

From the Superintendent

Rev Steve Day

Dear friends,

I write in the week leading up to Advent Sunday. Advent comes from the Latin *Adventus*, meaning "to come." During Advent, we prepare to celebrate the coming of God into the world in the person of his Son, Jesus Christ. Advent is a time of waiting and preparation. During Advent, we are invited to engage in two forms of waiting.

One form of waiting is visible in our churches. Each of our churches will have an Advent ring, with four outer candles and a centre one. Another candle is lit with each successive Sunday in Advent, leading to the lighting of the centre candle on Christmas Day. With the lighting of each new candle, we know that the end of our waiting is drawing closer. Advent calendars also help us in this form of waiting; the opening of a new box each day in December shows that Christmas is approaching. Some kind friends have given Jane and me an Advent calendar, and one for Ginger as well. It will be interesting to see whether Ginger registers anything beyond receiving an additional treat each day!

The form of waiting represented by the Advent rings and Advent calendars is one we may be comfortable with because we know there is a definite end. Christmas Day marks the end of our Advent waiting and enables us to prepare and anticipate our Christmas celebrations.

However, there is another form of waiting which marks Advent, but which may not be so comfortable. This waiting is for the return of Christ, a theme which is the focus of worship on Advent Sunday. This waiting anticipates the return of Christ and the coming of God's kingdom in all its fullness.

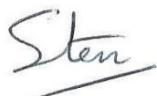
This second form of waiting has an unknown endpoint because we don't know when Christ will return. Jesus said, 'Keep watch, because you do not know on what day the Lord will come...the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him' (Matthew 24:42, 44). Jesus invites us as his disciples to live in a

constant state of watchfulness and readiness so we will be prepared to meet Christ when he returns in glory.

This form of waiting is active and ongoing. We are invited to a life in which we wait and hope for the return of Christ. During our waiting, we are called to use the spiritual gifts and skills with which we have been blessed to worship and serve Him, reflecting in our lives the gracious love we have encountered in Christ. In seeking to reflect the love of Christ in our lives, day by day, we seek to watch and be ready for His return. If we live our lives as those committed to reflecting the love of Christ, we will be ready to receive and welcome our Lord when He returns, whenever this may be.

May God bless our waiting in trust, expectation and hope this Advent and bless our celebration of the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ this Christmas.

God bless,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sten", with a horizontal line underneath it.