

St Bart's



Christmas, 2017



Services

Sunday 11.00 Holy Communion (with hymns)

Thursday 10.00 Holy Communion (said)

A warm welcome to all who worship with us.

After the service coffee is served.



Priest-in-charge

The Revd Gareth Randall

For further information concerning baptisms,
marriages or funerals:

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December, 2017

Dear Friends,

Carols at St Bart's
December 2016

It's early Sunday morning, the day after my tenth Carol Service here at St Bart's and I am sitting at the computer in my study bed-room, reflecting on why the service is of special importance to us as a church.

Objectively, because we're celebrating, in a very British way, the birth of our Saviour, Jesus Christ, remembering the wonderful mystery of the Incarnation, the story we all know from childhood.

Subjectively, because it is a service so popular with the French that we had to start 15 minutes early because the church was already full, standing-room only, and we had to close the doors and say, "Sorry, no room inside."

It should lend us a sense of real satisfaction that our church can be open, warm and welcoming to the French community in whose land we are privileged to live. It should give us encouragement that we can share what is precious to us with our neighbours.

The service is, understandably, a mixture of English and French, seven familiar carols, the Christmas story in seven familiar lessons, ending with a mince pie and a glass of wine, a real source of Christmas joy.

If you can come this year then do: and we do need help giving out the service booklets, taking the collection, serving the refreshments. So if you can be there, it is a wonderful way to enter into the true spirit of a Christian Christmas.

Father Gareth



Jane Querie

RIP

Sadly, we have learnt of the death of a former member of our congregation, Jane, friend of Audrey, who died on 30th October in Jersey. Many of you will remember attending the celebration of her 80th birthday here in Brittany.



Notes from the Council

November 23rd

My prayer at the start of our Council Meeting was for us as Council Members at St Bart's, your representatives in the care and management of our church, to be informed by wisdom, understanding and a sense of fellowship.

Thus, together, we tried to address the issues before us. Fabric, as ever, is a subject of our care and concern: roof, drains, central heating, doors. Among the many things being undertaken, David Morgan was thanked for unblocking the drain running from outside the back of the church out through the garden into rue Faber. Finance was sound with money being raised for Hedley Court and the annual poppy Day Collection. Our Advent Appeal would be in support of the Bishop's Advent Appeal for homeless refugees and asylum seekers in Rome.

Carolyn Hewitt produced examples of bags to be sold at a complete profit in aid of Church funds. The Xmas Fayre on 2nd December was discussed and concerts running from January to Easter mentioned.

Safeguarding remains a major issue. David Norris's letter on our behalf and the bishop's reply were part of the discussion in which it

was agreed that a simple self-declaration on the part of Sidespersons and Council Members was sufficient to conform to what was essentially required of us while our priest, church wardens and safeguarding officer all undertook a full police check.

Running out of time, further consideration of how we might commemorate in 2021 the 150th anniversary of our church's foundation was postponed to the January meeting.

Sadly, Krishna's resignation from the Council for personal reasons was accepted. The meeting closed in prayer shortly before noon.

Father Gareth



Notices

➤ **Deadline** for submission of material for the January edition of St Bart's is *midday on Thursday 28th December*

➤ **Church Finances for October**

Income: 3,509€ Expenditure: 4,206€



Parking outside the church

Three barriers are now movable at the entrance of the church so there is the possibility of disabled parking for a church service.

If you need to take advantage of this,
then please contact one of our Wardens.



Royal British Legion

This year, 500€ was raised for the RBL and £600 was sent to Hedley Court (the collection from our Remembrance Sunday Service on 12th November). Our thanks as ever to Helen and David Morgan for all they do to enable our support of these causes, not least the excellent finger buffet after the service that Sunday.



Soup Lunch

Our thanks to Sharon and her team for laying on an excellent soup lunch in church after the service on Sunday 29th October. Sadly, several folk were prevented from attending but we who were there thoroughly enjoyed the occasion which raised 241€ for church funds.



In memory of

Three times a year, on 8th May, 15th August and the 11th November, we remember in ceremonies at the war memorial opposite Notre Dame church, the British and Americans who gave their lives in the First and Second World Wars. St Bartholomew's provides the wreath in memory of the British and, for many years, Stephen Wolfgang funded the American flowers. Sadly Stephen is no longer in a position to take part in the ceremony but St Bartholomew's, which was once the British American church here, is now funding both wreathes. If you wanted to fund one of these for us, then please contact our treasurer, David Morgan, who would be delighted to hear from you.



Red Line

In the introduction to our November newsletter, Father Gareth puts the question: What's your red line beyond which you are not prepared to go ?

Personal answer: Offhand, I could give a variety of answers, but really it all comes down to this: I may not actually know how to define the red line, but I'll know it when I see it.

David Boggis



A matter of time

In the present
we can know the past
but only guess the future.



'Judas Iscariot – Redeemed ?'

Epilogue

So am I
guilty,
in perpetuity
unredeemed,
mean and miserable,
friendless,
faithless,
in the dark,
in the cold,
in the wrong,
ever apart
from His joy ?

Or am I
forgiven,
restored,
made whole,
made clean,
necessary
to God's plan,
part of His plan,
welcome
back home,
ever a part
of His joy ?



Choice

If Jesus could choose Judas,
What hope is there for me ?

Bad news ?

'found to be with child'

Matthew 1 v18

*I wonder what Joseph felt when he found out
that his wife to be, Mary, was pregnant
with child not his.*

I was so upset, so sad, so angry:
Mary, my fiancée, the girl I loved,
was pregnant with child not mine.
Blushing, eyes lowered,
she spoke of an angel
who'd appeared to her,
told her of God's plan –
for her to have His son,
a boy, born to be king,
our longed-for Messiah.
If only it were true !
But how can I believe her ?
And if it were true,
what should I do ?
We can't go on like this.
I love her; she loves me
but surely it's not right ?

Well, let's not make a fuss,
put her to shame in public.
Just shut up, keep quiet,
say nothing but, privately,
break off our engagement.
I'm so tired.
First I need to sleep.



Dreaming

*'I'm dreaming of a white Christmas,
just like the ones I used to know . . .'*

So sang Bing Crosby, a memory of the radio playing in our end terrace house in London some sixty years ago - a vision of the ideal Christmas then and perhaps now. So my question to you, as you gear up to celebrate yet another Christmas, is: 'What, in your eyes, would constitute the ideal 'Noël' now you're here in France ?'

Well, for me, it's easy to say good food, good drink, good company. To eat, drink and be merry is one of the gifts of being alive, enjoying a good life. To be at table with those we love, who mirror our love, is a true joy. But, as Christians, the reason for the season is rooted in the birth of a child - the Son of God, Jesus Christ, born of a virgin in a stable of an inn in Bethlehem over two millennia ago. A story of angels, shepherds, wise men, of no room in the inn and a baby truly lying in a manger.

Christmas is about presents: about choosing the right present for someone we love; about wrapping it with love and seeing their smile when it's opened. The heart of Christmas is the Incarnation, the Word made flesh, the presence of God with us - Emmanuel. The real

presence of *God* in our lives is the best Christmas present. But are we going to unwrap it ?

Father Gareth



Advent moon

In a pre-dawn sky,
 a thin, new moon,
 a sliver of silver
 rising in the east,
 shining over the Rance,
 cradling, like the Virgin,
 her new-born child,
 sign of the numinous,
 Emmanuel, God with us.



St Lucy

Claire de Lune
 Dinard sea-path
 a December Day
 cold grey
 St Malo
 in silhouette
 tide at low ebb
 in the moorings
 buoys boatless



Hee Haw Hee Haw

The Donkey's Christmas Carol

*This delightfully irreverent (?) song is sent to us
by the ever observant John Marshall*

Refrain

Hee, Haw ! Hee, Haw !

Doesn't anybody care

There's a baby in my dinner

And it's just not fair !

1 Jesus in the manger,
lying in the hay
far too young to realise
he's getting in the way !
I don't blame the baby,
not his fault at all,
but his parents should respect
a donkey's feeding stall !

Refrain

2 After all that journey,
with my heavy load,
did I ever once complain

about that dreadful road.
I can cope with backache,
and these swollen feet.
All I ask is some respect
and one square meal to eat.

Refrain

3 "Be prepared," I told them.
"Better book ahead."
Joseph said, "Don't be an ass,"
and took a chance instead.
Now they've pinched my bedroom,
people are so rude !
I can cope with that
but not a baby in my food.

Refrain



People's Republic 1/8:

Checkpoint Helmstedt

It takes a good four hours to drive from Frankfurt-am-Main to a tiny place called Helmstedt. One reason alone explains why anyone should ever have wanted to drive to Helmstedt in the first place. Here goes:

Back in the Bad Old Days, Helmstedt - which is roughly on a parallel with Braunschweig (Brunswick) and Hannover - was the quickest way to get from Ffm (universal German code for Frankfurt-am-Main) to what was then West Berlin.

It was autumn 1982 and the Falklands conflict was a recent, raw wound in many people's memory. Luckily the weather, grey as it was, wasn't shedding rain, never mind snow. The drive north from Ffm was the usual mixture of boredom (maybe 60 per cent) and terror (40 per cent) as the locals, who all believe in free movement for free citizens, at least where motorways are concerned, came howling past you at 120mph-plus while you were trying to maintain a steady 80mph.

These motorways were mostly the old, Hitler-built, two-lane jobs. Overtake a slow wagon at your peril. Then, at last, we were at Helmstedt.

The setting itself was enough to wrack the nerves. Check through the West German exit. Pass through a fifteen-foot barbed-wire fence. Drive a good quarter of a mile through undulating if unkempt lawns, giving you no idea of how many anti-personnel or anti-tank mines were sown there, to the next fifteen-foot barbed-wire fence. Park (obligatory). Get out of your car and walk into the East German immigration cabin, complete with five-year-old daughter, who of course had a passport of her own for pragmatic reasons, not the legal hoo-hah that set in a few years later. Get *Deutsche Demokratische Republik* entry stamps (I think it cost us in West Marks but can't remember how much). Get back in car.

And wait.

A tidy old queue of (exclusively) Western cars inched towards the next marker in our East German obstacle course. When our turn arrived, we didn't have an option. The rule was to place *all three passports* on a conveyor belt. And watch them disappear.

Our car was a battered, old, second-hand Lancia Beta coupé. A lot of the others were thumping great Mercs and Beamers, mostly wearing the 'B' indicator for origin Berlin. Positioned in the queue for entry to the transit road (Helmstedt-Berlin was the quickest), we were at right angles to where the conveyor belt ran off. To our left, it must have gone for roughly a hundred metres. Then it turned a right angle and travelled another sixty or so metres to a distant cabin.

At last our turn came and we drove - that's to say, I drove, in considerable trepidation - on the track parallel to the conveyor belt all the way to the right-angle turn and up to the cabin. Where, perforce, we halted at the barrier.

The man in the cabin - by himself - wore a green uniform reminiscent of the West German police. He had a round (not square) head with a visible accumulation of flab and the sense of humour of a village midden. He had our passports. And without them, we didn't exist.

David Boggis



Film Review of the Month

'Ecole Buissonnière' - Nicholas Vanier 2017

It's Monday 13th November. Monday is my day off. I close the church at 17.00 and at 17.30 at the cinema, less than a five-minute walk away, is a film in French that has unusually been showing for several weeks. If I don't make the effort and go and see it, I decide I must be truly feeble so I do and I'm not disappointed.

Now, I do think my French is good enough - good enough without subtitles to get the drift of what's going on but not good enough to understand all that's being said. That said, essentially it's 1927, Paul (Jean Scandel), an orphan in Paris, is taken home by a woman, Célestine (Valérie Karsenti) for the summer. She lives in the countryside, works in the Château of a count (François Berléand) where her husband, Barel (Eric Elmosnino) is a gamekeeper.

The boy is a troubled soul but, in the course of the film, through being immersed in the freedom of the woodland, by making friends with a man, Toloche (François Cluzet) who I guess is a sort of poacher, he starts to find himself, to become centred and then to discover who he truly is.

The film is well worth seeing because it is essentially a feel-good film in spite of the difficulties that the boy faces. So why not try to catch it on DVD if and when you can ?

And the evening ended for me in paradise - 'La Haute Cloque - a Kir, then steak and chips and a small pichet of red wine followed by a crêpe abricot and an espresso. What more could one want ?

Gareth Randall



Book Review

'Martin Luther Catholic Dissent'

by Peter Standford

It's October. I'm going on holiday but which book to take to read ? A former colleague of mine at Dame Alice Owen's, Tom Espley, once Head of History there, had recommended Peter Standford's book on Luther to me and it seemed like a good idea to make time and space to read something written recently, some 500 years on from the inception of the Reformation.

And I was not disappointed. A good book to read, 'Martin Luther Catholic Dissent' maps Luther's life, clarifies the historical and theological context of the time and outlines the issues that have shaped and challenged our shared Christian understanding of our faith. It caught my attention from the opening chapter set in the present - a rainy day in Wittenberg. From Standford's personal encounter with the actual, concrete legacy of the past, he takes us back in time and makes real Dr Martin Luther, the man, his background, character, personality and, above all, his honest and troubling journey of faith.

It is a balanced account, not so much a hagiography but more the story of a man of faith, trying to live a faithful life, wrestling with the abuses of the time. Even though Standford is himself a Catholic, he can clearly see what was wrong at the time with the Church and how those in authority failed to deal effectively and sensibly with genuine criticism from this obscure, German friar who taught theology at the University of Wittenberg. The book neatly offers an insight into why Luther was the right man in the right place at the right time to give birth to the Reformation and how his vision for individual freedom of conscience, informed by scripture, rooted in justification through faith, had a real resonance for some and was developed in ways he would not have approved of by others.

The word in German that captures the nature of Luther's troubled state of mind is 'Anfechtung'. Well beyond my 'O' Level German, Anfechtung is a complex idea, hard to translate succinctly but combining the strands of angst, hopelessness, helplessness along with despondency, despair and depression and also embracing the notion of temptation, assault by the devil and testing by God. For Luther, his faith and belief in God was anything but easy, consternation in constipation, worked out through every effort to express himself in Latin and his native German into which he translated the Bible and the liturgy. Luther's was a voice that respected the Word and the

word of *God* as the way of making sense of the mystery of *God* and *God's* love for *Man*.

Why not, then, give yourself a treat and have the book as a Christmas present ? It could help you better to understand the Reformation and the nature of *God* incarnate.

Father Gareth



Visitors' Book 1/13

On the table, as you come into the church, is our Visitors' book, a present from Val and Geoff Carter to mark their Golden Wedding back in 2014. The following is a series, sharing some of the comments written therein.

'Wonderful to see and feel the spiritual growth in St Bartholomew's'

July 2014

'Magnifique surprise en entrant dans votre Eglise - chaleureuse et accueillante.'

26th September 2014



Questions

'Midwinter ?'

In the old Julian calendar, midwinter, the winter solstice, fell around 13th December, St Lucy's Day. I love the idea that a feast dedicated to a saint whose name means light should occur around the darkest time of the year, the shortest day, which now, according to our Gregorian calendar, is 21st. But do you like winter or are you, like me, longing for the return of spring and summer then the autumn ?

Well, what might be good about winter ? Perhaps there is a virtue in a time when the days are short. It might mean we stay home more, go to bed earlier, get a good night's sleep ?

There might be something good about getting dressed up to go out to brave the cold, something romantic about the snow, a memory of snowballs, snowmen and skating on the ice.

There might be something magic about sitting in front of a fire - logs perhaps or coke, a memory of the coal fires of our childhood before we had a clean air act that banished the London smog.

But perhaps the best thing about the short, dark days of winter is the fact that they make us appreciate the summer when it comes. We need shadows for contrast. Hunger gives us an appetite; thirst makes us appreciate a drink; knowing pain and unhappiness helps us value being at ease, content. So all things considered, might midwinter not be that bad ?

Gareth Randall



Little gems 11/11

Sent to us by Peter Campbell

Sign at a barber shop:

We need your heads to run our business.



Odd Words

'Recognise'

If you speak English, then I'd be surprised if you didn't recognise the verb to recognise. I'd be surprised if recognise was not part of your ordinary, active and passive vocabulary.

I'm much better at recognising folk by sight than recalling their name but, on Radio 4, I heard the verb used differently from its everyday meaning.

Here, recognise or rather to use the exact phraseology 'the government does not recognise' was used to cast doubt on the truth of what had just been reported. It was the government's reaction to a judgement that they did not wish to accept, something said on which they wanted to cast doubt, an inconvenient assertion which they wished to refute !

So truth is true only if we can say that we agree with the truth; it's only true if, in our experience, it is so; that it is only correct when it's an accurate reflection of how we see things.

I guess that if it were my eyesight that caused me to fail to recognise something, I'd go and see my optician as soon as I saw fit !
But is this a problem you recognise ?

Gareth Randall



From the lectern 9/10

Bill Hughes, one of two Church Wardens, usually has an anecdote to share at the end of his notices. If you missed one or would like to enjoy it again, then this mini series is for you.

A young labourer started a new job staying in new digs. His landlady was a good, Christian soul, regarded the lad like a second son, saw he needed feeding up so she asked him if he'd like some sandwiches for lunch. He smiled and said, "Yes, please." So she made him a couple. That night, she asked him if they were ok and he smiled said thank you, yes they were tasty but that he could always eat a little more. So she made him four and that night he said the same. So she made him six and that night he said the same.

Well, this went on for a week till the woman began to lose patience, took a whole loaf, cut it in half and made two huge sandwiches. That night, with a smile, she asked the lad what he thought of the sandwiches and, with a smile, he simply said that they were really tasty but sadly there were only two of them again.



Quotations of the month

Elderly people's knowledge, the thing that made them the most revered and listened to social group, is now mostly considered stuff to be stored in the attic.

Tommaso Pellizzari



What Father Gareth hasn't said yet 11/11

Word play from David Norris.

Don't worry about old age.
It doesn't last.



Crackers 11/11

Snippets from Xmas Crackers given me by Jim MacCormack

What do snowmen wear on their heads ?
Ice caps.



Wise Words

Quotations and quips, submitted by the late Donald Soum.

Resentment is like drinking poison and waiting for the other person to die.

Carrie Fisher

Never admit a lie - simply keep repeating it.

Goebbels

When I picked up your book I was so convulsed with laughter that I had to put it down but one day I intend to read it.

Groucho Marx



Xmas Pud ?

This gem was noticed by Pasteur Mike McGowan:

In the Radio Times (2016), Philomena Cum described a Christmas Pudding as 'a big ball of boiling fruit tarmac that tastes a bit like shoe polish and can't be destroyed, even by fire.'

Is this your experience too ?

Readings in church

December 3^d *Advent Sunday*

Isaiah 64 v1 - 9
 Psalm 80 v1 - 7
 1 Corinthians 1 v3 - 9
 Mark 13 v24 - end

December 10th *2nd Sunday of Advent*

Isaiah 40 v1 - 11
 Psalm 85 v8 - end
 2 Peter 3 v8 - 15a
 Mark 1 v1 - 8

December 17th *3^d Sunday of Advent*

Isaiah 61 v1 - 4, 8 - 11
 Psalm 126 v1 - 8
 1 Thessalonians 5 v16 - 24
 John 1 v6 - 8, 19 - 28

December 24th *4th Sunday of Advent*

2 Samuel 7 v1 -11, 16
 Magnificat
 Romans 16 v25 - 27
 Luke 1 v26 - 38

December 25th *Christmas Day*

Isaiah 52 v7 - 10
 Psalm 98
 Hebrews 1 v1 - 4
 John 1 v1 - 14

December 31st *Christmas 1*

Isaiah 61 v10 - 62 v3
 Psalm 148 v7 - 14
 Galatians 4 v4 - 7
 Luke 2 v15 - 21



Diary dates for December, 2017

- 2nd December 11.00 Xmas Fayre
23rd December 17.00 Carol Service
24th December 11.00 Holy Communion
25th December 11.00 Christmas Day



Verse of the Month

Come to me, all you that are weary and are carrying heavy burdens,
and I will give you rest.

Matthew 11:28



Prayer of the month

O God, the Judge of all,
who gave your servant, John of the Cross
a warmth of nature, a strength of purpose and a mystical faith
that sustained him even in the darkness:
shed your light on all who love you
and grant them union of body and soul
in your Son Jesus Christ our Lord
who is alive and reigns with you
in the unity of the Holy Spirit
one God now and for ever

Collect for St John of the Cross



Prayer focus

Our way ahead

