

## Reflection for Annual Meetings 2025

(I'd like to offer a brief personal reflection, leading into a message from a Bible verse, that I hope will be an encouragement to us all)

Firstly, looking back to our annual meetings last year, I was thinking that for me they came just before the beginning of my sabbatical.

So I want to thank you for your understanding and support which enabled me to have that break. And also to say that it proved to be a very important time for me, in many ways – and as often seems to happen (when God is at work), what proved to be the most significant things for me, were not part of the original plan (but that is OK!).

Secondly, most if not all of you know that I am about to celebrate what feels to me like a significant birthday. Thinking about that, I was recently reminded of this translation of a familiar Bible verse:

So we're not giving up. How could we! Even though on the outside it often looks like things are falling apart on us, on the inside, where God is making new life, not a day goes by without his unfolding grace. (2 Cor. 4. 16, The Message)

As we go through life, as we get older, it may feel as if 'things are falling apart on us' in various ways, but we are promised that something else is going on in us at the same time, because 'God is making new life'.

A few years ago I heard someone explain that the New Testament uses two different Greek words where we would use the word 'new'. Two words, *neos* and *anakainoo*.

*Neos* means younger, more recent, new in relation to time (chronologically new). That is the kind of new that our world usually thinks of, and in a lot of ways is obsessed with. The new fashion, the new model, the new design, the new thing.

*Kainoo* means new, and *ana-* means again, so *anakainoo* means 'new again', something that keeps on becoming new, that is constantly being renewed, transformed into a new quality of life. (That might have something to do with what 'born again' really means). And that is what God is doing, is ready to do, in and with us.

So, wherever we are in chronological time (in age, in years), where might we be God's time? What may still lie ahead for us, if we will let God keep on making us new?

Almighty God,  
in Christ you make all things new:  
transform the poverty of our nature by the riches of your grace,  
and in the renewing of our lives  
make known your heavenly glory;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord. Amen.