

New Year message 2026

Dear Friends,

As the year turns, I want to begin with something simple and sincere: thank you. Thank you for the faithfulness that is so often unseen, for the steadiness that keeps going when enthusiasm is in short supply, and for the care you offer in ways that rarely make headlines or reports. Over the Christmas season especially, many of you carried extra responsibilities with grace, even when energy was limited. Your presence, patience, and quiet perseverance matter more than you may realise.

The arrival of a new year can stir a wide range of emotions. For some, it brings relief; for others, apprehension; for many, a mixture of both. Not every year ends neatly, and not every story reaches a satisfying pause at midnight on 31 December. If the year just past has left you tired, uncertain, or simply glad it is over, you are not alone, and you are not failing. Faithfulness is not always loud or productive. Sometimes it looks like staying, listening, and beginning again gently.

January often arrives carrying expectations it cannot possibly meet, forcing us to feel as if we need to reset, reinvent, and improve ourselves at speed. Yet the gospel offers a different rhythm. We are not required to become someone else in order to be valued by God. We are invited instead to live more truthfully, more attentively, and more kindly, to ourselves as well as to one another.

That is why, as we begin 2026, I want to commend once again the spirit of Gentle January, not as a programme but simply as a permission. Permission to ease into the year rather than rush it. Permission to notice what sustains rather than what exhausts. Permission to set aside unnecessary urgency. Gentleness can take many forms:

- a softer pace,
- a kinder inner voice,
- more spacious expectations,
- time to breathe, pray, and reflect,
- and a renewed attentiveness to the people and places entrusted to our care.

None of this is about doing less for the sake of it. It is about grounding what we do in grace rather than strain, and allowing God's faithfulness, not our own effort, to be the firm ground beneath us.

As this new year unfolds, my hope is that you will know moments of rest, clarity, and quiet joy, and that you will feel encouraged rather than driven. May 2026 be a year in which you are gently held, and gently renewed.

With every blessing for 2026,

Michael Hopkins
New Year, 2026