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Dear friends,
Waiting and anticipation have become completely alien concepts to the culture in which we live. No wonder that Advent, the season of waiting for Christmas and anticipating the great wonder of celebrating afresh the birth of God in human form, is something we have lost. The Churches Together are aiming to address the balance this year. We are holding services on each Wednesday in Advent, the first at St. Edmund and St. Mary Parish Church on December 8th at 8 o'clock. Each week the service will be an hour of quiet reflection, something very necessary at such a hectic time. The full details are elsewhere, but I do hope you will aim to make this a priority as you have inevitably got caught up in the perpetual busyness that appears to characterise this time of year.

I am sure that many of us find The Church of England both a sense of joy and frustration. When the faith became real to me back in 1988, I became a Christian. It was very clear to me that God also wanted me to become an Anglican. The structures and procedures of the Church give stability. But they can also be very odd. On 12th of December at 6 o'clock at St. Mary the Virgin, Fryerning, we have the service of Induction and Installation, where I am officially installed as Rector by the Archdeacon of Southend. When the benefices were re-organised in August, I was informed by e-mail that the changes were ratified by the Queen's Council and I was officially Rector. I then went to see Bishop Laurie and received from him my new licence. He told me that the licence was a very historic document. It was the first ecclesiastical document that officially linked the two ancient parishes of Ingatestone and Fryerning. He said that it should be framed for reference by future generations. I have yet to do this. The final part of the process is the induction, when I am installed as Rector. As I have been here since June 2001, undertaking all the functions, it appears rather odd. I wanted to keep it very low key, but the Bishop and

Archdeacon are keen that we see it as very important. As the Archdeacon said to me on the phone, "tell everyone I expect to see them there!" So you are all invited. There will be refreshments after the service in the Fryerning Parish Rooms.

Increasingly Non-Stipendiary Ministers are playing a significant role in the Church of England. Frances is NSM incumbent of the Benefice of Margaretting with Mountnessing and Buttsbury. Because such developments are new within the C. of E., she cannot be given the title Rector, as that can only be given to stipendiary clergy. At Deanery Synod the Area Dean said what a nonsense this is, and I would wish you to know how much I agree with him. Two months ago I wrote about how I feel clergy titles are themselves not appropriate or important. I think you can see why.

There will be a number of changes in 'The Tower' from the Christmas edition. The name will change to 'The Towers'. This reflects the reality that it will become the magazine for the Benefice of Ingatestone with Fryerning. Roy Savill, who has written many splendid 'Word in Season' articles will be concentrating his time and energies on Margaretting. Frances will be concentrating her energies on the benefice of which she is incumbent. I know we have all gained a great deal from reading her letters. New features will include a regular item from Sue Cruse, a monthly letter from Phil Manterfield, items from the Brownies and also archive material from past editions compiled by Alan and Gill Beech. We will be looking to give the magazine a real community feel, with this reflected in items about local activities. For the Church exists to proclaim the Word of God in the heart of the community. This is undertaken both through calling in people from the community to worship and sending people out to engage in community activities as Christians, motivated to serve God by serving others.

As we wait in anticipation both for Christmas and also for that unknown time when Christ will come again in splendour, let us recapture the true significance of this time of year. As we dash from one place to another, let us stop and reflect on the wonders of our faith. Yours in Christ, *Patrick*.