Advent

You may have noticed that the shops are decorated for Christmas even though it is as yet mid – November and everyone is encouraged to get into the mood for the festival. So it may surprise some people to know that in these Sundays of November Christians are focussing on Christ the King and
his Kingdom, as the season of “Ordinary Time” winds down towards the last Sunday of November and the close of the Churches' year. Then a new year for the Church will begin on the first Sunday of December. So, far from being catapulted into the Christmas feeling, Christmas, for us, is still ‘next year.’  That New Year begins on Dec. 1st.with the season of Advent that has its own feeling and atmosphere, and itself forms a preparation for the Christmas festival, while the turning of the old and new years suggests to us
that we think about the effect of the passing of time. That’s why many families use aids such as Advent calendars or crowns.

A well known advent hymn addresses and pictures Christ, and his first coming, as the Bridegroom who came to us “as drew the world to evening-tide.”

It goes on; “as towards thine advent, time declined.”

Many may be surprised or intrigued to learn that by this picture of things, the coming of the Incarnate One at Christmas, although it is deemed to have happened two thousand years ago, is also seen as occurring towards the end of the duration of the created universe: and therefore of time itself.

Advent gives us an opportunity to consider prayerfully our relationship with time in many and varied ways, and so to equip ourselves to deal with change as and when it arises. Advent leads us further, and teaches us to live prayerfully and faithfully in this ever-changing world, which is coming to an end. We need to reflect on the task of navigating the world and our own lives while always centring our focus on God who never changes and who is Lord of time.

And so it is that on Advent Sunday, we will begin a journey through the Churches’ year and will follow a path mapped out by the Liturgy Sunday by Sunday. The metaphor of a path is a fortunate one: speaking to us as it does of freedom, motion, time and choice. It also functions as an image of our proceeding through the world of space and time, as well as our traversing the complications of our own nature and being.  Let us allow this Advent to help us to expect, prepare for, trust in and respond to God, during this holy season and throughout the coming year.