

*“In this world nothing is certain but death and taxes” — Benjamin Franklin*

*“We must use time as a tool not a couch” — John F Kennedy*

*“We don’t know what the future holds” — Proverb*

The last quotation is not entirely true. We actually know quite a lot about the year ahead: Brexit talks will continue; the FA Cup Final will take place on 19th May; the Rugby World Cup will be held in Japan from September to November; anniversaries will occur – 60th anniversary of the last Goon Show on 28th January; 80th anniversary of the founding of the RAF on 1st April (Army and Navy rivals point out that that was April Fools Day!); 100th anniversary of Chamberlain returning from Munich on 30th September proclaiming “peace for our time”...

There will be deaths and taxes, as Benjamin Franklin said, while modern cynics add, “and more meetings.” There will also be personal events already planned for the year (I take my oldest grandson’s wedding in August) and birthdays and anniversaries to remember.

But, having said all that, 2018 will also contain so much more than we can ever predict. There will be surprises, joys, disappointments and sadnesses. The unknowns can be fearful. Will North Korea’s volatile leader trigger a nuclear war? Will our child get a job after college? Will my tests for cancer prove benign or otherwise?

Christians believe that trust in a God who cares and can help is one of the best ways of being prepared for the unexpected and being able to cope with it. “I don’t know what the future holds but I know who holds the future” (attributed to many but probably originated by Ralph Abernathy). This echoes what Jesus promised to those who follow Him: “Behold I am with you always even to the end of the world” and again “I will never leave you nor forsake you”.

There is also our personal responsibility to make the most of 2018. President Kennedy’s remark about using time as a tool not a couch is a good spur for us to make the most of this New Year whatever comes. It is so often only when we have been seriously ill and then recover, or if we know that we have limited time to live, that we start thinking about making the most of every opportunity.

Hopefully 2018 will not be our last year but it might be helpful to live as if it were.

On behalf of the Vicar and Clergy Team I wish you a happy and meaningful New Year. — Rev Tony Rogerson