

A few words from the Vicar

Besides this, you know what time it is, how it is now the moment for you to wake from sleep. For salvation is nearer to us now than when we became believers. (Romans 13:11)

In recent months I've not mentioned anything in my magazine article about the proposed team ministry covering the three Radcliffe parishes (St Andrew's, St Mary's and SS Thomas & John's) and ourselves. This is because there has been nothing to report, but now there is.

The progress achieved in forming the team has been much slower than hoped. The four parish steering group has therefore pressed the pause button and put the team formation process on hold for now. Instead, the four PCCs are exploring the possibility of forming what is known as a Mission Partnership. Should this go ahead (at the time of writing nothing has been agreed) it is argued we will be in a better position to form a team ministry next time a vacancy arises amongst the clergy allocated to the four parishes.

What is a Mission Partnership? Well, I'm not quite sure myself because neither the PCC nor I have been briefed yet. However, we will have been by the time you read this; so ask me then! As I understand it, in a Mission Partnership:

- clergy meet regularly for prayer and fellowship;
- we arrange occasional 'pulpit swaps' when clergy lead services in each other's churches (just as Ian the minister for Ainsworth Methodist Church and I do currently);
- we organise occasional joint services and joint activities.

Anyway, that's enough of that, it's Advent and we're fast approaching Christmas!

Advent is a season of expectation and preparation as we prepare to celebrate the coming of Christ amongst us but also look ahead to his coming as judge of all at the end of time.

These days Advent is overshadowed by the preparations for Christmas. This is not a whinge, for let's be pragmatic, when else are we supposed to prepare for the Christmas festivities other than during Advent. All that shopping, sending all those presents and Christmas cards, all the preparations must be done before Christmas itself. Unless you're one of those well organised folk who do their Christmas shopping during the January sales, it all gets done in December. And then there are all those Christmas meals and office parties to attend.

So no, this is not a whinge because it is only right we celebrate the good news of God incarnate, Jesus Christ come amongst us. No doubt some Church figure will rail against rampant consumerism (that's par for the course during Advent) but I really can't see a problem with hard-working people spending their hard-earned cash to buy each other presents and to enjoy themselves.

The problem comes when people spend money they don't have, when they pile up debt they can't hope to repay and have to suffer the consequences that follow. So I would urge people to spend responsibly this Christmas.

And as for those who don't appreciate the reason why we celebrate at Christmas, the reason for the season if you like; it's up to us to share with them the good news about Jesus!

Anyway, busy though things will be over the next few weeks, take some time out from the busyness to come along to our services during Advent and over Christmas (see the Parish Diary for details).

Every Blessing

Dave