

## **New Year's Eve Vigil**

A good place to start: I am not in the New Year's Honours List – but I know someone who is! Our congratulations to an occasional and enthusiastic choir member here, Gwen Zammit, who has been awarded a BME for her services to the community of Charlton, Royal Borough of Greenwich.

Also, of course, ALREADY ratified earlier by a Prime Minister (who obviously wasn't given a comb for Christmas): our nation leaving the EU which, personally, I am sad about. I have already written to the deputy-town clerk here to see whether our town's twinning with MUSSIDAN could at least be revived a little but, I have to confess, I am not over-optimistic. Neither was my favourite poet of all time who chose to say this for some reason in 1867 looking ahead to 1967. Thomas Hardy wrote:

“ In five-score summers! All new eyes,  
New minds, new modes, new fools, new wise;  
New woes to weep, new joys to prize;  
With nothing left of me and you  
In that live century's vivid view  
Beyond a pinch of dust or two;  
A century which, if not sublime,  
Will show, I doubt not, at its prime,  
A scope above this blinkered time.”

You will find that quotation as a preface to the great new book out on the Beatles by Aldeburgh writer, Craig Brown. We can't all be famous though, or honoured, but at the start of any New Year (and particularly THIS ONE TO COME), it is good and right to pray for our

nation and to stay hopeful because God longs us to be so. This is the same God yesterday, today, and for ever, who lives in our midst and lightens up all our darkness.

So our continuing prayers for the NHS matter, and for our keyworkers in particular. The wonderful vaccinations to come certainly offers the world that 'scope above this blinkered time' and we should be thankful, so very thankful to all those scientists and researchers who have (literally) lost sleep to make this happen.

This evening also marks a more local story about our own parishes here in Woodbridge and Great Bealings. At my interview, Norman Porter described Great Bealings as 'the rural lung' and I like that, just as I like the fact that it is healthier to have two lungs! We also share the prayers of two Marys' – she was no ordinary Saint after all, but the Mother of God, the one who gave birth to Jesus, Our Light and Saviour. So tomorrow's walk is a very symbolic, as well as historic one. It is a time to pray for our future together, to grow in love, faith, and mutual understanding, sharing our gifts and strengths, believing and making possible that scope for a fulfilling time, and an enjoyable partnership. There will be books at each Church tomorrow for you to write your own thoughts, hopes and prayers in your own hand. If you want, you can write them in another language – another poet and priest was right to say: "No man is an island entire of itself."

And in the Spring, we will exchange new trees (laurel is associated with Mary) and plant them. God wants them and us to grow. So let's dedicate this night and 'spot of time' to pray with the psalmist who said:

"My soul is longing for the Lord

More than watchman for daybreak."

Amen.

