



ST BARBARA'S PARISH CHURCH EARLSDON // ISSUE NO.471 // WINTER 2021

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.

Christmas provides us all with 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 is a flavour of some of the services we will be holding this December:

Christmas Craft Workshops and Buzz at St B's 12th December 4pm-5.30pm

This is a wonderful fun-filled and special service for families. We begin with craft workshops that help to tell the Christmas story and finish with gathering around the Christmas tree to hang decorations and sing carols. Suitable for all ages, we finish with tea and mince pies!

Christmas Carol Service Sunday 19th 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.

Christmas Eve Nativity Service 24th December 5.30pm (Booking Essential)

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. Booking for this service is essential. To do so, email: st.barbarachurchbooking@gmail.com with your name and number of people you wish to book for or ring 07869 603216. Alternatively, join us online as we stream this service live.

Christmas Eve Midnight Communion 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 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.



St Barbara's Newsletter is Going Digital—last chance to sign up!

From 2022 St Barbara's Newsletter is going digital. Rather than being delivered through your door, you will be able to access it online via our church website (stbarbaras.com). Sign up now to receive a reminder and a link each quarter by sending an email to newsletter@stbarbaras.com with 'newsletter' in the subject heading. (We will only use your email to send you a reminder and link to our newsletter four times a year).

If you would still 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.

Thought for the Season: Presents or Presence?



How are you approaching Christmas this year?

For some of us, we can't wait to get back to all the long-established family traditions: Christmas Day with all the family gathered together, followed by a snooze in front of the TV; Boxing Day out with friends; a New Year's Eve party perhaps.

For others of us, there may have been aspects of last year's more restricted Christmas that we quite liked and are hoping to hold on to. Maybe not having to tear round the country seeing people, often sitting in long traffic jams on the way; keeping it simple and quiet, with less demanding expectations.

And for others of us, we may be approaching this Christmas with feelings of anxiety and worry, wondering how we will afford all the presents and celebrations with food and fuel prices escalating, or wondering how it will

be to go through Christmas without loved ones who have died over the last year.

Every year we come to Christmas with a whole range of emotions and feelings.

It strikes me that must have been true for Mary and Joseph too as they approached what turned out to be the very first Christmas. Mary must have been excited by the imminent birth of her child, but anxious too - for herself and her health, for her child and his future. And Joseph, proud maybe of Mary's fortitude on the long journey to Bethlehem, but maybe feeling a sense of inadequacy too. After all, the one thing that he could do for her - provide a safe, secure place for her labour - was beyond him, as they ended up in a cattle feeding shed.

Here they were, with feelings of excitement and anxiety, pride and inadequacy, on that first Christmas night.

And yet the birth of Jesus transforms it all. Those feelings still remain, but they take on a different perspective. Christ's birth brings hope and joy, wonder and awe. Angels celebrate; shepherds sing; and Mary ponders quietly upon the miracle that has occurred. For God's son is born on earth, God has come to share our lives, to live among us, to bear with us our burdens, to bring us life. The world is changed for ever.

However we are feeling about Christmas this year - whether excited, anxious, joyful or sad - take a moment to pause and contemplate the thought that God's son was born among us. His presence changes everything.

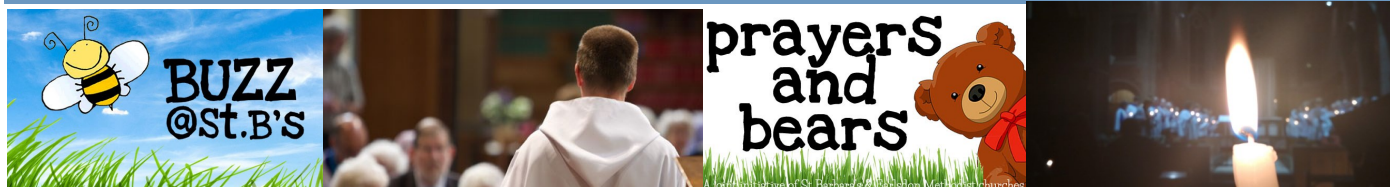
Rev Tulo Raistrick

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

Tearfund's Big Quiz Night

A lot of fun was had and brains stretched on 20 November for our Tearfund Big Quiz Night. Many of us in the hall, and a few extras on zoom, joined churches from across the UK for the charity's annual quiz event, together raising money to support some of the world's most vulnerable communities to adapt to new challenges brought on by the changing climate. It was a really close contest, with many of the teams finishing within just three points of each other, and the winner had to be decided by a tiebreaker. Congratulations to the Unseen Academicals who were worthy winners! Tearfund themselves were also winners, as we exceeded our target and raised an impressive £392 for the charity. Many thanks to all those who came, helped and contributed.





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

This is a quiet, meditative service.

10.00am Parish Communion

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 Wednesday (in term time)

9.30am Prayers and Bears

This is a short, fun and special service for the under-5s and their parents/carers, followed by snacks and crafts. It takes place at Earlsdon Methodist Church.

Every Month on a Sunday Afternoon

5.00pm Buzz at St B's (on 12th Dec; 16th Jan; 20th Feb & 20th Mar)

This is a fun, creative and interactive service for families involving lively songs, craft, drama and other activities. It lasts 40 minutes and is followed by sandwiches and cake.

Festival of Hope



The online phase of the festival is coming to an end—do look at the website www.festivalofhope.org to see the art work that has been submitted. There are a few community workshops currently being planned and we would love you to join in. You can find all the up to date information on the events page of the website. We are in the process of planning poetry, knitting, music and light activities. We are also forming a community choir (any age welcome!) from January at St. Barbara's church on some Friday evenings at 7pm with a performance in Central Methodist Hall at 3pm on 19th March 2022. We will be singing music from films—no experience is necessary you will be taught all the music as we go along. If you would like to come or want more information, please contact the festival through the events page on the website or Katherine@mostly-music.co.uk. We are looking forward to welcoming you to our live concerts and exhibitions in the late Spring – see the website for more details.

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.

What Christmas Means to Me

We asked some of the parishioners at St Barbara's what Christmas means to them...



Jo Rathbone

Christmas?

A high-risk strategy for God to be embodied in the human race:

- Risk of perinatal death through infection from animal toxins
- Born into a people living under tyranny
- Born in the act of being forced to register for a census to consolidate oppressive taxes and military power
- The birth of this homeless child being announced with all the language of Roman emperor's birth ("Peace" "Good News") – but addressed to marginalized workers (shepherds) at the bottom of the social scale
- Early exposure to refugee status

This speaks to me of the fragility and risk still of trusting this God who chose to appear at that time, in that place, in that way. It challenges me: am I living for God's fragile and risky way of peace and justice?

Sarah Owen

To me, Christmas usually means a LOT of busyness – as a musician, I'm getting involved in a lot of concerts and carol services, which is a lot of fun but it's also really important to me, since I personally find music such a powerful way to worship God. It's also really incredible the way that music, and Christmas – and especially music at Christmas! – brings people together. To me, Christmas is very much about people coming together to share love and warmth with each other, but also to experience the love of God – which, even though it's so much beyond our understanding, we can get a sense of it together, even as the days are getting darker.



Stephen Witt

Christmas to me is an encouraged time of enjoying. You're right to guess that I easily fall into routine and miss out spontaneous fun! So I'm stirred by the approach of Christmas (for me November not August) to think about loving, enjoying and remembering. I love the traditions we've built up in our family, which are now as enjoyable for their memories as for what actually happens – whether certain films or meals, or ways of giving and opening presents. But I also like small changes, to let the flow of Christmas take a slightly different course each year. And I try to listen to the inner voice saying 'reason for the season' - among the jobs lists to remember God 'becoming flesh and blood and moving into the neighbourhood' as the Message version has John 1:4.



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