

Crowland Abbey

**REVD MARK WILLIAMS,
PRIEST IN CHARGE**



Happy New Year!

No! The vicar hasn't forgotten and repeated the same letter as last month. November marked the beginning of the Celtic year... Advent marks the beginning of the church's year.

This is a strange couple of months. As we know, the shops have been advertising their Christmas goodies almost, it would seem, as soon as they put the Easter eggs away – certainly, in earnest, immediately Halloween was over. Many TV adverts are drawing our attention to Christmas, using Christmas to sell all sorts of unrelated products and services. The message is instant gratification – you could have this toy, this tool... you can buy your whole Christmas from this store, and all your worries will just float away.

The church however celebrates its New Year with the season of Advent – a very different feeling. Advent is the season of 'not quite yet...' the season of 'wait and see...' It is the season of the PROMISE of fulfilment, of what will be.

As all the bright lights are up in the streets... as our shops, pubs and restaurants are trying to whip us up into a state of near frenzy, the church, as ever, runs in counter-culture. The church says, 'stop for a minute and think!' The church says 'what would it really be like if God came to live with us? Think about that!'

And just when expectation never seems to meet reality – we fling open the doors and exclaim "Christ is born today... Emmanuel, God is with us? Let's celebrate, let's party!".

Happy New Year. Happy new life.

Mark, Priest in Charge of Crowland