Presiding Officer, members of the Scottish Parliament, thank you for the opportunity to address you today.

As this is the first “Time for Reflection” in 2019, let me begin by wishing you all a Happy New Year.

We live, as the Chinese say, “in interesting times!”

The month of January gets its name from the Roman god, Janus. He is depicted as a two-faced man.

One face looks towards the past and the other towards the future.

Perhaps looking back is what prompts us to make New Year’s resolutions for the future.

Some of you may have given up on resolutions, taking the same attitude as the characters in the cartoon, Calvin and Hobbes.

As Calvin once said ‘God put me on this earth to accomplish a certain number of things - right now I’m so far behind I’ll never die.’

Most of us have little idea of how this year is going to turn out.

It is more unpredictable than many in recent times.

We may have drawn up plans, and contingency plans.

We may have scoped out various alternative scenarios.

But forecasting is an inexact science and can leave us looking very foolish.

In our family, my wife is often heard to say ‘When life seems out of control, control the things you can.

For the children, it may be as simple as getting up and dressed, eating properly, going with well-established routines until life become clearer.

In the Old Testament, when the nation was being dominated by forces outside its control, the people were reminded to hold to what really matters.

As Martin Luther once said ‘Faith is taking God seriously’

What does that mean?

Micah put it this way ‘What does the Lord require of you.

‘To seek justice, to love mercy and to walk humbly before your God.’

For Christians, it is an invitation to embark on the adventure of faith, responding to the call of Jesus, who simply said ‘follow me’.

In 2019, I suggest that will take t**enacious, winsome courage** from all of us

**Tenacious** means we keep on believing, when it would be easier to give up.  
**Winsome** means we face life with active love and a smile, not hate and a scowl.  
**Courage** means we do what needs to be done, without complaining.

Our prayers are with you, for whatever lies ahead in 2019.