



ST BARBARA'S PARISH CHURCH EARLSDON // ISSUE NO.475 // WINTER 2022

ST BARBARA'S NEWSLETTER

stbarbaras.com



Celebrating Christmas Together

Christmas is almost upon us once again. The shops have been decked out with tinsel for a few weeks now; some homes are already putting up their Christmas lights; and the cold nights are drawing in.

You may be someone who gets caught up in the excitement and the wonder, the expectation and the anticipation of Christmas. Or you may be someone who worries about the cost, especially this year, or the loneliness that this season induces.

But for all of us, whatever our feelings, it provides a good opportunity to step back and think about what life is really about. To ponder: if there is a God, what kind of God are they? The Christmas story gives pointers worth thinking on.

So do come and join us at St Barbara's for our Christmas services. We would be delighted to welcome you. Here are some of the main services we will be holding this Christmas:

***Christmas Carol Service* Sunday 18th December 6.30pm**

Come and join us for a beautiful service of carols and readings, led by our excellent choir or join us online, as the service is streamed live, and sing along with carols from home.

***Prayers and Bears Christmas Special* Wednesday 21st December 9.30am**

Join up with lots of other parents, grand-parents, carers and young children for a short 25 minute service to enjoy the wonder of the Christmas story, re-told for the under-5s. (Older siblings are welcome). This service takes place at Earlsdon Methodist Church.

***Christmas Eve Nativity Service* Saturday 24th December 5.30pm**

Our most popular service of the year, we begin the start of Christmas proper with this service of carols, drama and prayers, suitable for young and old alike. Come early to make sure of getting a seat!

***Christmas Eve Midnight Communion* Saturday 24th December 11.30pm**

This is a beautiful, quiet service with which to usher in Christmas Day, as we celebrate the birth of Christ among us.

***Christmas Day Communion Service* Sunday 25th December 10am**

Suitable for all ages, come and join us for a joyful celebration on this special day. The service will be finished by 11am, so no need to worry about that Christmas roast! And if you can't join us in person, why not join us online?

To join any of our services online, simply go to our website – www.stbarbaras.com – and click on the links.

Thought for the Season: Light in the darkness



There's something about the letter 'a' when it comes to seasons: autumn and Advent have long been my favourites - for similar reasons. Autumn leaves run through light's spectrum of yellows, reds and browns in a hymn of wild, extravagant praise to their creator. And Advent focuses the hope of light down to a single laser-like beam: the one whom Israel's prophets had long heralded, the one who will illuminate the darkness, is on his way.

This year, though, it's a struggle to see the light through the darkness. War in Ukraine (and elsewhere), with power cuts in sub-zero temperatures; deadly protests in Iran; anarchy in poverty-stricken Haiti. Here? A climate emergency; for too many, a choice between heating and eating; and possible power cuts. So much darkness, literal or not. When I was ordained curate in the summer, the bishop reminded me and my fellow curates to seek out the dark, forgotten corners. No need to go looking for them, though, it seems: they've found us.

But amid the gloom, I recall the words of the modern hymn, celebrating Jesus: "Light of the world, you stepped down into darkness". A flare-path in the night, that guides us back into relationship with God. Jesus' story begins in a journey through darkness and danger. In his parents' struggle to get a roof over their heads ready for his birth. And in hurried flight from a murderous dictator.

Jesus has been to those dark, forgotten corners as one of us. He's lived them. For a time, he seemed eclipsed, overwhelmed when the earthly powers-that-be executed him, a supposed threat to stability, to good order. So much darkness. And yet through it all comes hope: God raised Jesus from the dead, putting down a marker, declaring that his light "has shone in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John's Gospel). For as the writer Frederick Buechner observes: "It is in the dark where he seems to visit most often".

When the darkness is thick around us, it can feel as though we're hoping against hope. But the inextinguishable light shines on: the Advent Christ child comes again into *our* darkness at this dark time. Not to 'magic' it away, but to be a light to our path through it. To give us hope in the darkness, which has not overcome the light, and never will.

Rev Jeremy Bevan

Why not visit stbarbarasearlsdon/talks to read more reflections on faith and life?

Harvest and Christmas Appeals

For our Harvest Festival Service this year we collected a vast array of tins, cereal, biscuits and other food for Carriers of Hope, an organisation supporting Refugees, Asylum Seekers and other Migrants in Coventry. It was estimated that there was well over £500 worth of donated food. We also had donations of fresh produce which was auctioned off with the impressive proceeds of over £200 also going to Carriers of Hope. Thanks to everyone who donated so generously. And thank you to all those who gave so generously to the Tearfund Appeal as part of the Big Quiz Night. Over £600 was raised for Tearfund's work in supporting poor communities around the world.



We are having a further appeal to help families in need this Christmas, both for Carriers of Hope and for projects at our prayer partner church, St John the Divine in Willenhall. In November we collected things to make up Christmas packages for children being supported by Carriers of Hope, including small items of stationery, colouring and reading books, crayons, pens, packeted sweets, flannels, soap bars, deodorants for older children, new underwear and quality new small toys. We will also be collecting for families being supported by St John the Divine.



Church Services

You can join all our 10am Sunday services in person, or online via our church website: stbarbaras.com

Every Sunday

8.00am Holy Communion

10.00am Parish Communion (also streamed online)

This is our main Sunday service, lasting just over an hour, attended by adults and children of all ages. We sing hymns and modern songs, led by an excellent choir, there is a thought-provoking talk, and time for prayer. There is a Sunday school group for primary and pre-school children during the service.

Every Month

5.00pm Buzz at St B's (on 15th January, 19th February, 12th March and 2nd April)

Mid-week Services

9.30am Prayers and Bears — Every Wednesday in school terms (at Earlsdon Methodist Church)

11.30am Mid-week Communion Service

Please check our website - <https://stbarbaras.com> - for the most up-to-date information on all our services.



Sign up for our Digital Newsletter Throughout 2023

St Barbara's produces a digital version of the Parish Newsletter three other times in the year, that you can access via our church website.

If you have not done so already, sign up now to receive a reminder and a link each quarter by sending your email address to tulo@raistricks.com with "newsletter" in the subject heading. (We will only use your email to send you a reminder and link to our newsletter).

If you would prefer to receive a paper copy through your door, then let us know via the email above, or via post (The Newsletter Editor, 24 Rochester Road, Coventry, CV5 6AG), or give us a ring on 07869 603216.

Would you like prayer for someone or for yourself? Feel free to email Christine on prayerchstb@gmail.com or telephone the vicar on 07869 603216. Prayers can be said in church services or confidentially—just let us know.

An Action-Packed Programme of Opportunities for Children and Young People

At St Barbara's we have a large and growing number of children and young people, from babies through to sixth formers, involved in the life of the church. Here are some of the activities we offer:

Prayers and Bears. This is a 25-minute service of songs, actions, treasure hunts, prayers and crafts for pre-school children and babies and their parents and carers. It takes place every Wednesday in school-terms at 9.30am at Earlsdon Methodist Church. Refreshments and time for play are provided afterwards.

Hive. This is the name for our children's group for primary school aged children and younger that takes place during part of our main service on a Sunday morning. These times are always wonderfully creative, as the children through craft, drama and story-telling explore the themes of the adult service in age-appropriate ways. (Every Sunday at 10am)

Buzz at St B's. This is our monthly service especially for young families, led with the help of some of our young people. The 35-minute service includes drama, music, craft, videos and reflection, and is ideal for primary-school and pre-school aged children. We finish with a bring and share tea, and an opportunity for children to play in the church garden or hall. Buzz at St B's is at 5.00pm on a Sunday afternoon, and the next Buzz services will be on 15th January, 19th February, 12th March & 2nd April.

Younger Youth Group. We have a monthly group for children in Years 6-9, that meets together currently on zoom, to chat about issues and explore more about the Christian faith.

Older Youth Group. We have an older youth group for young people from Years 10 and above that meets monthly at the vicarage. In past sessions we have watched videos on faith and on climate change, and are currently discussing a book *The Jesus I Never Knew*

Choir. St Barbara's has an excellent choir, and we are always keen to welcome new members, old and young. The choir practices are always fun and the choir members provide a lovely nurturing environment in which children and young people can discover and develop their love of music. Indeed, a number of our younger choir members have gone on to pursue careers in music as a result. The choir sings at our 10am Sunday services and other special services, and practices are on a Friday evening and Sunday morning.

For more information on any of these activities and services, contact our vicar, Tulo, on 07869 603216 or tulo@raistricks.com.



Good Neighbours

St Barbara's continues to support Good Neighbours—a city-wide project linking over-50s to befrienders. Combatting loneliness and isolation has perhaps never been more important as we face such challenging times. If you're interested in finding out more, head to <https://hopecoventry.org.uk/good-neighbours>



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