



Looking Back,

Looking Forward



2016: what a year! Who would have thought, as we watched the fireworks last New Year's Day, that before the year was out we would have seen the Brexit vote, Trump elected in America, and Team GB winning so many medals in the Olympics? Some things were anticipated, like the Queen's 90th birthday, but many others—the terror attacks in Brussels, the Zika virus spread, the devastation wreaked by earthquakes and hurricanes—these were out of the blue.

What did we hope for?

Last year was designated 'the International Year of Global Understanding'. I'm afraid that events have laughed in its face. The only understanding we can come to is that this world is as broken—if not more so—as it ever was. We are just as far from peace and goodwill as ever, despite the way we hopefully dress up our children in their angel costumes.

Coping without hope?

I am full of admiration for the people who keep going, even when things look black and hopeless. I am grateful for the many patches of light and joy which do come into our lives, despite the brokenness of the world.



But I am conscious of the way we can sometimes avoid facing up to uncomfortable truths, and one of the ways we do this is illustrated, tellingly, by this year's top 'new word' in the Oxford English Dictionary, which is 'post-truth'. 'Post-truth' is defined as describing 'circumstances in which objective facts are less influential in shaping public opinion than appeals to emotion and personal belief'. Are we coping by hoping, despite the evidence?

Hope for the future

Some people say that Christian belief is wishful thinking: believing that a baby born 2000 years ago can change anything about our eternity, let alone how we get through our daily lives, is to them classic 'post-truth'.

I would say that the opposite is true.

Most of our modern society is in the habit of ignoring the objective facts—the Bible records have an extraordinary historical pedigree, and I'd like to encourage you to read them for yourself. I suggest you start with Luke's gospel, and ask yourself what difference it would make if it were true. Then check it out. You might find 2016 still holds some wonderful surprises for you!

Margaret Hobbs is from
St Thomas's Church, Oakwood
www.st-toms.org.uk

