

DIAKONIA PRAYER LETTER January 2022

Happy new year!

We have crossed into a new year. Normally, we would welcome the new year with celebrations, fireworks and excitement as we gather with friends and family to ring in the new year, as we join in prayer to give thanks for the year past and the year to come.

But almost two years since the pandemic began, it continues to evolve into new forms that impact us as individuals, and as a global community. We are not able to fully process what this two years has meant for us while the world continues to be disrupted by the pandemic. We may have hoped to 'get back to normal' sometime soon, but that seems less likely. Too much has changed, been suspended, ended. Hope seems to have been dashed for many people.

We enter the new year less carefree - and more careful and concerned. For some, turning the corner into 2022 feels ominous and foreboding, with multiple challenges including the climate emergency, the pandemic, racial injustice, escalation of tension between and within nations, humanitarian crises, a distrust of institutions including governments - and so much more. Many live with despair and have lost the simple confidence that better days are ahead, that trials are temporary, that wounds will heal and 'all will be well' in the end.

As people of faith, what is our conviction about hope for a new day, a new year? Is it possible to hold joy and hope while living in the midst of so much despair?

I am grateful for the life of Archbishop Desmond Tutu who passed away at the end of 2021. The world grieves the loss of this man of God. When his country was torn apart by violence and systemic racial policies, he led the way towards reconciliation rather than recrimination, saying 'there is no future without forgiveness'. He embodied the hope, love and courage of the gospel in a way that allowed him to laugh - and to weep. He was transformed by joy right in the midst of the deepest darkness. He taught the world to laugh, and to dance. Maybe in the toxic global experience of fear, dissent, cynicism and anger, our contribution is simply to show up with wonder, joy, love, compassion, 'to do your bit of good where you are; it's those bits of good put together that overwhelm the world' (Archbishop Desmond Tutu).

Go well in this new year, with hope, love, peace and joy.

Rev (Deacon) Sandy Boyce, President, DIAKONIA World Federation

I offer two prayers for reflection, one by Archbishop Desmond Tutu and one by John O'Donohue.

Prayer

Somewhere, out at the edges, the night
Is turning and the waves of darkness
Begin to brighten the shore of dawn.
The heavy dark falls back to earth
And the freed air goes wild with light,
The heart fills with fresh, bright breath
And thoughts stir to give birth to colour.
I arise today

In the name of Silence,
Womb of the Word,
In the name of Stillness,
Home of Belonging,
In the name of the Solitude
Of the Soul and the Earth.

I arise today
Blessed by all things,
Wings of breath,
Delight of eyes,
Wonder of whisper,
Intimacy of touch,
Eternity of soul,
Urgency of thought,
Miracle of health,
Embrace of God.
May I live this day
Compassionate of heart,
Clear in Word,
Gracious in awareness,
Courageous in thought,
Generous in love.

(John O'Donohue's Matins, from Benedictus: A Book of Blessings)

Disturb us, O Lord
when we are too well-pleased with ourselves
when our dreams have come true because we dreamed too little,
because we sailed too close to the shore.

Disturb us, O Lord
when with the abundance of things we possess,
we have lost our thirst for the water of life
when, having fallen in love with time,
we have ceased to dream of eternity
and in our efforts to build a new earth,
we have allowed our vision of Heaven to grow dim.

Stir us, O Lord
to dare more boldly, to venture into wider seas
where storms show Thy mastery,
where losing sight of land, we shall find the stars.
In the name of Him who pushed back the horizons of our hopes
and invited the brave to follow. Amen

(Source: Archbishop Desmond Tutu, adapted from an original prayer by Sir Francis Drake)