

Lumen

Winter 2017–2018

The Anglican Church of Luxembourg

The Anglican Church of Luxembourg is a Chaplaincy within the Diocese in Europe of the Church of England. Our worship is open to all.

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[Anglican Church of Luxembourg](http://www.anglican.lu)



Dear Friends,

As I write this I see through my study window, in Norfolk, a day that is dank and overcast. The trees continue to shed their leaves as the autumn has been mild, and so now, in the early days of December, some trees retain their golden leaves. The squirrel that frequents my bird table has been stocking up on seeds and peanuts, and the pheasants that hesitantly approach the ground beneath the table are becoming daily visitors. There is activity all around my garden as nature prepares for the winter that lies ahead. Only the hedgehogs disappear, as they settle down for a long sleep, and the rabbits are less frequent, sleeping underground till the spring sunshine brings them out to feast on the growing grass and seedlings so carefully planted.

This time of enforced rest enables restoration for the coming of the new season, when the plants will put forth new foliage and everything will look splendid in their spring attire. Birds and animals will shed their winter coats in the spring, allowing a new covering to grace their bodies in preparation for mating and the arrival of chicks and young. The time of rest and recuperation that is hibernation brings new life and fresh growth.

But what of us? We, strange creatures that we are, continue to work at our normal pace and expect the same level of activity and energy that we can achieve in the summer sunshine. In the past our ancestors sensibly retired early and rose later, to save precious fuel and candles. This expectation of continued activity affects not only our physical lives, but it impacts our spiritual lives also.

Most of us allocate time each year to rest and recuperation, with a week or two of holiday, when we leave our normal routine and go, either to visit family or friends, or to travel, refreshing ourselves before returning to routine. Some of us, however, feel the need for something more, perhaps to take a time of withdrawal from our usual activity to seek fresh spiritual inspiration and a time of what might be a sort of hibernation.

As a teenager I was inspired by reading *A London Sparrow* by Phyllis Thompson, which tells the story of Gladys Aylward. Miss Aylward's missionary work in China was made famous by another book and a film, *The Inn of the Sixth Happiness*, but the first book tells a more detailed story of a longer ministry. It describes her turning up at a mission house from the wilds of rural China, exhausted mentally, physically and spiritually, and sitting for three weeks or more with an open Bible on her lap, accepting whatever food was given, uttering barely a word, as she regrouped her soul and body. Then, restored and refreshed, rekindled by allowing the work of the Holy Spirit in her own spirit, she would set off again, back to wherever she was ministering. The dedication and

drive she possessed that enabled the perilous journey she had taken overland to China, with no Mission Society support to pay her expenses because she was uneducated, is inspirational. But she also needed to take time out to give God space to administer restoration and refreshment.

We are not good at receiving from God in our self-sufficient society. We are not good at sitting still and listening, with or without a Bible on our laps. We are ‘do-ers’ and we are not so good at being ‘be-ers’.

As I grow older (and hopefully wiser!) it becomes clearer to me that, while there is place for taking responsibility and working hard to achieve a stated goal, I must take time to hibernate. I must sit, or stand, and stare – at the trees, at the clouds, at the river, at the wildlife frequenting my garden, and allow God to refresh my spirit. I have learned over many years that, at least once every year, I must take myself to a place of retreat, either silent or led. If I don’t, then I will become exhausted and less productive, stale and uninspired.

One of the reasons, and there were many, why I was delighted to take up the opportunity to come to Luxembourg last July, was that I could see if a thirty-day silent retreat was a possibility for me. It has been on my ‘bucket list’ for some time. It would mean a time of separation from friends and family, when I would be alone for long periods. I am an extrovert, which in Myers-Briggs terms means that I thrive on meeting with people. The result was that I learned it might be even harder than I had thought, so more practice will be needed and better preparation before this can be done.

Just like nature we, too, need to hibernate, allowing fresh spiritual growth and fresh thinking to emerge. We need a time to listen, to be alone with God and to face ourselves with spiritual honesty, allowing our true self to emerge. Most of us live our lives behind a mask, a mask created for protection or as a barrier to the rest of the world, which can feel scary and overwhelming. The fact is God knows who we are right now – we are not fooling Him – and he would like us to know and accept ourselves too, as He does. And through that acceptance of ourselves as we sit in God’s presence and allow Him to love us, we will, as St Paul said in 2 Corinthians 3:18 ‘... *with unveiled faces, see the glory of the Lord as though reflected in a mirror, and are transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another; for this comes from the Lord, the Spirit*’.



With love and blessing,

*Margaret Whitaker
Locum Chaplain*

*PS – Remember that there was originally a mirror
in this icon, in the square at the front of the table.*

Announcements

FUNERAL

31 October Ailish Angus-Palmer

Royal British Legion Poppy Appeal

The British Embassy in Luxembourg has informed us that the sum of €361.34 was raised by our congregation from the sale of poppies at the back of the church.

The Royal British Legion provides financial, social and emotional support to millions who have served or are currently serving in the armed forces, and their dependants. Without the money raised from the Poppy Appeal, the RBL would be unable to continue its vital welfare and benevolent work.

Christmas Carol Concert

The Christmas Carol Concert on 17 December attracted a large audience and raised €851 in donations for the charities supported by our Church.

***Lumen* returns to paper**

In response to the last issue's experiment with paperless distribution, there were 10 comments in favour of email, and two objections. The Church Council has decided to revert to print and postage, justifying the cost on the grounds that paper copies are more likely to be seen and read. Comment remains welcome: please write to mag.editor@anglican.lu.

Winter issue covers

Thanks to Kristi Roberts and Jain Garrod, for a woodland view of Luxembourg on New Year's Eve and a collage on the theme of hibernation.

News from the Church Council

At its October meeting the Council received the tantalising news that, following interviews, a candidate had been chosen to be our next Chaplain – but the Churchwardens were not at liberty to disclose the person's name until all the formalities had been completed. Patience was still the order of the day! Moira Hogg and Victoria Hodgson reported on the Archdeaconry Synod they had attended in early October. Apart from the general activities, they had participated in workshops on safeguarding and mission action planning.

After Catriona Gillham and Nik Legge had both stepped down as Council members for personal reasons, the Council co-opted Lauren Marshall and Tristan de Bollardi re to replace them until the next AGM. Thank you, Lauren and Tristan!

In November, Evelyn Sweerts, our Lay Pastoral Assistant, briefed the Council on how a number of her new activities were shaping up in what was proving to be a busy autumn for her. The Treasurer reported a big increase in donations in October. However, there had also been some large items of expenditure to meet, but they were mostly one-off. Some proposals for the 2018 budget were discussed. The Charities Committee put forward its list of proposed charities for 2017, which the Council then duly approved, thanking the Committee for its work.

The efforts by the Churchwardens to obtain payment of the Luxembourg Government subsidy due to us seemed finally to have borne fruit, as they had been told that the money would shortly be forthcoming. Some of the other matters looked at in December were the services over Christmas, a couple of issues with the Salle Rheinsheim, future use of the Church's flats and an ACAT inter-faith human rights project.

Tania Buhr

For more details, please visit anglican.lu / Links & Documents / Meeting Minutes & Reports, and scroll down to 'Church Council'.

Dear Friends,

We informed you, both by an e-mail on 28 September and an article in the Autumn edition of *Lumen*, of our Chaplaincy's shortfall in income during 2017.

We are glad to say that a considerable number of people responded to this and some generous donations have been paid into the Church account.

It is not our practice for the Treasurer to inform the Churchwardens, or the Chaplain when there is one, of the identity of donors; we simply know the total amounts given. We wardens are thus not in a position to thank those concerned individually. In the absence of personal acknowledgements, then, this message is our way of expressing our sincere thanks and appreciation to all those who have been kind enough to make extra contributions in recent weeks. We value very much this show of support for our Chaplaincy.

With best wishes,

*Philippa Seymour & Simon Norcross, Churchwardens
Gabriel Chelladurai, Treasurer*

Marie-Louise Read and her husband Geoff, our new Chaplain



Geoff (British) and Marie-Louise (German) have lived roughly half their married life in Continental Europe (Switzerland and Germany) and half in the UK. For 15 years Geoff was Anglican Chaplain in Basel, Switzerland before moving to his current role in clergy training and development in the Diocese of Chelmsford, England.

Marie-Louise started her working career as a translator in German, French and English before moving to language teaching via being a home-maker while their two, now grown-up, daughters were at school. She grew up just across the border in Bitburg and they met in Bristol while she was on a semester abroad from her Applied Linguistics course. The Konvikt Chapel is not unknown to them—they married there in 1985. Their two girls, Rebecca and Katya, now live in London and Köln. As a couple they enjoy cycling and opening their home for hospitality and walking the latest addition to the family, Evie, a one-year-old yellow Labrador Retriever.

‘We are excited about becoming part of the Anglican Church of Luxembourg, and working out together how the Lord will lead us forward to build on all that has been achieved there over the years. We value your prayers as we prepare to move.’

Geoff is expected to take his first service in Luxembourg on 18 March.

Reverse Advent collection, 2017

A big thank you to everyone that participated in the 2017 *Reverse Advent Collection*. Thank you to those that extended the collection to the European School and the European Court of Justice. The response was overwhelming. There is real joy in the act of giving. The joy is multiplied in knowing that in our own little ways, we touch the lives of some of those that are really in need. They do not know who we are, and they do not need to know. But they know that somewhere out there, there are people who thought of them, who wish to bring a little light into their lives – and that they are not alone. It is the joy and love that we extend to others that brings true happiness and union with God. When we give, we reap the joy of seeing a bright smile, laughter, tears of joy and peace.

Our 2017 *Reverse Advent Collection* went to the *Fondation Maison de la Porte Ouverte* – FMPO – to support people in need in several hostels in Luxembourg.

Those who braved the snowstorm on the family Carol Service Sunday had the opportunity to learn more about the activities of the FMPO through a short presentation made by the association's president, Maurice Bauer. He painted a very vivid picture of the situation of those that the charity caters for, and who are the recipients of our collections. Mr Bauer appeared genuinely surprised and appreciative at the sheer volume of the gifts brought by our congregation, and expressed the association's deep gratitude for the generosity of our church community.

The spirit of Christmas is indeed that of giving and of generosity. The Christmas story is that of a compassionate God, who was generous enough to give us His only son Jesus Christ – who is indeed the reason for the season.

Thank you all, and may your New Year be full of blessings from above.

Edward Ojo



Arts Festival preview

Our Arts Festival on Sunday 4 February will feature dance as well as many different types of music. We'll be on home ground this time, with the music performances in the Konvikt Chapel, workshops in the creche room and dance, food, drinks and book sale in the room downstairs.

There will be the usual three church services for the first Sunday of the month, and the Festival will run from after the end of the 11 am service until Evensong at 6.30 pm. A €20 ticket will entitle you to a whole afternoon of varied entertainment (children under 13 free). Performers also get in free, though we should be grateful for donations from performers who plan to enjoy other performances as well as their own. Workshops cost €5 for children €7 for adults, and should be booked in advance.

Money raised will go to the various charities that the Church supports. For a list of causes we supported in 2017 see <https://www.anglican.lu/giving/causes-we-support/>. In 2018 we shall continue support for most of these and maybe add one or two new charities to this list. Draft programme below.

Chapel (upstairs)

- 13.00 – 13.30 First Sunday Group and child musicians, with some songs for all ages to sing
- 13.30 – 14.00 *Raft of Loons*: Shanties and songs of the sea
- 14.00 – 14.30 Poetry
- 14.30 – 15.00 Music from students at the Luxembourg Conservatoire
- 15.00 – 15.30 *The Art of Music* vocal ensemble: Renaissance music for Candlemas by Andreas De Silva, Guillaume Dufay, William Byrd, William Mundy and Josquin Desprez
- 15.30 – 16.00 The Virtuoso Horn Duo
- 16.00 – 16.30 The Melusina Consort: music for voices & viols from Shakespeare's time
- 16.30 – 17.00 Intermedii vocal ensemble
- 17.00 – 17.30 Anglican Church Choir
- 17.30 – 18.30 Choir practice
- 18.30 – 19.30 Choral Evensong

Salle Maria Rheinsheim (downstairs)

- 12.30 – 18.30 Food, drinks, books and DVDs on sale
- 14.30 – 15.00 Pupils from the Jeanette Hutchines School of Ballet
- 16.30 – 17.00 Jeya Kalakshetra School of Dancing: Classical Bharatanatyam Dance
- 17.30 – 18.30 Swing Dance Luxembourg with an opportunity for everyone to take part.

Workshops in Creche room (upstairs)

For adults:

- 14.00 – 15.00 Art therapy (Claudia Mirica)

For children:

- 15.00 – 16.00 International folktales with songs from around the world
A colour-it-in story book to take home, featuring the folk-tales and songs (Lisa Dishman)
- 16.00 – 17.00 Fancy lettering and writing (Tania Buhr)
- 17.00 – 18.00 Creative writing (Jess Bauldry)

Philippa Seymour

Smartphone Prayers & Anglican Digital News

Did you know that there are lots of Anglican apps available to support your personal prayer life? Church House Publishing produces a range of official Church of England apps to support prayer, worship and Bible study. All are available for both Apple and Android (iTunes Store or Google Play Store).



Daily Prayer is the official app to help you follow Morning, Evening and Night Prayer, wherever you are. For every day of the year, it presents the three services in full and includes Bible readings (NRSV translation), psalms, canticles and seasonal variations. It allows you to:

- Access Morning, Evening and Night Prayer for yesterday, today and a month ahead;
- Switch between Contemporary and Traditional formats with one click;
- Find details of Feast Days, Festivals and Commemorations from the Common Worship Calendar;
- Read Bible passages in full (NRSV translation) without the need for a separate Bible app.

FREE online, £2.99 / year for offline access



Access a simple form of *Prayer During the Day* and *Night Prayer* (Compline): again all the texts are there, adjusted for the day and the season of the Church year, and no additional resources are required. You can use *Prayer During the Day* on its own, as your sole act of prayer and praise, or you can use it alongside *Night Prayer* in a pattern of prayer at the beginning and end of the day. Especially good for busy people.

FREE online / WiFi, 99p / year for offline access

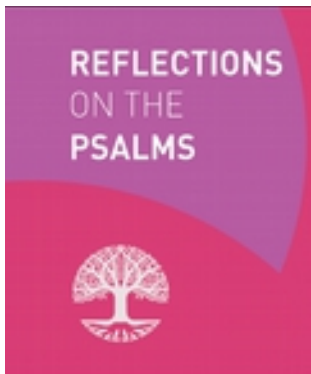


The official daily Bible notes from the Church of England, *Reflections for Daily Prayer* are designed to enhance your spiritual journey day by day throughout the year.

On Monday to Saturday each week, *Reflections* provides:

- An inspiring reflection on one of the Bible readings for the day;
- Full lectionary details for Morning Prayer;
- A Collect for the day.

By following the Common Worship lectionary cycle of readings, *Reflections* helps you to join your thoughts and prayers with those of thousands of Anglicans worldwide, and follow a balanced pattern of Bible readings that draws upon both the Old and the New Testaments.



Reflections on the Psalms provides insightful commentary on each of the Bible's 150 Psalms from leading writers, including the Archbishop of York John Sentamu, John Pritchard, Paula Gooder and many more.

There is one reflection for each of the Psalms, with two or more reflections for the longer Psalms. Each reflection is accompanied by the full text of the psalm from the *Common Worship Psalter*, plus a refrain and prayer.

The app allows you to follow a simple pattern of Psalms over the course of a month – following the 1662 *Book of Common Prayer* – or in any order you choose.

The app is available for a one-off cost of £8.99 – a substantial saving on the cost of the print edition (£14.99).



The *Sunday Worship* app offers an economical, quick and simple way to prepare for Sunday services. Whether you are offering intercessions, giving the Bible reading, helping at Junior Church, or just want to read and reflect on the week's readings, Sunday Worship allows you to:

- View the next Sunday's Bible readings, Collect and post-Communion prayers from *Common Worship* in full;
- Browse by date and scroll ahead to future Sundays;
- Bookmark your favourite dates for easy reference.

£1.99 for a 12-month offline subscription.

In addition, the Church of England has a brand-new website. The five major changes are:

1. Simple navigation, a good search engine, improved website accessibility, mobile-friendly and a clean design. Over 250 professional new images have been shared by local churches and taken nationally that show the breadth of the Church and activities that go on.
2. A transformed *Our faith* section that explains Christianity in an engaging way. Built in collaboration with Church House Publishing, new videos form a key part of this project.
3. New *Faith in action* films that bring to life the mission work of the Church. All of the *Faith in action* and *Our faith* videos are available for local churches and dioceses to use on their own websites and social media accounts from our YouTube page.
4. A streamlined *Prayer and worship* section, including liturgical and prayer resources, thanks to the work of Church House Publishing. Prayer will feature at the heart of the website with the day's Collect now far more visible.
5. A new *Life events* section better explaining baptisms, confirmations, weddings and funerals as well as vocations.

Do go and have a look: <https://www.churchofengland.org/>.

Evelyn Sweerts

Remembrance Day, 2017



Photo: Elaine Birch

Wreaths were laid by the representatives of five countries and of the UK's armed services. The RAF Association donated an altar-cloth with hundreds of poppy motifs, shown above. Members of the Brownies, Guides and Scouts were also present.

Resisting evil

In his sermon at our Remembrance Day service, Canon John Philpott wondered whether the second reading, Matthew 5, 38-45, was an appropriate choice for Remembrance. He explored various ways in which others have responded to this gospel reading but the question remained open. At around the same time the Book Group was reading Dietrich Bonhoeffer's *The cost of discipleship* in which this passage from Matthew, and the Beatitudes which precede it, are key texts. Bonhoeffer in this book looks at many of the really difficult things that Jesus said, and concludes in almost all cases that Jesus meant us to take them literally. It's a tough message, but Jesus never said following him would be easy.

But this one: 'Do not resist an evil-doer'. What? Isn't that precisely what we are supposed to do? Didn't we all promise (or our godparents promised on our behalf) when we were baptised to do just that? To renounce evil, to 'fight valiantly against sin, the flesh and the devil'. That sounds like

resisting evil to me, even if it doesn't use the word 'resist'. Bonhoeffer, taking it literally, points out that resistance to an aggressor tends to prolong the fight, whereas, he says, if evil meets no resistance it will eventually wear itself out.

The circumstances of his life provided a rather extreme opportunity to put this to the test. Ordained in Germany in 1931, he lived through the rise of Hitler. Despite the Gospel, he spoke out against Nazism and particularly the way that Hitler was forcing churches to adopt Nazi policies. When war was imminent he deliberately returned to Germany from the USA as he felt he should live through this difficult period with the people of Germany. He joined the military intelligence unit and used this position as cover to work for the German resistance until his arrest in 1943 and execution in 1945.

So he did resist evil, but not by using the violent tactics of his opponents. Perhaps that was what Jesus meant. Perhaps the clue is in the punctuation. There is no full stop after 'evil' in the Greek. A literal translation would be: 'Do not resist evil, but whoever hits you on your right cheek, turn to him the other as well', and the full stop doesn't come until after the bit about going two miles instead of one. So perhaps Jesus meant, don't counter violence with violence, but find some other way to wrong-foot your opponent, which was what Bonhoeffer did. And as John Philpott pointed out, to hit the right cheek is a backhanded slap to an inferior, but to hit the left cheek you have to face your opponent and look them in the eye, so that is perhaps a way of making aggressors face up to what they are doing.

I was thinking about this reading, and wondering whether there was a way that it could be reflected in a hymn, and came up with the following, to be sung to Gustav Holst's tune *Thaxted* for the hymn by Cecil Spring-Rice, *I vow to thee my country*, which may be better known as the *Jupiter* theme from Holst's orchestral suite *The Planets*.

O God, our Lord and Father, whose kingdom is above
All earthly cares and conflicts, inspire us with your love:
A love that's always with us, a love that never ends,
A love that shows us how to treat our enemies and friends.
Help us to never take offence, to turn our cheek and smile,
And cheerfully to do your will and go the extra mile.

Give us a sense of gratitude for those who paid a price
For brave, unselfish action when words could not suffice;
For those who struggle daily, whose courage does not fail,
To put an end to suffering, for justice to prevail.
Give us the generosity to think of others first
And answer hurt with gentleness, so evil is reversed.

Our hope is for your kingdom, where no more tears are shed,
The mourners will be comforted, the hungry will be fed;
The victims and the downcast will take their rightful place;
The merciful and pure in heart will see you face to face.
Help us to be the peacemakers so hate and conflict cease,
And let the whole world celebrate the triumph of your peace.

Philippa Seymour;
(with thanks to Evelyn Sweerts and other members of the Book Group,
who helped to clarify my thinking about this.)

God's work in us

Philippians 4 vv 4-7

(An abridged version of Canon Philpott's sermon on 15 October)

Listening to the epistle we had today from Philippians it would seem that the Christian life is a breeze – a wonderful experience, a problem-less existence, a joyful, fulfilling, energising yet peaceful romp.

Just listen to the way in which Paul seems to go over the top, as he reaches for words that allow for nothing but the highest and the best.

When should we rejoice? *Always.*

Who should know about our gentleness? *Everyone.*

What should we not worry about? *Anything.*

What should we pray about? *Everything.*

How much understanding does the peace of God surpass? *All understanding.*

A description of the Christian life in those terms seems to suggest that heaven, entire and complete, has already come to earth. However, just a moment's thought will remind us that in spite of the superlatives Paul uses about the life of faith, it has its shadow side. Paul himself was in prison, burdened with the care of the churches and with what he described in his second letter to the Corinthians as his thorn in the flesh. He wrote to those in Philippi who faced opposition. By God's grace he also writes to us, who like the Philippians are in Christ – the Christ who lived gloriously, rose triumphantly but also died ignominiously.

Paul's upbeat words have to be put in the context of his life, and the context of the lives of Christians down the ages, who have found that, tremendous though the blessings and advantages are of being a Christian, yet life is not necessarily a bowl of cherries. I remember reading M. Scott Peck's *The Road Less Travelled* back in 1986 and being struck by the opening three words – *Life is difficult*. In a world where so many Christian books promise you spiritual success if only you will do this or that (or not do that and this), it was quite a relief to read a book that for weeks topped the best-seller lists but wasn't actually a simple problem-solving, cure-all-of-life's-ills sort of book.

God's people throughout history have faced tough times, tough decisions, and painful episodes. Faith has been undermined, health has been damaged, temptation has been given in to, depression has crippled and poverty has dogged their steps. Take, for example, one of the great 18th century English hymn writers, William Cowper. He wrote *O for a closer walk with God*. Why did he write it? Because something he once had, seemed to have deserted him. In the words of another of his hymns – *Where is the blessedness I knew / When first I sought the Lord? / Where is the soul-refreshing dew / Of Jesus and his word?* The poor man was a depressive; he feared he had committed the unpardonable sin, and he was hounded by rumours of an immoral relationship. He experienced a nervous breakdown and suicide attempts, and was kept straight-jacketed in an asylum for the insane. No wonder he also wrote *God moves in a mysterious way his wonders to*

perform. I reckon Cowper found it difficult to rejoice in the Lord always. I'm sure the peace of God eluded him on occasions.

It can be that being a Christian brings us problems that we would never have encountered otherwise. There was John Woolman, an 18th century American Quaker. He was a very comfortable merchant until God convicted his conscience of the sin of slave-owning. Woolman gave up his prosperous business, and used his money to purchase his slaves' freedom. He wore undyed suits to avoid using dye produced by slave labour and travelled on foot in solidarity with slaves who weren't permitted to ride in carriages. He refused to consume sugar, rum, molasses and other products of slave labour. You can guess what his neighbours and former colleagues thought about this man, who it seemed had gone soft in the head.

His oddness may not have won him many friends, but it wasn't long before there wasn't a single American Quaker who owned a slave. All this ties up with what Jesus said when he encouraged people to come to him – *Come to me, all you who are weary and heavy laden and I will give you rest*. Having heard that, the disciple then discovers that the comfort comes through taking on ourselves a new yoke – a new regime of learning from and obeying Jesus.

Why was *Pilgrim's Progress* the most bought and read book apart from the Bible for centuries? I think it was because John Bunyan's pilgrim often got it wrong. And getting it wrong tied up with people's experience of being a Christian. Vanity Fair, the Slough of Despond, Doubting Castle and Giant Despair all have their parts to play in the life of the Christian. It isn't all as simple as *Winning Friends and Influencing People* or living *The Purpose-Driven Life*.

I've talked about Cowper, Woolman and Pilgrim as a sort of health warning as we now turn our attention back to what Paul said – to the absolute joy and total conviction that he had, that all would be well, and all manner of things would be well. Let's look again at the questions I asked at the beginning.

When should we rejoice? Answer – *Always. Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Celebrate God. Revel in God*. Before we sink into a pit of desolation, a valley of futility, even before we bombard God with prayers and petitions, we are to rejoice in the Lord. We are to enter his courts with thanksgiving in our hearts. Before you share with God the pains remind yourself in his presence of the things for which to give thanks. Rejoice in your salvation; rejoice in your status as a child of God; give thanks for his love for you and his life shared with you; rejoice in the forgiveness of sins and the hope of glory; praise him that though once you were blind, now you see, that though once you were lost, now you have been found. Give thanks that though you might be a nobody in the eyes of the world, and rather less than you would like to be in your own eyes, nevertheless you are a somebody in the eyes of God – namely a child of God. Rejoice in cross, in tomb and in Holy Spirit. Irrigate those valleys of discontent, doubt and anxiety with the water of praise.

Second question: Who should know about our gentleness? Answer – Everyone. The word rendered here as *gentleness* is very difficult to translate. An older translation suggested *moderation* – perhaps not a bad idea to take on board in a culture of excess. *Kindliness*, *thoughtfulness*, *courtesy*, *considerateness* are other possible translations. *Magnanimity* or

generosity are also possibilities. Aristotle said that the opposite of this word was *strict justice*. Paul says that in our dealings with anyone and everyone we shouldn't insist on the letter of the law. Sometimes we can be so strict with what we expect of ourselves, our children or colleagues that we become inflexible and our desire for justice hurts rather than heals. Are we charitable towards the faults of others or do we use their faults to puff up our own sense of achievement? Do we take the whole situation into account or do we judge according to the bits of evidence which suit our case?

When Paul was having a rough time with the Corinthians he appealed to them *by the meekness and gentleness of Christ*. Christ sets the standard. Don't insist on standing on your rights. People have done that but in the end have lost more than they have gained. To whom are we to be magnanimous, generous, gentle? *Everyone*, says Paul. With people who annoy you? Get up your nose? Irritate you? Cheat you? Being magnanimous towards such people is a rarely used weapon, but it has the stamp of Jesus Christ upon it. It was made in his weapons factory.

Being magnanimous, generous towards others is not an easy weapon to use. However, a school of behaviouristic psychiatry suggests that one way to change our inward attitudes is to begin by changing our outward actions. Thus, if your love for your partner is waning and your relationship is rocky, then act towards him or her as if the love were still strong. By actions create the opportunity for attitudes to change. If forgiveness is hard to achieve mentally, then begin by acting as if forgiveness were a reality in your heart. A change of behaviour by one person can lead to renewed hope in the other.

We may not *feel* particularly generous towards others; but we may as an act of faith have to begin by *being* generous. To whom are we to be gentle, generous, kind, considerate, magnanimous? Everyone.

What should we *not* worry about? Anything. I guess Paul should know that this is possible. After all, didn't he sing praises to God after having been beaten and whilst his feet were fastened in the stocks in a Philippian jail? By word and by example, following the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount, he says that you do not have to spend sleepless nights tossing and turning. I'm sure there have been experiences in your life, as there have in mine, when something serious has happened or is about to happen and it plays on the mind – invading our privacy, robbing us of sleep, tensing our muscles and leaving us dry in the mouth.

It's all very well Paul telling us not to worry about anything, but something must be done. The issue cannot be left simply hanging in the air. It won't go away by wishful thinking. This is where he introduces his next big thought. What should we pray about? His answer is 'Everything'. All those things which should not be worried about should be prayed about. What is the difference between worry and prayer? Worry we hug and hold close to ourselves, even though it does us harm. Prayer is that act of faith by which we bring our problems into the sphere where God's wisdom interacts with our folly, God's truth bears down on our half truths, God's strength interacts with our weakness, God's grace influences our lack of it and God's answers come in response to our questions. The way to be anxious about nothing is to be prayerful about everything.

The result of giving all our anxieties to God in prayer will, says Paul, be an answer to another question. How much understanding does the peace of God surpass? All understanding. Christians are invited to share in the calm serenity that characterises God's nature. *The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.* There are no half-measures with Paul.

The result is that turmoil is replaced with tranquillity, problems are put in perspective, nerves are steadied and fevered brows are mopped. Note that Paul doesn't say *It won't happen*. He doesn't say that the thing that you feared will not come to pass. Prayer may sometimes result in changed circumstances, but what Paul promises is that prayer – characterised by petition and thanksgiving – will result in changed attitudes to those circumstances. What he does say is that God's peace will invade your heart and your mind without you or anyone else really understanding how.

What makes the great difference as far as the Christian is concerned is, as Paul reminds us in the passage, that the Lord's coming is nearer than when we first believed. So it may be that Paul is thinking that the Lord is near in time – near to his reappearance. It is also true that the Lord is near in the sense of being close. His presence is with us by his Spirit. This is what distinguishes Christianity from other religions or philosophies ... This truth – namely that one person, Jesus Christ – is critical. Our hearts and minds are guarded *in Christ Jesus*. It's as if he were a detachment of soldiers sent to protect hearts and minds from crippling anxiety.

It is as a result of our relationship with him that we see ourselves and our world differently. *What's our bottom line*, people ask as they prepare to go into negotiations. *What's our irreducible minimum?* For the Christian, Jesus Christ is the bottom line. Why?

- Because we have learnt to *Rejoice in the Lord always*.
- Because just as he was generous to sinners, so we are learning to be.
- Because through him we are learning to bring everything to his Father, in prayer and petition with thanksgiving, so that we need no longer be anxious about anything.
- Because our status as his people means that God's peace – something far beyond all understanding – guards our hearts and minds.

John Philpott

Hibernation

ˌhɪbəˈneɪʃ(ə)n/

noun - an extended period of remaining inactive or indoors.

- Ingredients required for the perfect hibernation: Netflix, Ben & Jerry's, pizza, Coke and chocolate from the comfort of a blanket on the sofa! (See back cover.)

Jain Garrod

Resolution?

New Year New You?
New Year New Me?

Well I'm trying to find
the energy ...

Shall I pump lots of iron and eat lots of greens?
Shall I stop eating cakes and pretend to be keen,
for the New Year New You and the New Year New Me?

Well I'm trying to find
the energy ...

I could cut out all gossip, and stop telling fibs,
I could cycle to town, rediscover my ribs —
All for New Year New You and New Year New Me?

Well I'm trying to find
the energy ...

Will metamorphosis be once, at New Year?
Or is it 'One day at a time', to lose the fear —
Of the change that I need and the change that I dread?
Will I learn at the table where I eat God's bread?

Well I'm willing to follow, Lord, please hold me safe
When we take tiny footsteps or great leaps of faith.
I won't beat myself up, if I stumble and fall,
for your rod and your staff, they are there after all.

But for

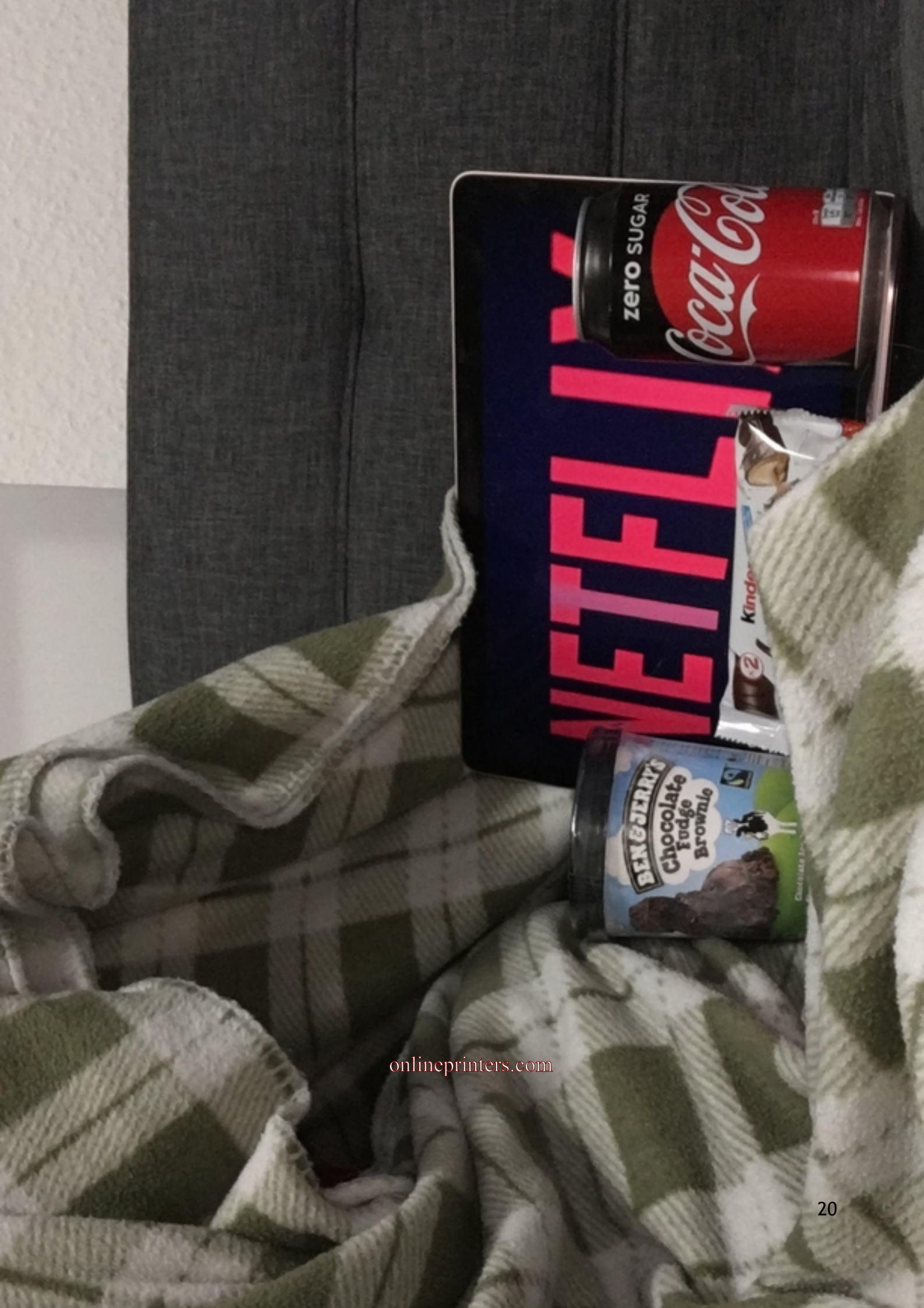
New Year New You and New Year New Me

I'm still trying to find
the energy ...

Lisa Dishman

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