

Pastoral Letter December 2021. Revd Sue Cooper writes:

Dear Friends,

It's that time of year again, when the Christmas frenzy descends on us and we feel ourselves beginning to rush around. There is always something to do and we find ourselves on what seems like a treadmill of festive fun and activity

I love this time of year, and I can get as carried away as the next person with all the excitement of Carols and Christmas cards and gifts, and the sheer joy of the decorations and coloured lights which brighten our streets and homes and, for a brief time, dispel the gloom of the news stories.

We have entered the season of Advent in our Church calendar, and traditionally this is a time of watching and waiting. Christians are waiting to celebrate Christmas when we celebrate the birth of Jesus just over 2000 years ago. Jesus came at a very bleak time in Jewish history, when the Jewish people were under Roman occupation. They had been promised a saviour, someone who would come and deliver them from their depressing and oppressing situation. They had been watching and waiting for a very long time, and finally Jesus, their saviour was born.

We have all been watching and waiting a lot over the past 20 months. Initially watching the daily Covid updates by the Prime Minister and Health Secretary; waiting for the 1st lockdown to lift; watching and waiting at loved ones' bedsides, or just waiting for news from the hospital; waiting for a vaccine to be made; waiting to have the vaccine, waiting to see loved ones again, waiting for life to begin again!!!!

Waiting is not something we like to do, even before Covid reared its ugly head. It stirs up visions of standing in the post office queue or at a bus stop. Waiting feels like a waste of time in our fast paced, fast lived lives, especially as we have missed so much of life in recent months. Waiting is boring. But in our hurry to now begin to live life again to the full, we can be guilty of cramming activity into every last second of our lives and our children's lives, and something is lost.

The season of Advent in Church is supposed to slow us down, and it takes real effort to enter into it. Christians are not only remembering the joy of the Saviour's arrival 2000 years ago, after a very long wait in terms of history, but we are also watching and waiting for Jesus to return. The bible tells us in *Revelation Chapter 22* that one day Jesus will be returning to this earth. This may sound like an outrageous claim, but Christians believe this to be true, and so we watch and wait in expectancy for that great day. Anything worth having is worth waiting for isn't it? Think of a pregnancy and the long 9 months of waiting and then the joy of new life. Think back to when you were a child, and waited for Christmas morning, we all remember how great it was to wake up and feel a rustling at the foot of our beds, and think about how happy we all were when the lockdown finally lifted and the long wait was over, and we were finally able to see our loved ones face to face and hug them again. Waiting is not all bad is it? And as we celebrate the babe of Bethlehem who was sent into our dark and gloomy world to be our saviour, let's pause for a moment and think again; he will be returning to us one day,,,,,but until then,,,,,we watch and we wait.

I do wish you all a very merry Christmas, and every blessing for the New Year. God bless you all,

With love Revd Sue.

Revelation 22:12-13 (NIV) "Look, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to each person according to what they have done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End."