

Dear Friends,

Each season has different characteristics. In the winter, there are a number of animals who hibernate. Hedgehogs are but one example with others including bumblebees, bats and chipmunks. Other animals, such as badgers enter a period of lower activity rather than totally hibernating. Hibernation is a time of slowing things down, not least for nature because of greater difficulty in finding food sources. I wonder what we can learn from our animal friends as we enter the new year.

January is a month where the bright lights of Christmas have been taken down, but the nights have not got substantially lighter, although there is a marked change between the beginning and the end of the month in this respect. It is a month which can be quite difficult for some and maybe hibernation feels like a good idea.

For the animals who hibernate, it is a time to stop and regroup, a time to build up energy once again ready for the new season. Maybe this feels like a good idea for us as humans as well. We know that when God created the world, he rested on the seventh day. It is also one of the commandments and we know that in New Testament times, Jesus also regularly took time to rest, contemplate, reflect and regroup. The period of hibernation for animals is much more substantial than taking a regular day of Sabbath rest but the themes of reflection, contemplation and regrouping are all part of the rhythm of life.

As we enter the new year, many people will have made some new year resolutions. Others may choose not to. The world around us encourages us to reflect as we come into the new year. Maybe we could think about the rhythms we have in our lives and ask ourselves how they reflect our discipleship and time with God. The rhythms we have in our life are to sustain us, to help us to regroup on a regular basis and to prepare for a new season.

In January we join together in our Covenant service. This is a time where we think about our relationship with God and the Covenant prayer is one which asks us to reflect deeply. John Wesley encouraged people to spend a day in contemplation and reflection prior to the service, considering the implications of it for their discipleship, witness and service. Maybe in the few days before the Covenant service, taking some time to sit with the prayer might be something to think about.

Maybe this January is a time for us to spend time with God, learn from the actions of Jesus and allow the Holy Spirit to work in us, guiding us for the next season. I encourage us all to reflect on the rhythms we have in our lives, and how we might best serve God together in the coming weeks and months.

Happy New Year!
God bless,
Chris