

NEW YEAR MESSAGE

We face a worrying New Year. There is great uncertainty on the economic front with high personal debt affecting many people. The housing market is looking unsteady. The full consequences of the Northern Rock crisis are not yet known. Belt-tightening both for individuals and for Government seems the order of the day.

Overseas our troops are engaged in a seemingly endless struggle in Afghanistan and are not yet extracted from Iraq. The Middle East situation is far from being resolved. Iran's intentions remain unclear. Nearer to home the Balkans might again erupt in conflict. Deep pockets of poverty still shame the world and hanging over all of us is the challenge of global warming.

In 2008 the world's statesmen will need to be calm and cool. This is a necessary pre-condition to our having the Happy New Year for which we pray.