



January 2026 Pastoral Letter

Dear United Parish,

'A Happy New Year'

So begins 2026:

- On January 1st Bulgaria officially adopts the Euro.
- On January 28th the Rt Revd & Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally DBE legally becomes the Archbishop of Canterbury and will be officially installed in March.
- February will see the start of the Winter Olympics in Milan.
- 'Toy Story 5' will be released on 19th June.
- There will be a solar eclipse on August 12th.
- The Mid-Term elections take place in the USA in November.

What has caught my imagination most though about 2026, is the fact that on November 13th, NASA's Voyager 1, will become the first human-made object to reach a distance of one light-day from Earth, about 16 billion miles away. Currently travelling at 38,027 mph it is making its way through space on a journey that started on September 5th, 1977.

I find Voyager 1's 50 year journey truly mind-blowing.

However, having reflected on this when I learnt of it recently, its importance paled into insignificance once contrasted to this verse from Genesis: "*In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.*" (Genesis 1:1) That is some statement, that sits beside another verse from the other end of the Bible: "*Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away"*" (Revelation 21:1)

Whatever happens this coming year, whether planned or unplanned, it comes in the presence of God, the one who revealed himself in a vision to St John exiled on the island of Patmos, recorded in Revelation chapter 1, in these words: "*I am the Alpha and the Omega,*" says the Lord God, "*who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.*"

This is the Creator of all, who we have just reminded ourselves over Christmas was incarnated in Jesus Christ, Immanuel, the one who chose to be with us, in human form, sharing in the joys and sorrows of human existence.

He is with us, and will travel with us throughout 2026, but now as Jesus Christ the Lord, Resurrected and at the right hand of God to intercede for us.

Let us put our trust in Him at the beginning of this New Year, remembering his last words recorded in Matthew's Gospel:

Matthew 28: 18 *“Then Jesus came to them and said, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.”*

Have a great year!

Tony