

Faith Comment published in the Petersfield Post

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A peaceful Advent



With goodies in the shops since the beginning of November and the decorative lights being strung across our streets in Petersfield before Remembrance Sunday, Christmas seems to be starting ever earlier and the preparation time seems to be becoming ever more frenetic.

Anyone who has had to plan a wedding or any kind of celebration will be aware that much of the enjoyment of the occasion is in the anticipation. All the thinking and cooking and buying for Christmas does contain its own joy but often on 'The Day' there can be anti-climax in the afternoon and sometimes squabbles and arguments break out by the evening.

For centuries the church has had four weeks of quiet contemplation leading up to Christmas Day. It is known as the season of Advent and, although shorter, it fulfils the same purpose as the season of Lent which prepares us for the great festival of Easter.

Both Advent and Lent can be times of thoughtfulness about the great celebration to come. The idea is that a short time of self discipline makes the festive season even more delightful by contrast.

Advent, this year, began on 1 December.

Some people like to eat more plainly during these preparation weeks, some like to spend more time in prayer or meditation and many like to select a special book to read each day to guide their thoughts for the present and the future.

The Unity Bookshop, in Folly Lane, has a good selection of books for Advent, as well as Christmas books, cards, music and gifts for both children and adults. There will also be a book/gift stall facilitated by the bookshop in many of the churches during the next few weeks.

We are aware that the retail trade - and bookshops in particular - are suffering a great deal since the introduction of on-line shopping so the message they would all like us to hear is 'use us or lose us!'

A peaceful Advent to you all.