

ADVENT MATTERS

We can ward off the fullness that is empty, by paying attention to the emptiness that is full.

Shall I attack the commercialisation of Christmas? I myself am about to spend a lot of time and money on food, drink, and other costly material things. Many livelihoods depend on the business opportunities of this season. We are material people. At Christmas we celebrate God's material love for the material world. So of course it is a material Feast.

And whilst enjoying our material Christmas, we need to remember that it is all spiritual too. Or to put it another way, we must try to be thoughtful in all we do, and try to live our material lives in God's way.

Christmas is the fulfilment of what we hope for in Advent. No more micro-chocolates from the Advent Calendar. It's time to scoff whole boxfuls! But oh, indigestion! Hangovers and the rest. We learn that such fullness – is empty.

May I humbly suggest a treatment for this? Not an indigestion remedy, but more of a pre-Christmas vaccination. We can ward off the fullness that is empty, by paying attention to the emptiness that is full.

Many Christians say how much they love the season of Advent. This is something deeper than anticipating the presents and enjoying all the early Christmas treats. The symbolism of Advent expresses our yearning for a better world, better lives, better relationships. These hopes and aspirations are about the truth of who we are now, and our eternal destiny. Wow!

At our Christmas Eve Crib Service at St Matthew's Perry Beeches, we begin by each bringing a handful of straw to the crib. Like so much that we try to do for God and others, it's of small worth. But then at the end of the service we each receive a cross, made of the same straw. The emptiness we brought is now transformed, full of God.

Make the most of Advent. If you'd like some free seasonal inspiration, you can "join the journey" at www.churchofengland.org/Christmas. Or text GODWITHUS to 88802.