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Dear Friends,

This letter brings you my best wishes for Christmas and the New Year. I have just heard of a superficially conventional Christmas card bearing the message 'Peace on Earth' in large letters followed by an asterisk leading the eye down to 'Terms and conditions apply' in small letters at the bottom of the page. It makes me wonder whose terms and what conditions.

I am concerned about the signs of widespread inequality which are facing us now and how we should be fulfilling our responsibilities towards the poor and marginalised. I sometimes look back and wonder about the choices I have made in my life (while realising that many others have no choice about theirs). Perhaps it is a sign of growing old.

I have certainly made good use of the NHS during the past year including many encounters with the local Geriatric Department (now called 'Medicine for Elderly People'). At present the only things which disable me are fatigue, deteriorating eyesight and vertigo which constantly affects my balance. I am rather like a toddler who can easily climb up a staircase but can't get down again and have to be rescued now and then.

Leading worship this year has been unevenly distributed with four very busy months and six months with virtually none at all. The Leeds Partnership continues to develop and we are exploring the way forward with two new ministerial colleagues.

My cousin and I spent ten days away together in Scotland visiting relatives and checking the repairs to family tombstones which we initiated earlier. As usual we stayed in Youth Hostels and bunk houses and met some interesting and congenial people, many of them retired like ourselves. I had two further visits to Scotland on my own on one of which I met up with a previous Taiwanese colleague from Taiwan Theological College where he is Professor of Church History. He was doing research at New College, Edinburgh. Questions had recently

arisen about access to missionary records from the Presbyterian Church of England which are deposited in London at the School of Oriental and African Studies and the URC History Society was involved in this. So a face-to-face meeting was useful.

The 2017 May General Election was a landmark. Our local Labour Party branches had been steadily gaining new members, many of them proving to be keen and active. We keep campaigning year round despite often being told on the doorstep, 'We only ever see you when there is an election!' This time we succeeded in displacing the incumbent LibDem MP who had been in post for 12 years. We worked very hard, had a good manifesto and ran an effective campaign in which the use of social media played an important part. It is good to have a Labour MP as it adds strength and personnel to our ongoing work.

I find I am lagging behind in being able to use social media and generally manipulating computer programmes, etc. These things seem to change very rapidly. In fact, this seems to be a time of change in a number of ways. The City of Leeds has many new buildings and plans for development. Even Headingley is changing. What was once a Morrison's supermarket in the main shopping centre is on the way to becoming a Premier Inn and the Library is becoming a 'Hub' with the Post Office inside it.

My printer has finally given up the ghost, so I must take this out to be printed ...

With every good wish for 2018 and joyful blessings for Christmas

from  
Liz