



CONNECT

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Those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength,
they will soar on wings like eagles;
they will run and not grow weary,
they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40:31

Minister Revd John Gray details on Contact Page

Church Secretary Mrs Sally Edmondson

Dear Friends,

The month of January is named after Janus the Roman god of doorways and gates, beginnings, and endings, making him the perfect deity to herald in the New Year. Janus was famous for his ability to turn one face to reflect upon the past and yet another face freshly pointed upon the future. This is so appropriate. January marks the new year for most of us humans. Janus is two-faced not because he gossiped about the other gods behind their backs, but because he calls us to look back on the past with reflection and forward with hope.

As we look back on 2020 we could say it was an “annus horribilis” dominated by Covid-19 and all sorts of disruptions in our everyday, church and family lives. Our “new normal” might seem “abnormal” to us as the disease and all the restrictions around it made 2020 a difficult year. However, also let’s remember in prayer all the friends, family and our church fellowship who have shared the last year with us and helped us to go through it reasonably well.

And with Janus’ second face, giving Christian meaning to the originally pagan symbolism, let’s turn our heads forward seeing hope and new opportunities in the future. Let’s draw from the knowledge and the experience we gained from last year concerning what really matters in life and in what areas we should live differently and resolve to live each day fully and well to the glory of God.

The images of Janus are strange and evocative; they seem to combine time and place with an uncomfortable intimacy. We tend to think of the present moment as the most real experience: the past and the future are unknowable or distant. Yet, they are not. Our actions in the past are linked to our hopes in the future. As we turn our head – with Janus’ second face – forward we see lots of opportunities in not only a different year but in a different us too. *“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!”* 2 Corinthians 5:17 Our resolve is that we will be kinder, more caring and loving, and more faithful than before.

In ancient Rome, the gates of Janus' temple were only closed in times of peace — which didn't happen often. I hope they get closed for us now, symbolically, as it is our wish to have a peaceful year in the world and in our circles

Instead in the new year may we be able to open the doors of the church of the Living God – (lack of) Corona virus permitting -, our Heavenly Father in Jesus Christ. Our Church.

Happy New Year! Yours in Christ,

John

Christmas Greetings

We as a congregation have received Christmas greetings from Ken and Valerie Marsh with a message "To all our friends at Nailsea URC .

Hope we will see you all again sometime in 2021."

Thoughts

Just before Christmas I received a card from Mary Piggot's sister Janet I am sharing with you their message:

“Janet and Kenneth sent their best wishes along with Christmas blessings to all the congregation at Nailsea church.”

I have been in touch with them occasionally and with Mary's niece Sheila.

We are blessed that Mary's legacy of friendship and support continues.

A Prayer for putting on a Face Mask

by Revd Richard Bolt, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Canada.

Creator God,

As I prepare to go into the world, help me to see the sacramental nature of wearing this cloth. Let it be a tangible and visible way of living love for my neighbours, as I love myself.

Christ Jesus, since my lips will be covered, uncover my heart, that people would see my smile in the crinkles around my eyes. Since my voice may be muffled help me to speak clearly, not only with my words, but with my actions.

Holy Spirit, as the elastic touches my ears, remind me to listen carefully and caringly to all those I meet. May my simple piece of cloth be a shield and a banner, and may each breath that it holds be filled with your love. In your love and in that love I pray. Amen.

Commitment for Life Prayer

Prayer for the Children:

Heroes and villains

Jesus, we love to sit beside our children and listen to stories of heroes and villains. What happiness must fill your heart when you hear the children laugh! What desolation you must feel when you see a child hurt, frightened or unhappy.

Jesus, just as you called all the children to be by your side, offering food and life, protection and safety, may we too be a people rising up like heroes to love, honour, and protect all the children of the world.

Amen.

The URC daily devotions

The URC daily devotions can be accessed via devotions.urc.org.uk
These are approx 5 minutes long. The Sunday service can be accessed from the same site.

New Year's Plan by Mary Fairchild

I tried to think of a clever new phrase -
A slogan to inspire the next 365 days,
A motto to live by this coming New Year,
But the catchy words fell flat to my ear.

And then I heard His still small voice
Saying, "Consider this simple, daily choice:
With each new dawn and close of day
Make new your resolve to trust and obey."

"Don't look back, caught in regret
Or dwell on the sorrow of dreams unmet;
Don't stare forward anchored by fear,
No, live in this moment, for I Am here."

"I am all you need. Everything. I Am.
You are held secure by my strong hand.
Give me this one thing - your all in all;
Into my grace, let yourself fall."

So, at last, I'm ready; I see the way.
It's to daily follow, trust, and obey.
I enter the New Year armed with a plan,
To give Him my everything – all that I am.

The Twelve Days of Christmas

On the first day of Christmas my true love said to me
I'm glad we bought fresh turkey and a proper tree.

On the second day of Christmas much laughter could be heard
As we tucked into our turkey, a most delicious bird.

On the third day of Christmas we'd people from next door
The turkey tasted just as good as it had the day before.

Day four relations came to stay, poor Gran is looking old,
We finished our Christmas pud and ate the turkey cold.

On the fifth day of Christmas outside the snowflakes hurried
But we were nice and warm inside, we ate our turkey curried.

On the sixth day of Christmas I must admit the Christmas spirit died,
The children fought and bickered, we ate turkey rissoles, fried.

On the seventh day of Christmas my true love gave a wince,
When she sat down at the table and was offered – turkey mince.

Day eight: our nerves were getting frayed, the dog had run for shelter,
I served up turkey pancakes, with a glass of Alka Seltzer.

Day nine the cat left home, by lunch time dad was blotto,
He said he had to have a drink or two to face turkey risotto.

By the tenth day the booze had gone, except for our home made brew,
And if that wasn't bad enough, we suffered turkey stew.

On the eleventh day of Christmas the Christmas tree was moulting
The mince pies were hard as rock and the turkey was revolting.

On the twelfth day Of Christmas my father smacked his lips,
The guests had gone, the turkey too. We dined on fish and chips!

I would like to thank everyone who has contributed to Connect in the last twelve months. I have been happy to receive jokes and poems, thoughts and prayers as well as letters of thanks and information. Please keep them coming and I will include as many as I can

Tony