



ST BARBARA'S PARISH CHURCH EARLSDON // ISSUE NO.482 // WINTER 2024

# 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; homes are 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 Workshop and Buzz at St B's (Sunday 15 December 4-5.30pm)**

This is a wonderful fun-filled and special service for families. We begin with craft activities 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!

### **Prayers and Bears Christmas Special (Wednesday 18 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. This service takes place at Earlsdon Methodist Church.

### **Christmas Carol Service (Sunday 22 December 6.30pm)\***

Come and join us for a beautiful service of carols and readings, led by our excellent choir.

### **Christmas Eve Nativity Service (Tuesday 24 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 (Tuesday 24 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 (Wednesday 25 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!

All of the services marked with a (\*) above will also be streamed online, so if you would prefer to join us from home for these services, then simply go to our website – [www.stbarbaras.com](http://www.stbarbaras.com) – and click on the links.

## *Thought for the Season: Expecting the unexpected*



Still over a month till Christmas as I write this, and snow's already falling in Coventry. I'm sure keen weather watchers will be able to tell us when we last had the white stuff in November, but it certainly feels... unlikely.

I wonder if 'expecting the unexpected' is the new normal? Seeing beavers (again) on Autumnwatch, surprisingly flourishing in the English countryside after an absence of 400 years. An England football team getting to the final of a major competition (again). 'Once in a lifetime' weather events (again), devastating floods and record temperatures across the world.

The Christmas story, too, is full of unlikely happenings. A young woman gets a visit from an angel and learns, to her surprise and wonder, that she's expecting a baby. An animal feeding trough doubles as a makeshift, improbable crib for the baby when Mary and Joseph take what accommodation Bethlehem can offer, packed as it is with people returning 'home' for the census. And those visitors: smelly shepherds straight off the hills, unable to contain their surprise at finding things exactly as another wholly unexpected angel visitor had announced; wise

men from the east, with perhaps the most unimaginable Christmas gifts ever...

How do we deal with the unexpected? Worry whether the beavers will thrive after so long away? Cross our fingers, hoping that, this time, football may actually be 'coming home'? Fret about our inability to act resolutely, together, to address climate change?

The Christmas story echoes all those reactions, and more. Life must have felt out of control for Mary and Joseph, unable to bring their baby into the world somewhere tolerably hygienic; unable to stop the flow of curious, curious visitors with strange news and stranger presents; unable to predict the unfolding of a future the angel promised, and towards which those odd gifts hinted.

Yet it's a story shot through with surprising hope. For the unexpected is what we should expect if God does indeed love the world, as the Bible proclaims: loves it enough to send Jesus to renew, revitalise, realign. England may not have won at Euro 24. And the struggle to fit our lifestyles to what planet earth can cope with goes on. But like those beavers unexpectedly remodelling our countryside, the improbable Christmas story is a new beginning that reshapes everything and opens up new possibilities. May you know that surprising, extraordinary hope this Christmas.

Rev Jeremy Bevan

Why not visit [stbarbarasearlsdon/talks](http://stbarbarasearlsdon/talks) to read more reflections on faith and life?

## *Exploring life's journey*

During the autumn, 15 members of St Barbara's gathered for four evenings reflecting on our life journey. Through silence, personal reflection and discussion, each person reflected on key questions about their lives: where have I come from - what has been my life's journey up to this point? where am I now - what are the experiences, the wisdom, the gifts that shape who I am today? and where am I going - what life-giving steps can I take going forwards?

People said of the evenings:

"It was a wonderful opportunity to have space to think and reflect"

"It came at just the right time for me. I don't often get the chance to be listened to, and that was really helpful."

"Being made to talk about myself initially was hard, but I really appreciated the opportunity to do so."

"I found myself mulling on things throughout the following week and going further and deeper with my reflections."

"It was a real privilege to get to know people really well."



If you would be interested in participating in a future course, please contact Tulo, the vicar, on [tulo@raistricks.com](mailto:tulo@raistricks.com)



## Church Services

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

### Once a month

#### 5.00pm Buzz at St B's (on 15 December, 19 January, 16 February, 16 March, 6 April)

A fun, creative and interactive service for families involving songs, craft and drama, lasting 40 minutes, and followed by sandwiches and cake.

### Every Wednesday

#### 9.30am Prayers and Bears — Every Wednesday in term time (at Earlsdon Methodist Church)

A short, fun and special service for the under-5s and their parents/ carers, followed by snacks and crafts.

#### 11.30am Mid-week Communion Service - a pause for prayer and reflection in the middle of the week

And see page 1 for information on all our Christmas services.

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 2025

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](mailto: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.)

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

## People of the Parish - Alex & Rosie Wheatley

### What does St Barbara's mean to you?

Rosie: St Barbara's has been my home church for my whole life - I was baptised, confirmed and married here - so it really is what church *is* for me!

Alex: I have found St Barbara's to be a really friendly, welcoming community. I have enjoyed worshipping here the last few years and getting to know people.

For both of us, St B's means community and fellowship.



### What do you like about St Barbara's?

The people are so welcoming and always ready for a chat. There is a real sense of togetherness, and a group of God's disciples striving to live in faith the best they can. We also like that it's in the heart of Earlsdon

### What else do you do outside of church?

Rosie works as a nurse at UHCW, caring for patients on the vascular ward. She likes to bake cakes, eat cakes, and dance with the Orme School. Alex works as a Physics teacher at King's High in Warwick, plays the guitar and enjoys cooking and (when he remembers to) looking after his house plants. We are also mid-way through the renovation of our house on Innis Road, which feels like a labour of love that will never end!

### What does Christmas mean to you?

For both of us, Christmas is a time to enjoy seeing family. We both really like the Christmas services at church - it's such a great time of year in the life of the church! Sadly, Rosie sometimes finds it difficult to balance work commitments over Christmas - people don't stop getting sick just because Santa is about! Alex appreciates the longer school holiday as a time to cook everything from scratch (this year's bacon is already curing in the fridge!).

## Harvest Service



On Sunday 13th October we celebrated our Harvest Festival at an all-age service, with many visitors and some cub scouts joining in, including in an activity that involved rearranging the letters of the word "Harvest" into other words to help us in our reflections.

We collected over 20 large bags and boxes of donated food for the Food Bank and were also encouraged to tape a pound coin to any donated tins as part of Coventry Foodbank's 'can+coin' initiative. We also had an auction of fresh produce after the service. The money raised through the auction, cub cake sales and the "can and coin" offerings, came to over £170, and

has been given to Mission Bolivia's work amongst street children. So thank you everyone!

Thanks also to Earlsdon WI who donated some beautifully decorated willow obelisks to adorn the church for our Harvest service. The obelisks were redecorated afterwards with poppies to feature in our Remembrance Sunday service and will later be used in the garden.

### CONTACTS

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