

Dear Chaplains,

As I write this on today, the first day of Advent, I am reminded more than ever of the great theme of Advent, which is waiting. It seems as though we have spent much of this year waiting. Waiting for a vaccine, waiting for the end of lockdown, waiting for various government announcements, waiting to begin worship in buildings again, waiting to hug loved ones. Waiting. I am not very good at waiting. I'm impatient and I like to get things done. But the season of Advent reminds us that for us as Christians life is really one long wait.

We wait, of course, for the coming of Jesus as a baby at Christmas, but we wait also for his return at the end of the age. When that time comes he will put all things right, and there will be no more sickness, or death or pain or suffering. There will be no more 'social distancing' for "*God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God*" (Rev 21.3). On that day we will be gathered in groups of many, many more than 6; in fact, in "*a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb!*" (Rev 7.9). That is a day to look forward to with great hope and expectation.

But in the meantime, in this period of waiting, this comes with my encouragement to keep on looking out for those signs of hope. The light has shone in the darkness and the darkness will never overcome it. This is also an opportunity for me to say thank you so much for all the ways - large and small, known and hidden - by which you serve and bless your communities in your roles as Mothers' Union Chaplains. Your prayers, worship and acts of service, I know, are so appreciated by all our members, and without your life-giving, light-shining, hope-bringing ministry the world would be a much darker place.

One thing to look forward to in the new year is an opportunity to gather together with all the Diocesan Chaplains, online, for a time of sharing and worship on the morning of the 3rd March. More details in due course.

In the meantime this comes with my love and prayers for a blessed and peaceful Advent.

In Him,

+Emma