

Week 54 – Saturday 7th July



Less than 6 months to Christmas!

I had a pastoral visit to do the other day. I knew it would be quite difficult: the person I was visiting had just come back from our cancer hospital and I guessed the news was not good. Her words, "I've been given nine months!" met me as we sat down. Then with a smile she said, "That's just enough time for me to have a baby" – a miracle indeed as she is 87!

That led us into talking about our faith, our hope, and the thought that death is a new birth into the total love of God. Nine months of preparation, or nine months to say goodbye? And wonderful though our medical folk are, I wonder what giving a definite date does to someone? As a minister I know when I begin an appointment when it will end, and it is amazing how that concentrates the mind. I remember when I was leaving one appointment I was really sad at the thought that I wouldn't see the amazing banks of daffodils at the side of the road the following year.

Now I look at my diary and realise that we are on week 27 of the year, and it strikes me we are less than six months to Christmas! And what has happened since I started to write these thoughts? Sandra has been our President for just over a year; I've moved from the west coast to the east coast; we have been battered by the 'Beast from the East'... And many of you will have had something happen that will have changed your lives into a new direction – a birth, a death, a diagnosis, a meeting. In our daily lives we may think we are organised and planned but my diary get changed almost daily and often well laid plans have to be changed!

Yet in our Churches we live by a Church Year: we have the great mysteries of Christmas, Easter and Pentecost; we have our annual Anniversary, Remembrance Sunday and Harvest Festival. We take time out in Advent and Lent to think about the depth of God's love for us and our response to him. We have a routine of faith that gives us stability, but we serve a God who disturbs us from our complacency, who calls us to be pilgrim people, who reminds us that he came to share in our life so that we might share in his.

We may have six months to Christmas, but if I run true to form it will still come as a surprise and I'll wonder if I'll be ready on time – just as I wonder if any of us are ready to come face to face with the one who created and loves us, whether we have notice or not!

***Holy and life giving God,
we come before you to hold in prayer those who have heard news
that will change their lives forever.
We thank you for faith that enables us to turn to you with hope,
and pray for those who as yet do not know
how much you reach out to them in their pain and hurt.
Help us live each day to the full,
knowing we are on a journey towards meeting you finally.
May the hope that we celebrate at Christmas, of God with us,
be filled with the resurrection hope of Easter,
and empowered by the Spirit sent at Pentecost may we live
as your redeemed loved children in your Kingdom of love.
Amen***