



Happy New Year! The season of Advent marks the start of the Christian year, and is a season of expectation and preparation as the Church looks forward to celebrating the birth of Christ.

Like Lent, Advent is a season of preparation, but it is also a season of expectation and hope rather than a season of penitence.

Over the years, the commercial pressure of the outside world has made it increasingly difficult for us in the church to remain alert and watchful in our anticipation of Christmas, but it remains our mission to do so as the coming of Christ is an incredibly powerful reminder of the real meaning of the season.

As we move into the darkest time of the solar calendar, the symbols of light and darkness become more powerful and provocative. We begin our journey through advent in deep darkness, progressively lighting a single candle in our advent wreath each week to symbolize our journey from darkness into the light of the birth of Jesus.

The four weeks of advent are a single story adventure where we are taken from hearing of the birth of a saviour foretold by the prophets of the Old Testament, to the prophet John the Baptist foretelling of Jesus saving power, to the Angel Gabriel visiting Mary and Joseph to announce to them that they were chosen to care for the Son of God.

This is indeed an incredibly powerful story that builds week by week as we eagerly await the ultimate culmination and celebration on Christmas Day. Leaving out parts of the story, or glossing over them, would be like leaving out a part of our story, of who we are as people of God. Each piece is as important as the next, each twist and turn in the adventure helping us to understand fully the gift God has given us in the offering of his Son to the world.

As we enter into Advent this year, may we be eager to celebrate the birth of our Saviour, but may we also be at peace in our chaotic and commercial world where the season of Advent is spent rushing from store to store and party to party. Those few moments of peace, quiet, and expectant waiting on a Sunday morning are what we, as God's people have to offer the world. As faithful Christians, we already know that we have been given the greatest gift ever, and we are on a mission to share that gift with the world - in its entirety - not just a piece of the gift, but all of it.

I pray that you and those you love this advent season will enjoy the peace of Christ that passes all understanding. May your hearts and minds be guarded in Christ Jesus. And may you be blessed throughout the holidays as you continue to bless others.

*Rev. Sharla*