FROM THE RECTORY - IN THE BEGINNING WAS THE WORD

And so, as darkness falls, and with it yet more rain, the old year draws to a close. This Sunday, the first in Advent, is the beginning of the church’s year; only 25 days until Christmas. Now is a time for preparation.

*In the beginning was the Word … and the Word became flesh (that is - human) and dwelt among us*. (Jn 1: 1 …. 14). This is what we are preparing to celebrate. Over the coming month this Word will be written, danced, enacted, drawn, read, sung; indeed presented and represented in more ways than we can imagine. Step inside the world of the next few weeks and you will see a giant birthday celebration for a baby born roughly 2000 years ago in Bethlehem. A birth is a new beginning; a beginning both for the new born child and his or her family and this one is no exception.

Nostalgia sells; whether it’s a 2000 year-old stable or an Edwardian snow-clad mansion. So, our Christmas celebrations will include a lot of looking back. The story of Jesus’ birth will be told and retold. Do you remember when ….? Do you remember those strange visitors, and their odd gifts? Do you remember that strange light in the sky; some said it was a star, others a satellite, most of our friends thought we were imagining it - and so it goes on. A birth may be a moment of hope, of optimism, of dreams; not all dreams are fulfilled. We warned him but he wouldn’t listen. A tragic end, a life cut short, such a waste.

The Word became flesh, but not in the beginning. The Word was (and still is) God; active in creation from the beginning. Before the Word became flesh, it had already existed throughout time. The birth of Jesus, the event we are preparing to celebrate, is just one step in God’s story, a story that is ongoing. This Jesus will come again (eg: Lk 13:26, Acts 1: 11); and this time in power, as judge.

Christmas marks neither the beginning nor the ending of the story. The story continues and we are a part of it. As we work through this month of preparation; as we hear again the good news of a saviour’s birth; let us not only rejoice in what has been, but ask ‘*looking forward, what are we called to be in response?’* Then, having asked, let us listen as we wait for the Word in reply.

Rev’d Philip Advent 2023