

Waiting there are many reactions to having to wait for something. These depend on who is waiting and what they are waiting for! Now, in December, we are all waiting for Christmas; our emotions as we wait will very much depend on who we are, on what extra pressures the season might bring alongside the joys of spending time celebrating with family and friends. Christmas can be a very difficult time for those who have lost a loved one, especially if they now find themselves alone, and living as we do in a supportive and caring village my hope is that nobody will be left completely alone at Christmas. If you know of anyone who needs support, please do not hesitate to get in touch through the Parish Office.

The church marks this waiting time specifically as Advent. 'Advent' means 'arrival'. This year, Advent Sunday fell in November, on 28th. I wonder if any children noticed that they should have had an extra couple of chocolates in their advent calendar this time round! But for Christians, the four weeks leading up to Christmas each have a focus, so as we wait, we reflect on the history of our faith, looking at the example of the lives of key figures in the Bible and hopefully learning more about our own faith. This year we are taking these weekly themes of the Patriarchs ('Fathers' of the faith from the Old Testament like Abraham and Moses), the Prophets (people like Isaiah, through whom God has spoken to his people), John the Baptist (who prepared the way for Jesus to begin his ministry) and Mary, without whose willingness to be the mother of Jesus there would be no Christmas, and discussing these in our weekly Advent Study Group – details can be found on our website.

All these people prepared the way for Jesus with humility and self-effacement, putting the call of God first, something we can all learn from! Secular Christmas is very much self-centred, focussing on what people want, what they perceive they 'deserve'! We all need to remember that the real reason for Christmas is Jesus, Emmanuel, God-with-us - a baby born away from the security of a home to an ordinary but devout couple, who grew up to give his life for you and me to bring us closer to God and offer us the gift of eternal life. Tempting as it is to think just of ourselves at Christmas, my hope and prayer is that in reading this you have been reminded of the real reason we are waiting for Christmas, that we wait to once again welcome the Christ-child into our hearts and lives, by reflecting his eternal love to those we meet in how we live our lives. The only gift needed to give and to receive at Christmas is love.

May God bless you all as you prepare to celebrate Christmas this year. Thank you for the care and compassion you show to those who need it, locally and globally. Colin and I look forward to welcoming you to the many events and services planned over the Christmas period and wish you all a healthy and happy 2022.

Every blessing,

Helena