

MESSAGE FROM REVEREND BERNARD FIDDER

It is December again! Do you not find that every year seems go by faster? It does seem so to me – maybe it is sign that I am getting older...

I find December quite a busy month. If you are like me, and have a paid job, then you'll know that this time can be quite stressful. Like me, you may have objectives that need to be met and in order to meet them you'll need to put in some extra hard work. These could be sales objectives, cost savings objectives or, in my case, an important deadline of one of my IT projects.

December is also the time to prepare for Christmas. Christmas cards need to be written and sent, presents need to be bought and wrapped, and all the shopping and cooking needs to be done.

And then there are also additional festivities, which are nice, but do take up time. Like many offices our office also organises a Christmas party, but you may also have been invited to Christmas parties from societies or clubs you belong to. And of course Churches will have additional celebrations like carol singing.

All in all December is a busy month, but as we prepare for Christmas practically, do we also take time to prepare for Christmas spiritually? You may know that the Christian year does not start on the first of January, but on the fourth Sunday before Christmas (November 27 this year) and that Advent is the first season leading up to Christmas. But the season of Advent was not designed to do all the last minute preparations for Christmas, but as a time of quieting down. Not as a time of planning ahead, but as a time of reviewing what Christ means to us, and what Christ has done for us in the last year. Not as a time of parties and festivities, but as a time of reflection on the Kingship of Christ – so that when we celebrate His birth, we not only celebrate the birth of a famous baby, but also the beginning of our salvation in Christ.

I have just come aware of a new booklet: "Ready, Steady.... Slow", published by the Anglican Church (<http://www.chpublishing.co.uk/product.asp?id=2395742>), which is a different type of advent calendar that "offers a daily practical tip to help you stay cool from December 1 to 24, as well as a reading, a prayer, a short reflection and a reference to an online video with a helpful message. Each day's content is based on a real observation relevant to the season."

It does not matter how you do it, but I would encourage you to find a time each day, to read your Bible, pray and think about what the birth, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ means to you. And I hope and pray that you will be surprised by our God when you do so!

I wish you and yours a very happy Christmas time, in which you not only can enjoy the festivities, but also have a real and meaning full encounter, with Jesus Christ, Son of the living God. And if you are interested in this "Ready, Steady... Slow" booklet, and do not have ready access to a bookshop or the Internet, let me know, and I can buy it for you.

Bernard Fidler