

Dear Friends

My father was in the Royal Navy and I can remember one occasion, when I was a child, going down to Portsmouth with my mother, brother and sister all dressed in our best clothes eagerly watching the horizon with binoculars. There were dozens of other families all doing the same thing. The ship was returning home after a year on an overseas commission and all who were there were waiting expectantly to see their husband, father or son. When the ship was eventually spotted a great cheer went up and there was a growing excitement as she came closer and closer and the little dots on board became real people. As soon as the ship had passed, we raced to the car and drove down to the dockyard to be there when the ship came alongside and what a wonderful reunion there was.

I was reminded of this having sat next to a naval officer at the lunch following the Armistice Day service and Act of Remembrance. He had a wife and 7 year old son back home whom he was longing to see over Christmas, when he had a short spell of leave, though he spoke of using skype which at least kept him regularly in touch with his family.

But this excited, expectant waiting is exactly the spirit of Advent and our Bible readings through



Advent set the tone for the season as they look to the coming of Christ. There's a book of prayers entitled *There's a Time and a Place*, which captures the essence of the Advent season:

*You are the God who came,  
who comes,  
who is to come.*

*You came in Jesus.  
All that prepared the way for him was part of  
your coming: the promise to Abraham,  
poets' visions, prophets of judgement and  
hope.*

*You come in the Spirit  
who makes Christ immediate,  
opening our eyes to see him in the neighbor  
who serves us and the neighbor we can  
serve.*

*You are to come at the end of all time and  
the end of our time in the judgement of  
Christ and the mercy of Christ and the  
glory of Christ as he promised.*

*O come, O come Immanuel.*

May that sense of eager expectation fill our worship this Advent / Christmas season.

Chris Butt

PS A big thank you to all who have made us feel so much at home in these early days in Bahrain. Thank you for the warmth of your welcome, for drawing us so quickly into the family of St Christopher's and Awali and being patient with us as we have found our feet here. Thank you too for the welcome you gave to our six friends from our last parish, who came out for the Installation weekend. They write so warmly of their experiences.