

Pastoral Letter – Dec 2020-Jan 2021

From The Rev'd Michael Lovegrove

Dear friends

The production schedule for this publication is such that I am writing this at the beginning of November. This is a difficult task as there is so much uncertainty about the future. The situation with regard to the pandemic changes almost daily and who knows where we will be by the end of January? We are waiting for a return to 'normal' whatever that may be. We are waiting for the time when we can meet together to sing our hymns of praise, we are waiting for a new Team Rector and we are waiting for the time when we can hug our grandchildren and so on.



Waiting is something that most of us are not very good at. At best we regard it as a time that could be better employed and at worst as an experience of growing impatience, anger or anxiety. Post after post does not bring the results of medical tests or a job application and that important email or text message fails to appear on our screens. Waiting can be a bitter word especially in an age when we had become accustomed to living by the clock.

But waiting is a holy word. The Old Testament is a 1000 year record of waiting for the coming of the Messiah and Advent (which this year begins on 29th November) is a celebration of waiting. In our churches a candle is lit on each Sunday in Advent. Week by week the light is coming into the world. A few days stand for centuries of waiting, as the light grows stronger until it reaches its climax with the fifth candle of Christmas.

The Old Testament also records pestilence and plague. In the book of Joel we read "I will restore to you the years that the locust has eaten" (Joel 2.25). After the plague comes that gracious promise. No pestilence lasts forever and I pray that when it does pass we will have learnt important lessons from it.

For Christians, Advent is a season of preparation- not just preparing for family gatherings which may be severely restricted this year, nor the buying cards and presents- but preparing also for the glorious celebration of our Lord's coming into the world. So alongside our material preparations let us make some time for some spiritual preparations- perhaps by putting aside some time each day for prayer, reflection or meditation or by reading the bible.

Images of a stable will throng around us at Christmas as well as rival scenes of robins on post boxes and scenes bustling with stage coaches in the snow and houses will be lit with coloured lights. But what will be left for you when the last turkey sandwich has been eaten and the decorations come down?

Don't misunderstand me. Christians should not be 'kill joys'. There's nothing wrong with having a good time at Christmas as far as current restrictions allow provided that the song of the angels is not drowned out by the noise of men.

*'And man at war with man, hears not
The love song which they sing;
O hush the noise ye men of strife
And hear the Angels sing'*

The Christmas song is a song to beat all songs, a song to deliver us from fear and to save those 'who sit in darkness and the shadow of death'.

I wish you all a prayerful Advent, a very happy Christmas and every blessing for the year 2021

With love,

Michael Lovegrove

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