

New Year message for 2021

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Message also available on our Diocesan YouTube channel [which can be found here](#).

There's no question that 2020 will have been one of the toughest years many of us will have experienced.

The problem is that 2021 does not at this stage look much more promising. For many of us the problem is uncertainty.

We love to make plans and know what is coming next and 2020 has ended with all sorts of plans upended.

Christmas presents in the wrong place; food orders having to be cancelled; dates for the start of school unclear; jobs insecure; sudden changes of Tier status and fear of catching the virus; not knowing when families, loved ones and friends can meet up again and anxiety and mental health issues growing by the day.

Then there was the to and fro as to whether there would be a deal or no deal in our trading relationship with our friends in Europe until, of course, the Brexit deal announcement was finally made on Christmas Eve.

There is so much to be uncertain about, as we emerge from 2020 and it feels very uncomfortable.

A colleague recently used a rather helpful image to describe how 2020 has felt. He described it as being in a car without shock absorbers, noticing and feeling every bump in the road much more keenly than usual.

That makes sense to me, as with high levels of uncertainty we pick up the challenges and pain of all the uncertainties much more acutely.

So, is the message for 2021 all doom and gloom, with more and more bumps in the road and less and less ability to manage the journey?

There will always be uncertainties. They can't be avoided. It is how life is.

Even the most carefully planned diary can be thrown into confusion and chaos by unwelcome and unexpected intrusions that throw the plans out the window: a sudden bereavement, an accident, a loss of income, a breakdown of relationship, nowhere to live.

And that is where the issue of the shock absorbers come in. What is it that we have in place to help us cope with the bumpy road? The unknown bits of 2021?

None of us is meant to face these challenges alone, which is where support and friendship and neighbourliness all come in.

I see 2021 delivering examples of that kind of ongoing community care through a variety of networks, not least the service the Christian community brings to the table; and doing all this in partnership with others, so that it is a shared venture.

For those who are Christians there is the added advantage of what I strangely call 'the certainties of faith' if that is not a contradiction.

The Christian believes that God has not deserted His world, He has come to us in the person of Jesus and is on course to right every wrong and bring order out of chaos.

That Christian hope lies at the heart of Christianity and while it will not remove all the bumps in the road and suddenly and automatically make life easy and comfortable, it does enable us to keep going, because we know there is an end in view, we know what that end will be and we can press on in faith.

In the Bible, the New Testament tells us that Faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see.

The unchanging and therefore reliable certainties about Jesus - what He has done and what He requires - can give us peace and hope in facing all the uncertainties of 2021.

So as I wish the people of Lancashire a happy New Year, may you have in place those things that will enable you to take 2021 in your stride; to manage the rough with the smooth and to look forward to the day when all these present uncertainties will have disappeared.