

Faith Comment published in the Petersfield Post

11 December 2009: Rev'd David Stickland, St Mary's, Buriton

Look Back as well as forward

The race for Christmas has started.

Christmas trees are sprouting up everywhere, school plays and concerts are being rehearsed and performed and newspapers and magazines are full of advertising seeking to encourage us to spend both on presents and seasonal food.

But the Church calendar is encouraging us to stop, look and listen. The Church is observing the much-over-looked and undervalued season of Advent. It's that season of quiet reflection which looks both back to the past and forward to the future.

We look back to those who foretold and heralded the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ many years before: the prophets, John the Baptist and others. We think of their words of hope and expectation. But we also look forward to another Advent when the same Lord Jesus Christ will return as both King and Judge.

The Church sees Advent very much as a penitential time and a time of preparation, not just for Christmas but also for Christ's second coming. I would encourage you to stop, look and listen during this month. Slow down and reflect, look back and consider how God prepared for the gift of His Son. As Paul writes in his letter to the church in Galatia, at just the right time God sent His Son so that we might be adopted as his children.

As you prepare for Christmas, look back as well as forward and then look past Christmas to the future when the baby born at Bethlehem will reign as Judge and King.