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## Advent & Christmas Reflection

### Are we there yet?



How many of us remember asking that question when

we were children? It didn't matter how many different ways we were given to count the days or hours until something special would happen, we were still impatient to get 'there'.

During Advent the temptation is to rush forward to get everything ready for Christmas? Christmas becomes the end of something rather than a new beginning and Advent is reduced to simply a time of shopping, preparing do-ahead meals, deciding who to invite (or not invite!) or which invitations to accept. Advent travelled well brings us, not to the end of anything but to a new beginning which is Christmas and the birth of the baby who would grow to be a man who changed the world.

Are we there yet? Have we reached the place of peace and justice which was at the heart of Jesus? teaching and action? Have we reached the place where God's gifts are freely available to all people? Have we reached the place where there are no divisions between people? We clearly haven't but we keep going because we know that we can get there and all the hard work and the waiting and the dark times and all the disappointments will give way to light and hope.

This is at the heart of what we exist to do. As an educational charity we work behind the scenes to strengthen individuals and churches on their journey to freedom, peace and justice for all people, beginning in the churches and Christian communities, and working closely with people of good-will.

The Advent journey for Inclusive Church has included adding over 20 churches to our network, bringing us to almost 400 in total. We have celebrated the fifth Anniversary of the Disability Conferences in partnership with St Martin-in-the-Fields and the generous and moving book produced has encouraged and challenged many. Our National Coordinator has been out and about thanking and encouraging our wonderful Ambassadors, speaking and preaching, responding to queries, planning for the future work of IC and through all of that work sharing hope that, although we're not there yet, we are on the right journey.

At the end of 2017 Bob Callaghan will retire from his post as our National Coordinator. Since 2011 he has been 'the face' of IC and has been at the centre of our growth as an organisation. We are now working with

the Ministry Division of the Church of England to encourage vocations, we are a fixture at Greenbelt ? giving support and fellowship to many estranged from their own churches, Bob has participated in the creation of the Hub at Sheldon ? an online resource specifically for those in ministry who find themselves isolated and in need of support, proved a dependable co-worker to the trustees and ambassadors alike and sought to answer positively every invitation to support or request for information.

When we advertised for his successor we had many very good applicants. This is a tribute to Bob?s very hard work and to the growth of IC. Following interview we offered the post of National Coordinator to Ruth Wilde and the trustees are thrilled that she will begin work in January. Please do make her as welcome in your midst as you have Bob and get in touch to say hello and introduce yourself.

Are we there yet? Well Bob has almost reached retirement. IC has reached a new milestone with the appointment of Ruth, new partnerships, we have some new trustees and we are even more aware of how much an educational charity like us has to offer to the church at large.

We?re not yet there but we can see the destination. Thank you for your part in the work of IC during the past year. May the waiting of Advent bring light even in the darkest of places and when Christmas comes may the light of God shine with renewed warmth for you and all who you love.

With blessings and peace

*Dianna Gwilliams Chair Inclusive Church*

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