¹⁰*He says, 'Be still, and know that I am God;
I will be exalted among the nations, I will be exalted in the earth.'*
¹¹*The LORD Almighty is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress.*

Psalm 46

Thus perhaps our response to the turmoil that is happening around us is to do as God tells us in our Psalm – 'Be still and know that I am God.' Why not do this at some point over the New Year period – just take a bit of 'time out' and be still before God and choose to put your hand in His. Do so with regard to our country and its future, but perhaps also do so with regard to the personal challenges that you are aware 2019 is bringing or might bring for yourself or for those closest to you.

And perhaps also as St John's and St Luke's Together, we might care to do the same – for, as seems to be normal now, we are facing significant challenges in 2019 ranging from our desire to see growth, especially at St Luke's, to financial pressures caused at least in part by another increase in parish share request. We could get downhearted or even fearful, but we would do better to put our

hand in the hand of God, journeying with Him into the future knowing that that will be better than light and safer than a known way. This is what we **need** to do.

With every blessing

Simon