

Reflections for New Year

I feel sorry for 2021; I don't think a year has been laden with such expectations for a very, very, long time.

But, let's not lose sight of the good things that 2020 brought us, those of us here this evening have grown into a fellowship during 2020, communities have shown huge strengths in supporting and caring for one another, many people have developed relationships with their neighbours thanks to the weekly clap for carers, lots of us have learned to use new ways to stay in touch with friends and family. We have demonstrated love and compassion and by doing that we have shown the love of God and created opportunities for those we care about to develop their own relationships with God.

23 years ago, I started the year with high expectations, Chris and I got engaged just as 1998 began, but even the excitement of planning a wedding and beginning a new life together can't compare with the global impact of the pandemic coming under control. But it's not going to be under control for a while and there will be more separation, frustration and restrictions before it does – we still have a lot of waiting to do.

Through Advent at All Saints', we thought about waiting. Waiting not just for Christmas but for the second coming the time when God will come and complete the work Jesus began, when heaven and earth will be re-made. Just as the way we lived through 2020 impacted on those around us, so the way we behave and what we do through 2021 and beyond can also be an example, our closing prayer looks at the way we should live while we are waiting. Thinking about the short winter days it looks at the things we need to be short on, to do very little of and the things we should be long on, take our time over, and do well....

**From the rising of the winter sun to its setting,
scatter the darkness with the light of Your love, O Shining One.
Make me short on mean thoughts, long on offering words of comfort.
Make me short on being rushed, long on paying attention.
Make me short on focussing only on myself, long on looking beyond.
Make me short on obsessive lists, long on spontaneous acts of kindness.
Make me short on mindless activity, long on time to reflect.
Make me short on tradition as habit, long on re-discovery and re-owning
Make me short on rushing and tiring, long on walking and wondering.
Make me short on false festive jollity, long on stilling and rooted joy.
Make me short on guilt, long on being merciful to myself.
Make me short on being overwhelmed, long on peaceableness. Amen**