

Dear Friends,

Over the last few days I wonder what you have noticed? Looking out the window I've seen there's more leaves on the ground than the trees, and whenever I think about all the leaves I've collected, there seems to be even more to pick up. I've seen the squirrel running across the driveway and the days getting colder. At the same time, I wonder about all the things I've missed.

Last week whilst on a District Retreat we were encouraged to go out for a walk, to notice small details and to stop and reflect on God through it. It's easy to miss the berries hanging on the Rowan tree or the variegated leaves of a plant with each leaf having its own pattern of green and gold. Without stopping and noticing, I'd have missed this completely in the rush of daily life.

As we enter the season of Advent we are watching and waiting. We are waiting and preparing for the season of Christmas and to celebrate the birth of Jesus. In the world around us it is a time of frenetic activity, yet this is a season of contemplation. We need to hold the two together. Through the Advent ring we often find ourselves being encouraged to reflect on the themes of peace, joy, hope and love. Where do we notice these themes in our day to day lives?

Over the coming weeks we'll hear the words of Isaiah remind us in chapter 9 that 'for to us a child is born, to us a son is given.' This passage helps us to look ahead to Jesus' birth, remembering that God was revealed to humanity in a tiny, vulnerable, and helpless baby. We will then be reminded that he will be called 'Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father' and 'Prince of Peace.' How amazing! In a few short words we are reminded of the character of God whom we worship, who in Jesus is alive today through the Holy Spirit.

December is a month of busy-ness in many ways as we prepare to celebrate Jesus' birth as families, churches, and communities. There is much to do but we also need to find the time to stop and notice the work and character of God. Maybe we can spend a little time each day focusing on one of the phrases from Isaiah, looking out the window or going for a walk and thinking about where we notice God in the wider world. In the times of getting everything done, where do we see the character of Jesus revealed in the actions of others? My encouragement is that we seek to hold together the things we need to do with time to be with God.

May this Christmas be filled with the peace, joy, love, and hope of Christ for you, those you know and love, your church and community.

God bless,
Chris