

January 2018

New Year Greetings!

In Scotland, New Year – or *Hogmanay* – is the most important of the winter holidays. For 400 years, the Protestant *Kirk* banned Christmas celebrations so New Year was the opportunity to party and make merry.

First introduced by the Vikings, Hogmanay is replete with ancient traditions. These include cleaning the house and paying one's debts before the old year ends, holding torchlight processions through the town, and showing hospitality to friends and strangers alike. A relatively new custom is the singing of "Auld Lang Syne". (Robert Burns only penned the ditty in 1788!)

Another integral part of Hogmanay is "first footing." To ensure good luck for the house, the first person ("foot") to enter in the New Year should be a dark male. He must bring with him some coal, shortbread, salt and whisky - to ensure a year of warmth & plenty. (Vikings were blonde or redheads & usually brought axes!)

These customs are fun for Scots and Sassenachs alike. But it struck me that they would make fine New Year traditions for all people of faith. Before a new year begins, we should clear up the mistakes and messes we've made in the past twelve months. Make amends for anything we've done to hurt or harm, also. Welcoming friends and strangers alike is a Christian mandate 365 days a year – so we've got that one sorted! Then there's first-footing ... We Jesus followers don't discriminate by colour, gender or any other denominator. All people are welcome and all can be bearers of good things. But there's an even better way: why not make sure that God is the

first to “set foot” in your home this New Year? Abundant blessings will be guaranteed!

Wishing you a blessed and peace-filled 2018.

*Brenda*