

# St Paul's Anglican Parish of Ipswich CHAPLAIN'S CORNER

## What's in a name?

Delivered by Rev'd Michele Knight

The New Year can often bring a mixed bag of emotions and memories for many of us. Some may have just experienced the best year ever and look forward to an even greater one looming ahead. Others may have just trudged through one deep struggle after another. The fresh calendar year brings desperate hope for things to be better, with an ache for the still-fresh wounds to slowly begin their process of healing.

The month of January is a month named after the Roman god Janus, an appropriate personification of the start of the new year. This particular Roman god had two faces so that he could look ahead toward the future and back at the past at the same time. As we get rid of an old year and look forward to a new one, we all try to be a little like Janus. We know through experience what we did wrong and what we did right, and hope to do better this year. Some people make ambitious new year's resolutions; others just take a deep breath and hope for the best...."

Whether you've just walked through the greatest year of your life, or are incredibly glad to see it finally over, one truth still rings clear amidst it all. You are not alone. Not ever.

The Gospel of Matthew tells us that Joseph, when he was concerned about his coming year and trying to come to terms with what was seemed to be an impossible problem in his life, the angel told him that Mary, his pregnant betrothed "will bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus, for he will save his people from their sins." All this took place to fulfil what the Lord had spoken by the prophet: "Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emman'u-el" (which means, God with us). (Matthew 1:21-23)

Our God is a "with us" God. On the heels of the celebration of the birth of our King, that reminder has the power to carry us right into a fresh, new start. He is Emmanuel, God with us. And though things and people around us shift and change, our God never changes.

So we can pray with confidence -

*Lord, let this year be filled with the things that are truly good—with the comfort of warmth in our relationships, with the strength to help those who need our help and the humility and openness to accept help from others. As we make our resolutions for the year ahead, let us go forward with great hope that all things can be possible—with Your help and guidance. Amen*