



The Church of England
in Essex and East London
Diocese of Chelmsford

New Year 2025

A New Year reflection from the Bishop of Chelmsford

The Right Revd Dr Guli Franics-Dehqani, the Bishop of Chelmsford has written a New Year reflection for 2025:

For many people, celebrations at New Year are marked by grand gestures: large gatherings and spectacular fireworks; lavish feasts and late nights. There's probably something about wanting to recognise the significance of the past year and properly mark its ending; but also a deliberate leaning into that which lies ahead – eager anticipation for what the New Year might bring. There's nothing wrong with a good party at New Year, but many of us will also recognise how the glitz and glamour can sometimes provide a cover for the deeper complex of emotions we often experience as the old year passes to the new: those little successes and failures, joys and sorrows, hopes and regrets that have shaped us.

The truth is that, whether it's New Year or any other time of year, if we focus too much on the extravagant and large scale we might just miss some of the poignancy contained in the smaller treasures: the sight of the first tiny bulbs poking through the soil, hints of a lighter evening sky, a small act of kindness from a friend, gentle signs of healing in a relationship that's been damaged.

In the life of the church, too, as we look for the signs of the coming of God's kingdom, it's perhaps natural to seek out the exciting and remarkable. The prophecy of Jesus, recorded in Matthew's Gospel, about "the son of man seated at the right hand of power and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matt 26:64) would seem to speak to this. Again, there's nothing wrong with this and it's part of the Christian story. At the same time, it's perfectly possible to catch glimpses of the kingdom in the smaller, more ordinary things of life. And to notice these we have to resist being dazzled by those things which appear impressive and successful and we must be open to seeing God in the small and marginal. To recognise Christ in unlikely people and places is to be alive to the signs of God's presence which might otherwise easily pass us by.

My sense is that much of the church's life is like this. Small things, acts of love and generosity which may not, by themselves, feel particularly significant, but gathered together transform the worlds we inhabit. These are tangible reminders of God's ongoing love and presence in our communities.

So as the first bulbs begin to poke their way through the Spring soil, beautiful in their fleeting vulnerability, I give thanks for the small and fragile ways in which God's kingdom is evident here in Chelmsford Diocese. These are signs which require us to slow down, stay awhile, and look closely. As we do so this New Year, may we be encouraged and renewed in faith and may our hearts be filled with joy for the many ways in which God is at work in the world.

+ Guli Chelmsford