

At Christmas 1939, in a time of great uncertainty, the young Princess Elizabeth handed her father a poem by Minnie Louise Haskins. King George V1 quoted it in his Christmas broadcast. It began:

“And I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year: ‘Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown’.”

As we start a new year we too all face the unknown—and the unexpected. Who could have predicted a year ago that in 2016 Theresa May would become PM and Jeremy Corbyn leader of the Labour Party? Or Britain voting to leave the EU and Donald Trump being elected President of the USA? Or Leicester City finishing top of the Premier League and Andy Murray number one in the tennis rankings?

There will without doubt be further unexpected events on the wider scale in 2017. There will also be the unexpected in our own personal lives. There will be joys. There will be sadnesses. There will be births and there will be deaths. There will be change and there will be uncertainties. And uncertainties are hard to deal with. Julius Caesar is reputed to have told the soldiers scouting for him, “I don’t mind if you come back with information that the enemy are three times as many as us and that they all much bigger men. I can deal with facts. I can’t deal with uncertainty.”

How will you and I handle the uncertainties ahead? For me, who can get as apprehensive as the next person, I am going to seek to put my trust in a God who promised his followers, “I will never leave you nor forsake you... I will be with you always... Fear not for I am with you.”

That was the message which Minnie Loise Haskins’s poem presented. The verse quoted by King George VI went on, “And he replied: ‘Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God. That shall be better than a light and safer than a known way.’”

“So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.”

Plans to recruit a new Vicar are under way. We hope to advertise in the next month or so, maybe interview in March and have a new person in the post in the Summer. The C of E wheels tend to grind slowly!

Those of us clergy who seek to hold the fort in the benefice of Radley, Kennington and Sunningwell Alison, Glynis and me join in wishing you a very happy, and not too uncertain, New Year.

Rev Tony Rogerson