

December 2023 Advent

I always like to think of it as a 'Pregnant pause' – literally for Mary and Elizabeth of course! For most of us though it is a time of waiting, of getting ready, of expecting.

What is it that we are expecting though? Presents is often the answer I get in school when I ask that question and of course that is true and with those gifts comes the expectation of time with friends or with family, a space to celebrate. We expect a change of atmosphere and attitude – we look forward to 'feeling – Christmassy'!

Alas though, so often, we rush into Christmas with other expectations, stress, busyness, panic, overcrowded shops, relationships strained to breaking point, guests we 'ought' to invite but don't really want to.

In our churches perhaps we could try to slow the pace down a little. It seems impossible I know- but what if, in Advent, we journey together, taking time to look back on those who have gone before us, waiting with expectancy for the story which fills our Christmas day but not rushing to get there, enjoying the journey itself not just focussing on the destination.

This advent (if you can) take just 5 minutes each day to find a little space, to allow yourself to expect the

good things, to give to God those difficulties and moments that you dread and to feel the

pace slowing a little. Five minutes may seem like no time (or else an impossibly long time to stop with so much to do) but if we can carve out just those few minutes to contemplate the reality of Christmas.

The reality we are reminded of each year that God of the universe who chose to be born a vulnerable child, in a borrowed stable, a family forced to live as refugees and then endure a life as an outsider so that we might know God's love and presence in the joys and sorrows of our lives. There is something about taking time on the journey that allows us to 'look forward' to Christmas in a new way, to wonder about what will be in a way that Children seem to find so easy and as adults we seem so often to have lost.



Alison Booker
Archdeacon of Oakham



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Produced by the Diocesan Office, The Palace, Peterborough, PE1 1YB

Tel: 01733 887000 Email: communications@peterborough-diocese.org.uk

www.peterborough-diocese.org.uk