

I've said it enough times over this last month, the month when Church has been remembering and celebrating Advent: "Advent is a time of waiting, of looking forward to something or someone; a time of excited preparation ... for something that is to come." It's a joyous time of anticipation and making ready. I follow that up by saying: "It's a time of preparation for Christmas, celebrating Christ's birth, and preparing ourselves (somehow) for Christ's coming again." Children, most especially, have been waiting excitedly (and impatiently) for Christmas. Most of us have also been looking forward; waiting for something special, and happy, and joyful.

Well, now the excitement of Christmas is over, for another year ... so now what? We did all that waiting, the looking forward to Christmas ... and it's now passed. For all the anticipation, it still only lasted 24 hours just like any other day. It's now behind us again; so now what?

We seem to spend our lives looking ahead to things that are still to come, and we do so either with expectation or with anxiety. We always seem to be waiting for something. As I was preparing to write this we were looking forward (looking ahead that is, rather than looking forward with anticipation and relish) to the Brexit vote in Parliament. Now we wait to see what happens next; and we wait, uncertainly, for 11pm on Friday 29 March. On a much happier note, we look forward to the village pantomime (oh yes we do!). Or, on a more pragmatic note, we wait for appointments, or results, or operations, or exam results, or ... we're always waiting for something.

We are always looking ahead to something else. I'm always doing that; the Church is always doing that. Even before Christmas I was looking past Christmas to think about Epiphany, Ash Wednesday, Lent, Holy Week and Easter. In January last year I had my first conversation about a Christmas service for 2018. We are always looking to the next thing.

Perhaps by always looking forward (ahead) to something else, we forget to live in the here and now. And if we forget to live life now - well, life has this habit of passing us by. Before we know it, all those things that, at the time, seemed important, they've all happened; we've continued to look forward (usually with anxiety), life has happened and all of a sudden we reach our last appointment. And only then do we realise that it's too late - we've missed living life. There's a verse in Luke's gospel where Jesus says: "The kingdom of God is within you." That means you are living in God's kingdom now; don't always be looking forward to it, anticipating its coming. Live it now; your life is part of the Kingdom. Now. So this New Year, as well as planning for the future, remember to live life now, please.

Revd David Commander, Rector