

From The Rectory

I am always a bit ambivalent about the New Year. A Yorkshire woman married to a true Scot, my mother never took to the customs surrounding Hogmanay. My father, meanwhile, got irritated by her reluctance to enter into things. I have come to the conclusion that I am definitely my mother's daughter in this regard – I am delighted now that we have grandchildren to give us the excuse of babysitting to avoid the midnight revelry! I also find it all a little daunting – looking into the year ahead, a vast empty space to be written on: who knows what it will bring?

2017 will be a turning point for the parish. I retire on 7 May. Two weeks later Matthew and I have plans in place to take off on a 'gap year' and see something of the Americas, maybe further if we don't get fed up with travelling! By then The Rectory will be empty and waiting for the next incumbent.

For the parish, it will be a time of 'interregnum', a time when the church must look after itself without a vicar to oversee things or be responsible for worship. Everyone has to pull together and do their bit to keep things running smoothly. Visiting clergy must be brought in to cover services and occasional offices (baptisms, weddings and funerals).

Most importantly however, an interregnum is a time for the parish to take stock: to look back on recent years, see where it has come to, and consider what the way forward is now. What are the priorities for the churches, what strengths and talents will they be seeking in the new priest? A new chapter is about to be written, and it is important that it is not a replacement that is sought, but someone who will take you on the next step of your journey. You should be starting to mull over these things now.

So next year is daunting because of the unknown, but it is also cause for excitement. What will we all be doing by this time next year? You will, I hope, be celebrating his/her first Christmas in Bledlow, Saunderton and Horsenden with your new vicar. Matthew and I will be in Buenos Aires celebrating a warm and sunny Christmas with our daughter and her family.

All that, of course, is if things go according to plan – as someone once wisely said, if you want to give God a laugh, send him a copy of your five year plan!

May God bless you and yours in the coming year.

With love and prayer

Jennifer