



Let's Pray: New Year's Eve

How can we pray well as we
head into 2022?

It's been a hard year. We've each had our lives uprooted in one way or another, and have been existing in a phase of uncertainty, awaiting new headlines, new statistics, new test results, new restrictions being placed or eased. Many of us will have experienced loss this year. As we enter the last few days of this year and look towards the next, there is, understandably, a lot of talk about leaving 2021 behind.

The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.

John 1: 14 NIV

The Word became flesh and blood, and moved into the neighbourhood. We saw the glory with our own eyes, the one-of-a-kind glory, like Father, like Son, Generous inside and out, true from start to finish.

1 John: 14 MSG

At Christmas we celebrate the coming of Emmanuel – God with us. As we reflect on the year that has been and anticipate what is to come let's remember that Jesus not only came, but he stayed. He grew up in family, he made friends and built relationships. And Jesus didn't keep far away from that which was messy, painful or wrong; he got close. He cared for children (Mark 10: 13-16), he ate with those his community had marginalised (Matthew 9: 10), he listened to women who were all too often ignored (Luke 8: 43-48), he touched those viewed as unclean (Matthew 8: 1-4).

We are invited and called to live life in a way that reflects the heart of our Father, who became flesh and dwelt among His children; a life that pursues justice, that cares with compassion, that brings light and hope and that demonstrates the radical hospitality of Jesus.

It requires time; it requires effort; it requires proximity.

2021 will undoubtedly leave scars on our society; some we can see already. Findings show that around two in five UK adults don't think their feelings of loneliness will go away after the pandemic ends [1]. Poverty has risen amongst children and the elderly [2] and there has been a significant rise in the use of food banks across the UK [3]. Numbers of children coming into care have risen as the impact of multiple lockdowns on families and children became more apparent. There is a shortage of foster carers and adoptive parents with the right skills and in the right locations to meet the needs of children entering the system. Right now there are teenagers living in inappropriate accommodation without the safety net of family to support them practically or emotionally. The need that we all have for the love, stability and support of family and community is painfully evident.

What if this New Year, rather than leaving behind, we shifted our focus to moving in?

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made; without him nothing was made that has been made. In him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.

John 1: 1-5 NIV



**God has gone before us.
Darkness has not
overcome us; the light
still shines.**

In the midst of newness
and uncertainty, let's hold
on to the light.

A prayer for New Year's Eve

Father God,
You were there in the beginning. Through You, all things were made.
In You we find life; in You we find light. Light that shines; light that cannot
be overcome.

And yet, You did not stay far away; You moved in close. You were born to
earth, and You stayed. You dwelt among your people with love, kindness,
justice and mercy.

As we reflect on the year that has been, and look forward to what is to come,
will You help us follow in the footsteps of Jesus. May we, Your children, be a
people who move in close and who stay. May we hold on to the light that
shines in the darkness.

Amen

[1] 1 <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-politics-56498227>

[2] <https://www.jrf.org.uk/press/rising-child-and-pensioner-poverty-shows-why-covid-inquiry-must-consider-its-impact>

[3] <https://www.trusselltrust.org/2021/11/24/more-than-5100-food-parcels-given-to-people-facing-crisis-across-the-uk-every-day-in-past-six-months-says-the-trussell-trust/>