

Moravian Women's Association- Devotional Paper – November 2023

Fruits of the Spirit

*But the Spirit produces love, joy, peace, **patience**, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, humility and self-control. (Galatians 5:22-23a GNB)*

The season of Advent begins this year on Sunday 3rd December. The word Advent comes from the Latin “adventus” which means coming and in the Christian Church it is the word used to describe the weeks immediately prior to Christmas. It is a time to prepare for Christmas. Of course, out in the non-Church world, preparation for Christmas often begins at the beginning of September if not earlier, as the shops begin to display their Christmas offerings. We are just approaching Halloween as I write this and I fully expect to hear Christmas music in shops as soon as the Halloween paraphernalia is packed away. The only mention of Advent in the non-Church world usually relates to Advent Calendars. When I was small, an Advent Calendar consisted of a piece of card with a picture of the Nativity Scene on the front with 25 doors, one to be opened each day. Behind the door was a picture and some words depicting some element of the Christmas story. By the time my own children were small, the pictures had been replaced by a chocolate. Now you can buy Advent Calendars containing all sorts of gifts – socks, perfume, gin, whisky to name but a few. This seems to me to be a reflection of our society which seems to have become increasingly unable to wait for anything including the mountain of gifts that many people receive on Christmas morning. It feels that we are an impatient society.

I am always happy when Advent arrives as it means it is time to sing one of my favourite hymns or carols – “O Come, O Come Immanuel.” This Carol is probably one of our most ancient with its roots in the 6th Century. Each verse begins with the plea that God would appear to us and rescue us. The verses use biblical imagery mostly drawn from the book of the prophet Isaiah. Imagery which Christians interpret as referring to the coming of Christ the Messiah. Immanuel – meaning God with us (Is 7:14); Rod of Jesse – shoot from Jesse, father of King David (Is 11:1-2); Key of David – the great King of Israel (Is 22:22) and finally Dayspring – meaning dawn (Is 9:2 and referred to in Luke 1:78). I also think this Carol's tune to have a yearning quality and a sense of expectancy as we wait for the Coming of Christ.

Isaiah witnessed the disappearance of Israel and Judah as independent nations. The promise given to Moses of a land where the Jewish people could live in peace and prosperity was over. The Temple was destroyed, the people enslaved with many living in exile. When Isaiah was given these prophecies, all he could see before him was defeat and captivity. Isaiah had to have enormous hope and patience to wait for God to intervene and send His Son, Jesus as Messiah to rescue His people.

Read Isaiah 9: 2-7.

As Christians we believe that some of those prophecies delivered by Isaiah were fulfilled in the birth of Jesus Christ. During Advent we will prepare to celebrate His birth over 2000 years ago. We also believe that some of the prophecies will only be fulfilled when Jesus returns, not as a helpless human baby but as a mighty King and we yearn for His return. It is plain to see that our world is not as it should be. War, violence, hunger, disease – the list goes on and on. Our Advent preparations should also include making ourselves ready for Jesus' triumphant return and part of that preparation requires patience – hoping and believing that in time He will return and God's kingdom will be fully present on earth.

Questions

There used to be goods which only appeared in our shops at certain times of the year – do you remember any of these?

Do you think that this limited availability made us more patient and appreciative?

What can we do during Advent to cultivate our ability to be patient?

Each time we pray the Lord's Prayer we pray these words – "Thy Kingdom Come". In which situations in our own lives, in our churches, in our country, in our world, do we feel that God's Kingdom needs to come?

Perhaps these situations could be written down on a largish piece of paper and prayed about either in your Circle, in Church or in your own private prayers at home.