

## Thought for the Month of January 2022 by Alison Fletcher, Associate Rural Chaplain



Welcome to 2022 - another new calendar year!

It feels natural at the start of a new year to ask ourselves some questions, if only in passing, ie, "how are we feeling about this new year?" Or maybe, "what are we hoping for in this new year?" Of course there will be as many answers as there are people reading this reflection. However it's likely that there will be some similar themes and after the past two years, it is probable that many will start this new year feeling troubled or uncertain but desperately hoping for brighter more settled times as soon as possible.

Over the past two years, all of our lives have been affected in so many ways but each one of us has a unique story known only to us and our Heavenly Father. Whilst understandably some of us may find ourselves focussing on the sad, the difficult, or the dark experiences we've gone through, it can be really helpful to also take time to reflect on the way God has continued to bless us over these difficult years. God knows exactly what will lift your spirit and mine, and in my experience, He often sends those blessings just at the right time: an unexpected encouraging phone call, bumping into someone you've been thinking of and not seen in a long time, the sight of a spectacular sunrise or sunset, seeing a special bird, flower or animal - the list is endless. God is good and cares for each of us.

The photograph of the snowdrops at the top of this reflection is a very deliberate choice. You don't have to be a keen gardener to know that snowdrops usually flower early in the new year and as such they herald lighter, longer days that point towards spring. They reliably return year after year making bigger and stronger clumps and right at the start of the new year they are already peeping through the ground. They are a sign of new life and hope.

My prayer for us all is that we can move into this new year with a spirit of gratitude to God for His care and love and with hopefulness knowing that He goes with us. The lines below from the famous poem "God Knows" by Minnie Louise Haskins sum it up so well and maybe I can encourage you to look it up and read the whole poem as it is full of truth and challenge.

All of us in the Derbyshire Rural Chaplaincy wish you a happy, healthy and blessed 2022 and trust that you will feel able to connect with us at any time should we be able to support you in any way, or simply catch up with us for a chat when you see us, be it on Mondays at livestock market or at other times during the year.

*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."*

*And he replied:*

*"Go out into the darkness and put your hand into the Hand of God.  
That shall be to you better than light and safer than a known way."  
So I went forth, and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night.  
And He led me towards the hills and the breaking of day in the lone East.*