

Putting ourselves in the picture...

You may have read recently about the abstract artwork called 'New York City I', created by Piet Mondrian in 1941, which has apparently been displayed upside down for 75 years - *you can find a link to a BBC report on this, [here](#).*

It took a sharp-eyed Curator to spot that things were not quite right and soon there was evidence coming forward to support their claim. This included a photograph of the artwork taken in Mondrian's studio with it displayed there the right way up. As this is art, perhaps there is still room for debate, and ultimately does it really matter?

As we head into Advent, Christmas and the New Year to come, and look around at the world and the lives that we live today, things are not quite right here too – far from it! And it matters. People across the globe are ever more alert to the impact of climate change, seeing more and more clearly that all is not well with the world and that a response from us is needed to help put things right. Every nation is feeling the effect of social and economic changes that are having a growing and deepening impact on how life is lived and it's not looking good. The reality of this is being felt most powerfully - as is so often the case, by the poorest and least able to navigate through such changes or lack of them, that are devastating life at home, at work and in the communities where they live. Making sense of this is complex and challenging and turning things around will stretch leaders and those they lead to the limit. And while it's not the only place of conflict today the ongoing war in Ukraine - that has turned life upside down in so many unexpected and horrific ways - as war does, leaves all those touched by it wondering what else is there to come before peace returns and justice reigns.

Advent, Christmas and the beginning of a New Year, won't in themselves help us through these challenging times and enable us to be a help to others. But what they invite us into can – being alert, awake and ready to respond to God's call on our lives through Jesus and letting this come to life, through the work of the Holy Spirit.

Advent – a time of looking out for the coming of something, of someone! who matters, invites us to be opening afresh our hearts and lives to God. To take time to look at our lives, to see where they too may be upside down and be asking God to help us get them the right way up.

Christmas – invites us to be ready and willing to see God at work in and through Jesus. To know that as Immanuel he is ‘God with us’ - the God who walks with and alongside us. He comes to rescue, to heal and to restore what is broken in life and the world that we live in. It took the eyes of a watchful Curator to see that a painting was not looking as it should be, as the artist had intended. If we are ready to journey through life with Jesus, we can trust him to help us see where our lives are not as they should be – as God intended them to be. And through the work of the Holy Spirit, they can be turned around - put the right way up! with something of God being seen in them as they are.

A New Year – gives us a moment in which to say things can be different and begin again. I was told today that it takes just 21 days to make or break a habit. My research tells me that habits are there to be made and broken and that for some 21 days may be enough, but for others – for all sorts of reasons, it can take much, much longer.

As we enter the New Year perhaps you can take a moment to ask God to help you be aware of habits to begin and to end. Ones to begin and end that will open up your life to him ever deeper and see it reflect more of the God we know through Jesus.



The Church of England's '**Follow the Star – the great invitation**' prayer and reflection resources for Christmas and the New Year, are here to help get you started – to help get us and our lives the right way up, in ways that others will see God has been at work and rejoice! Lookout for them when they are available at church or go to your app store and download the free app, when it's available.

You can find the 'Follow the Star' homepage [here](#) which has helpful links and information to enable you to follow the star.

Happy Christmas and God bless you, as you step into 2023

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Tony Hand'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name 'Tony' and the last name 'Hand' clearly legible.

Revd Tony Hand