

St Luke's in the City

Celebrating at the Crossroads **Advent Sunday, 2 December 2007**

Dear Friends,

Advent is a wonderful gift to us, especially for we wealthy Westerners who are inclined to be burdened with lists-on-lists of things to do, diaries bursting with must-do commitments, and a sense of artificial and manic urgency which seems to evaporate on the 25th December. While all around the world is rushing about like chickens without heads, anaesthetised against the world's suffering by a torrent of superficiality (and descending rapidly into credit card debt!) Christ the Coming One beckons us to slow down, breathe deeply, attend to reality, watch and wait with joy and hopeful expectation. Everything about the Advent liturgy is designed to slow us down, so that there is space and time for looking, listening, waiting – so that we may alert, on the lookout watch for the Coming One. Almost everything about December is designed to do the reverse! I encourage us all to let Advent be Advent, to resist the imposition of Christmas into December – not, of course, by a preachy dogmatism, rather by a simple detachment from all that is trivial, superfluous and distracting. Attend to Advent. Put your trust in Advent's symbols and scriptures, and make the commitment to be present in the Sunday liturgy throughout Advent.

If you do not already have a copy of the Advent-Christmas-Epiphany seasonal guide do pick one up in church today. If you would like an electronic copy please drop me an email. As we begin today the 'Year of Matthew' I recommend making the time and space to sit somewhere comfortable and read Matthew's gospel from start to finish uninterrupted. The Advent Quiet Day, The Service of Light, the Sacrament of Reconciliation, praying around the Advent Wreath at home – you may find these helpful, and you may know of others who might appreciate being invited. I invite us all to take to heart the Sending prayer in our Advent liturgy. Not only will we be able to pray it from our hearts during the liturgy (without being tied to words on pages), we will also be able to pray it wherever we happen to be during December:

As Christmas trees are lighted,
as people rush to shop, and send their cards,
as Christmas songs are heard everywhere;
keep us close to You,
that the One whose coming we celebrate,
Jesus Christ,
may be honoured by all we do.

With my love,
David