



January 2025

*'Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness and patience.'* (Colossians 3:12)

Dear friends,

Have you made any New Year resolutions? I tend to avoid resolutions not because I don't see value in wanting to improve my life in some way but because when I've set them in the past, I always seem to set the bar impossibly high. It's like deciding to take up pole vaulting and imagining that we should attempt an Olympic record before we've even picked up the pole for the first time! I heard part of a radio programme last week in which a panel examined why it was that we so often fail to fulfil our New Year resolutions. They concluded, unsurprisingly, that our initial determination to be fitter, faster, kinder, better in some way, is often unrealistic, failing to recognise the many small steps along the way that represent real progress in any part of life. It's not surprising that so many of us give up before we have even begun. Maybe next year, we wonder to ourselves.

St Paul's exhortation in Colossians to put on compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience, are worthy resolutions at any time of the year. But I wonder if the key word in the sequence is patience. Perhaps we ought to receive Paul's words as an encouragement, or a nudge, towards deeper exploration rather than a resolution that can be fulfilled simply by stating it. If we are to become more fully compassionate, kind, humble, meek and patient – Paul is clearly pointing us towards what he sees in Christ here – then we must begin the patient work of growing in grace, confronting the preoccupations, attitudes, behaviours and agendas we hide from ourselves as step by step we become these things.

The beginning of a new year, especially as we prepare to share in Covenant Services, is a good opportunity to reassess where we are and to face ourselves honestly. The beginnings of the Colman Readings for January in *Celtic Daily Prayer*, set the following challenge:

*'There is so much in us of anger, aggression, selfishness, hurt, deception and damage that can only be rooted out by patient, faithful, loving commitment to seeking God and knowing self, our limitations, boundaries and weaknesses, for only then can we deal with them.'*

It is a powerful reminder of how much within us is resistant to God's grace. Yet our God is patient, meeting our resistance and failure with love, compassion and kindness. God continues to invite us to grow in these virtues moment by moment, day by day, one small step at a time.

May we all continue to grow in compassion, kindness, humility, meekness and patience as we seek, day by day, to be more like Christ.

Happy New Year!

Revd Richard Andrew

Chair, Darlington District