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To everything there is a season

For many years now at home we have kept a Christmas cactus. This plant has succulent leaves, annually producing masses of pink flowers, before hibernating for the next 11 months.



You might be forgiven for thinking that, named as it is, the cactus should be in flower over Christmas. Perhaps we just have a weird specimen, or maybe it is something to do with global warming (or our central heating!), but each year it seems to bloom ever earlier.

This October, it was in full flower in support of Breast Cancer Awareness, and laudable as that cause may be, it didn't seem right somehow.

Before October was out, how many shops were selling "Christmas" with promotions, decorations and artificial trees? How many ads have you already seen on television for Christmas gifts? Like my Christmas cactus, it feels all wrong.

A few weeks ago when the clocks were changing, the young people in our church led all-age worship on the theme of time. The reading from the Old Testament was from Ecclesiastes chapter 3: "To everything there is a season, and a time to every purpose under heaven."

Christians celebrate the season of Advent in the four weeks running up to Christmas. We then look forward to the birth of Christ. As the writer of Ecclesiastes wrote, there is a time for everything. If we are to keep Christmas special, the time for Christmas, and its true meaning, awaits us.