

The Old Ways for the New Year

We are living in interesting times. Perhaps only in war time has there been the level of uncertainty, and insecurity that we are seeing today. The figures that different countries are said to be in debt are beyond the comprehension of most of us.

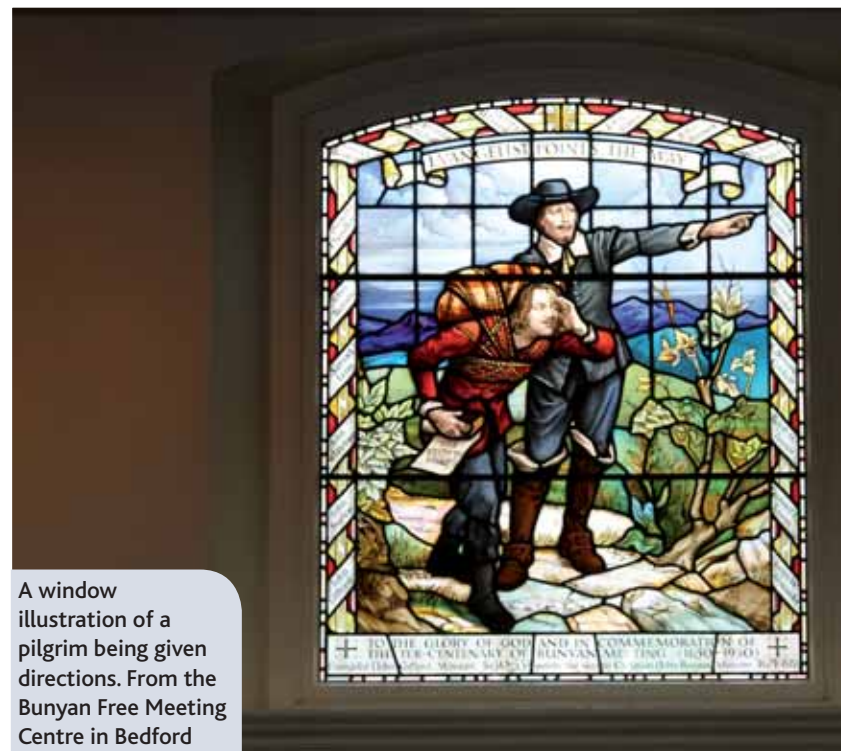
'Austerity measures' are affecting everyone. It is not only in Europe that countries are being shaken – there are major changes in other parts of the world, too. For people that have lost much, this year's traditional greeting of 'Happy New Year!' will have a hollow ring.

Even in the 'good times', our individual worlds can be turned upside down. Job is a good example. He lost his livelihood, his wealth, his family and his health, one after the other. He had been a respected town councillor, but now here he is, sitting on an ash tip and scratching boils on his body with bits of broken pottery. His wife loses patience with him, and his friends become a byword for uselessness. They would have understood if he had said something like, 'Well, the old ways haven't served me well. I trusted in God and look where it got me. Time to do things differently.' But Job didn't do that. He said, 'But He knows the way that I take; When He has tested me, I shall come forth as gold.' And, 'For He performs what is appointed for me, and many such things are with Him.' Job 23: 10, 11, 14. (NKJV)

Can we all say like Job that the Lord knows our way? Well of course He does, and as Christian believers, the Lord's people, we know that just as Job did. We have seen the Lord's leading in our lives, sometimes only afterwards, but none the less we know He brought us to a certain place, at a certain point in our lives. Sometimes we have seen our Lord preparing us, but not always. Oh, like Job to say 'He hath tried me; I shall come forth as gold!' To keep to the ways of the Lord is what we all want,

never to go back in the face of His command even when we don't fully understand why we are where we are, it is always in the Lord's purposes. We just need to trust Him, and to remember that He is in control and always has a purpose, even when we don't understand!

Centuries later, another prophet urged Israel to, 'Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; Then you will find rest for your souls.' (Jeremiah 6:16, NKJV).



A window illustration of a pilgrim being given directions. From the Bunyan Free Meeting Centre in Bedford