

Happy New Year!

I grew up on the West Coast of Scotland and so, for me, New Year—or Hogmanay as we called it was a highlight of the year. As young children, it was a treat to be allowed to stay up to 'bring in the New Year' with the grown-ups! We had all sorts of wonderful, but rather peculiar traditions, including opening a window to 'let the old year out and the new year in' and of course, 'first footing,' where we visited friends homes after the 'bells' (after midnight) bringing gifts.

It was also traditional to give your house a good clean on New Year's Eve and many people would make a point of finishing any practical projects they were doing, like knitting a jumper, before the New Year began as it was considered bad luck to carry them over.

It strikes me, as we enter into 2016, that the very heart of the Christian faith is a message about new beginnings. We have just celebrated Christmas, a date on which we mark the birth of Jesus; it is through his life, death and resurrection that Christians believe Jesus points the way to new beginnings: the free gift of forgiveness and new life in him, offered to each and every one of us.

Jesus brings light to the dark places of the world and hope for a new and better future in which, in God's kingdom, all that's wrong is made right. In the face of so much uncertainty and suffering in the world, Jesus's message is one of hope for all of humankind. We'd love to welcome you to St Swithun's Church, so do take a look at our website for details of services and forthcoming events, and don't forget Messy Church on Sunday 17th.

Wishing you every blessing for 2016!
— Alison Mathew