

## Column – New Year

More years ago than I like to remember, I was seated in a tiny desk in my second-grade classroom. Our teacher Mrs. Roberts mentioned the year 2000. That date seemed a million lightyears away, so far into the future that it hardly seemed worthwhile considering. Now I find myself pinning up a calendar emblazoned with the numerals 2025! Can it be?

Putting up a new calendar is a good time to look back. As we do, no doubt, there will be a number of happy memories which will come to mind but also some painful ones.

The former will likely outnumber the latter. I remember Bishop Duncan Montgomery Gray, Jr., of Mississippi explaining why the ‘good old days’ appear good. He said the element of uncertainty has been extracted. No matter how difficult the circumstances, we survived.

Moreover, these days may well have been catalysts for growth, maturity and greater trust in the

Lord. Two verses from Psalms come to mind. The first says: “It is good for me that I have been in trouble, that I may learn thy statutes” (119:71).

The second focuses on the experience of the Old Testament character Joseph: “Iron entered into his souls” (Psalm 105:18). His brothers, envious of the special status he held with his father, sold him into slavery into Egypt. There, in that far country, he got into more trouble. The wife of his employer falsely accused him, resulting in him being locked up in prison. These downturns in his life did not defeat him, rather, as this verse suggests, made him strong. Looking back on your own life, you may have experienced something similar.

Once, while leading a tour in England, I had a lady in my group who was not a very confident traveler. As it turned out, she darted into the toilet in Paddington Station as everyone else was getting into a railway carriage. Before she returned, the train pulled out from the station, leaving her behind. Instead of being a bad thing, it turned out to be a good thing. Having to find her way back to the hotel gave her new confidence. Instead of staying in her

room, she walked to the British Museum where she spent the day and had a great time.

While travail pales in comparison to that of Joseph, the principle holds. Trouble doesn't have to defeat us. It can lead to growth. We don't seek it out, but when it comes (and come it will), we can give it to God confident He can use it for our good.

Putting up a new calendar is an invitation to look back, but also an invitation to look forward. As we do, we can be confident that the hand that led us safely through 2024 is outstretched to lead us through whatever comes in 2025.

The hymnwriter Frances Ridley Havergal catches the spirit of the calendar-changing moment when she says: "Another year is dawning! Let it be, in working or in waiting, another year with thee."

*O Eternal Lord God, who has brought thy servants to the beginning of another year: Pardon, we humbly beseech thee, our transgressions in past, and graciously abide with us all the days of our life;*

*through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen. (Proposed  
Book of Common Prayer, Church of England, 1928)*

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