



ADVENT and CHRISTMAS 2021

Clifton Pastoral Charge

"...and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" John 1

Greetings Members and Adherents of Clifton Pastoral Charge!

Is life, including Christmas, still coming at you as quickly as in the past or has age and the pandemic slowed things down a bit for you? If the later, I want to suggest that that may not be all bad. All of our traditions; those things we do each year just because we have always done them, are up for grabs in this particular time we are in. As a funny sign I saw said: "Tradition may be just peer pressure from the dead".

Maybe one of the gifts of the pandemic is reflection on traditions, on self, on the world and the meaning of this short span of lifetime we all have. Maybe our forced slowdown is a gift.

Advent and Christmas is about peace, joy, love, and HOPE, all things we associate with the birth and life of Jesus and incarnation: The Word becoming flesh. It is an exciting time of preparation and celebration!

But HOPE, based on faith, needs to be deeper than just the end of the pandemic and be based on more than the latest news of case numbers, which leave us on an emotional see saw.

What are the deepest hopes and desires of your heart? In 1982, Jim Strathdee wrote what he thought our deepest longings and needs were, in his song "Waiting for the Kingdom of God". The first verse and chorus go like this:

Through the darkness and confusion, the struggle to find our way. Some of us still hold on to the dream and hope for a better day. Though the road is strewn with failure, the future is hard to see, there comes a moment of God's grace; a glimpse of what we still might be.

And we're waiting for the kingdom of God; waiting for the kingdom of God. What we do while we wait depends on what we're waiting for. We're waiting for the kingdom of God.

As we wait and prepare for what is coming this Christmas and beyond, what are you waiting for in the depths of your heart? St. Paul tells us that we may not even know, but that the Spirit can pray for us about them. (*Romans 8*)

May this coming year be one of something really new!

Merry Christmas!

Rev. Phillip

