

Mike's message

Preparation!

It's a time of preparation!

I've been sorting out my Study at the Vicarage. It's amazing how much clutter we gather over the years. Old meeting papers, brochures, service sheets and those things we once must have thought 'might come in useful' but, let's be honest, they never did!

I'm being ruthless. If I don't need it now, and if I can easily find something to replace it if I need to in future, out it goes!

It's a timely 'sort out'. It is Advent after all. Advent is about preparing for the coming of Christ. The word 'Advent' is from the Latin 'adventus' (coming) and it's a two-fold preparation. Just around the corner is Christmas, a celebration of the birth of Jesus Christ, The Word made Flesh, some two thousand years ago. We are preparing for the celebration of that 'coming'. But there's a deeper, more challenging, theme to Advent. The readings at worship remind us that God's plan is ongoing - he hasn't finished with his world yet - and in the fulness of time he will complete his plan and Christ will return.

The idea of a 'second coming' sometimes becomes associated with what some of us would regard as the fundamentalist wing of the Christian faith. But it's mainstream belief and doctrine. Advent is a time of preparation - but for what are we preparing?

Sometimes the preparation for celebrating the birth of Jesus Christ at Bethlehem can get in the way of preparing to greet the coming of Jesus Christ again! We can get so engrossed with Christmas decorations, Christmas card writing, Christmas shopping, planning Christmas parties and Christmas family gatherings that we miss Advent.

Advent doesn't start until 29th November. By then there'll be that many carols being played in shops, lights on the High Street and seasonal "bon homie" that we can be in danger of missing Advent all together! We need to prepare properly by reviewing how we live our lives. What's really important? To us? To God? Do they match up? God hasn't finished with this world yet and Christ's return in glory is promised. That will be a time of judgement, but we don't need go through Advent with miserable faces, like Scrooge uttering 'Bah Humbug' because Christ's return will also a time of completion of God's purposes. The Kingdom in it's full glory.

As Paul writes to the Corinthians:

"now we see in a mirror dimly, but then we will see face to face"

(1 Corinthians 13 .12).

