

YOU'RE WARMLY INVITED TO JOIN US AS
WE CELEBRATE THIS CHRISTMAS IN
SOUTH BARROW...



Merry Christmas

Sun 10/12 at 4 pm at St George's:
CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT with Dalton Town Band

Thurs 14/12 at 3.30 pm at St Aidan's:
FESTIVE FAMILY CAFÉ & CHRISTINGLE

Sat 16/12 at 12.30 pm In Barrow Town Centre:
FLASH MOB CAROLS

Sun 17/12 at 10.30 am at St Aidan's:
ST AIDAN'S 50th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION

Sun 17/12 at 4 pm at Yarlside Academy:
GRACE CHURCH ALL AGE CAROLS

Sun 24/12 at 4 pm at St George's:
CHRISTINGLE, CAROLS & COMMUNION

Sun 24/12 at 11 pm at St George's:
CANDLELIT MIDNIGHT COMMUNION

Mon 25/12 at 10 am at St Aidan's:
CHRISTMAS DAY FAMILY CELEBRATION



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The Magazine of the Parishes of St Aidan's,
St George's with St Luke's and Grace Church,
Barrow-in-Furness

TEAM TALK



December 2017 & January 2018

Team website: www.sbtchurches.co.uk



50p



The South Barrow Team - Useful Contacts

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PAUSE FOR THOUGHT : "Christ did not come to make us nice people, He came to make us new people."

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TEAM TALK

The next edition of **TEAM TALK** will be a combined **FEBRUARY & MARCH 2018** edition. News items and articles should be forwarded to **ALISON OTTO** by **SUNDAY 21 JANUARY** at the latest.

Please email:
alison.otto@cumbria.ac.uk OR
alisonotto15@gmail.com or deliver to 42 Devon Street, LA13 9PX

The annual subscription for Team Talk is only £5 for the year (if posted, please add £5). Cheques should be made payable to 'St George with St Luke PCC' and forwarded to Miss Pat Hughes, 24 Kent Street, Barrow-in-Furness, LA13 9 QT. If you pay UK Income tax please consider making your subscription into a donation and Gift Aid it.

Thank you

ADVERTISING IN TEAM TALK

Do you know of a local business or organisation who would consider advertising in TEAM TALK? While providing publicity for the advertiser, the income would support the local church in South Barrow. Please put prospective advertisers in touch with the Team Rector. Thank you!



'Imagine Church' Cumbria Hub 2018

Do you ever feel like church seems disconnected from the rest of your life? Do you ever imagine that there must be a way of doing church differently so that faith is more connected to everything else in your life?

Back in the Spring a few of us from the South Barrow Team went to Ulverston for an 'Imagine Church' Day put on by Carlisle Diocese. The idea was to be inspired as to how our church services could better equip us for living out our faith the rest of the week.

Here's what Marek Mozdzyński from St George's said, "In the past I've tended to be enthusiastic about church and enthusiastic about so-called 'mission' work, but I'd almost disregarded my workplace as a place where God might use me. I've tended to keep a low-profile, just get the job done and get my money. It's not that I wasn't kind or thoughtful as you might expect of a Christian employee, but I was pretty passive about it all. But work is a really significant part of our lives, and our approach to church needs to encourage us in that."

"The Imagine day helped me to start thinking of myself as a tool for God, and gave me loads of ideas. As a church it's also helped us start thinking about how what we do on a Sunday can support us the other six days, rather than being disconnected."

Off the back of attending that taster day, as a Team we were invited to explore this further by being part of a Cumbria based 'Imagine Church' Hub in 2018. The idea is that anyone from the church is able to attend three days of input & discussion in Penrith, as well as then committing to reflecting on this together as PCCs to embed what we've heard.

So why not put the following dates in your diary and get in touch with Gary or Robin if you'd like to be part of them. We will arrange travel to Penrith together, and lunch will be provided. It'd be great if a few from St George's, St Aidan's & Grace Church were able to commit to going together. More details in the new year!

10th February 2018

16th June 2018

6th October 2018

Sunday Worship during December 2017 & January 2018

- 3 December** *9.30 am Holy Communion at St Aidan's
*10.30 am Holy Communion at St George's
*4 pm Grace Church meets at Yarlside Academy
- 10 December** *9.30 am All-age Worship at St Aidan's
*10.30 am Holy Communion at St George's
*4 pm CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT at St Georges
*4 pm Grace Church meets at Yarlside School
- 17 December** *10.30 am ST AIDAN'S 50TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION SERVICE with the Bishop of Penrith at St Aidan's
12 Noon Baptisms at St George's
*4 pm Grace Church Christmas Celebration at Yarlside Sch
- 24 December** *9.30 am Christmas Communion at St Aidan's
*4 pm Christingle, Carols & Communion at St George's
11 pm Candlelit Midnight Communion at St George's

FOR FULL DETAILS OF CHRISTMAS SERVICE PLEASE TURN TO PAGE ??

- 31 December** *10 am End of Year Communion at St George's
- 7 January 2018** *9.30 am Holy Communion at St Aidan's
*10.30 am Holy Communion at St George's
*4 pm Grace Church meets at Yarlside School
- 14 January** *9.30 am All-age Worship at St Aidan's
*10.30 am Holy Communion at St George's
*4 pm Grace Church meets at Yarlside School
- 21 January** *10.30 am TEAM COMMUNION at St Aidan's
*4 pm Grace Church meets at Yarlside School
- 28 January** *9.30 am Holy Communion at St Aidan's
*10.30 am Morning Worship at St George's
12 noon Baptisms @ St George's
*4 pm Grace Church meets at Yarlside School

**Refreshments will be served after these services.*



Jesus is the Reason for the Season!

The South Barrow Team Register

Baptisms

8 October	Ellie Mae Hunt (B:25/6/17) at St Aidan's
29 October	Haddie Jae Northcott (B:26/5/17) at St George's
29 October	Ivy Evelyn Griffiths (B:23/3/17) at St George's
26 November	Isabella Grace Place (B:20/11/16) at St George's
26 November	Kaleb Anderson Patrick (B:27/7/17) at St George's
26 November	Amelia Henderson (B:2/3/17) at St George's
26 November	Stanley Isaac Smith (B:10/1/17) at St George's

Funerals

We extend our sympathy to the family and friends of:

26 May	Alan Anderson (81) at Thorncliffe Crematorium
6 July	Ethel Smith (92) at St George's Church
7 August	Mary Arnold (84) at Thorncliffe Crematorium
16 August	Eleanor Babbs (98) at Thorncliffe Crematorium
22 August	Kimberley McGowan (28) at Thorncliffe Crematorium
12 October	Mildred Jackson (83) at Thorncliffe Crematorium
13 October	Margaret Gallagher (89) at Thorncliffe Crematorium
16 November	Doris Mumford (94) at Thorncliffe Crematorium
20 November	Hilda Richards (90) at Pennington Church
23 November	Eileen Spencly (71) at Thorncliffe Crematorium
28 November	Clifford Coward (90) at Thorncliffe Crematorium
29 November	Anne Hopkinson (83) at Thorncliffe Crematorium

Enquiries about Thanksgiving for the Birth of a Child, Baptism, Weddings, Renewal of Marriage Vows and Funerals should be directed to any of the clergy (see page 2 for contact details) Thank you



REMEMBRANCE SERVICE

WEDNESDAY 13 DECEMBER 2017

at 5 pm at ST AIDAN'S CHURCH

Followed by light refreshments

This service to remember our loved ones who have died is being organised and sponsored by George Hall, Funeral Directors. All welcome



BARROW STREET ANGELS

Street Angels is up and running, the first teams went out in the early hours of Sunday 15th October, after a few months of preparation following the initial meeting in May of this year at the police station.

The first night went very well and the teams were well received by those enjoying the night scene. A number were interested in what we were doing and we were well received by the public and some people were helped – with offers of water and flip flops. We were surprised by receiving several donations. The police were pleased to see us and both on the night and before we are grateful for their support, encouragement and cooperation - a vital point in the success of the project. As this was the first night we are still on a learning curve and some important points were noted.

Street Angels is one of over 130 projects across the country and is there to serve and support the public by being salt and light (it is not primarily evangelistic); the evidence across the country is that this has reduced crime and admittance to A&E.

Street Angels, for the present, will operate between midnight and about 4am, in the Cavendish Street and Dalkeith Street area in two teams of 3. Though we have a number of volunteers more are always welcome but they will need to have an up-to-date DBS and be willing to undergo some specific training.

We have been encouraged by the number of donations received, both in terms of money and kind; the training provided by the police has also been much appreciated. We have also been offered free training places on local first aid courses.

There is a Steering Group supporting and working with me (Sophie Carnaby) as the Coordinator of the local project; this group consists of representatives from Churches Together, volunteers, the police, the night economy and a member of Cumbria County Council

Barrow Foodbank News

Foodbank stocks are very low again, and items particularly needed are UHT milk, UHT fruit juice, tinned meat, tinned vegetables and sponge puddings. Clients will soon be given a small Christmas hamper, and donations of Christmas cakes, puddings, and biscuits would be most welcome. The Foodbank are also hoping to give a gift to clients in the run up to Christmas, so gifts of chocolates, toiletries etc, and also small toys, selection boxes etc would be most welcome for children who otherwise would have very little in the way of Christmas presents.

Donations of money are always welcome, and can also be given online at

www.justgiving.com/crowdfunding/barrowfoodbank

Items always needed are: UHT or powdered milk, soup, UHT fruit juice, pasta sauces, tinned sponge puddings and rice pudding, tinned tomatoes, meat, fish and vegetables, cereals, tea bags, instant coffee, instant mashed potato, rice, pasta, jam, biscuits or snack bars, toiletries, nappies and ladies' hygiene products. Please NO sugar, as the Trussell Trust has decided to no longer issue sugar.

Volunteers are always needed to work in the drop-in centre and warehouse, so if you could give 2 hours a week or more to help in any of these roles, please email volunteer@barrowfoodbank.co.uk or ring 01229 343436, for information, or to arrange a visit.

There are permanent collection points at Morrisons, Asda and Roose Road Co-op as well as all Tesco stores.

A recent Christmas Gift Sale held at the Foodbank raised £458 for their funds. While a collection at the December Sunday Night Live at Costa Coffee raised over £150. Also, why not come along to 'A Feast of Christmas' Concert at St George's on Saturday 16 December where the proceeds will be for Barrow Foodbank (see details elsewhere)

Thank you again for your support, it is very much appreciated.

Sheila Simpson

ST AIDAN'S - CELEBRATING 50 YEARS' WORSHIP & WITNESS!

In December 2017 we shall be celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the consecration of St Aidan's Church, Newbarns! The need for a new Anglican church in the Newbarns area was first considered in 1945-46, at the time new housing was being planned. Work began to build a church hall in 1951 and this building, which continues to be widely used today, was dedicated for public worship on 5 July 1952 and came under the pastoral care of St Paul's Parish. It was some 15 years later that the new church, dedicated to St Aidan, was consecrated on 16 December 1967 by the then Bishop of Carlisle, the Right Reverend Cyril Bulley, assisted by the then Archdeacon of Westmorland & Furness (who was also Vicar of St Luke's), the Ven. Richard Hare (later Bishop of Pontefract)

It was in the year 635 that Oswald, the Christian King of Northumbria, appealed to the monks of St Columba's monastery on the island of Iona for a bishop to restore Christianity to his ravaged kingdom. In response to this appeal Aidan, one of the most saintly and gifted monks of Iona was consecrated bishop and sent to Northumbria. Aidan fixed the centre of his work on the island of Lindisfarne where he founded a monastery and filled it with monks from Iona. Aidan resolved to share the Gospel with others and travelled miles on foot preaching the Word of God and baptising new believers. Aidan was commended by the Venerable Bede for 'his diligence in teaching, his humility, his love of peace and charity, his tenderness in comforting the afflicted and his authority in reproofing the powerful'.

Aidan lived until 651 and his example, as an ambassador for Christ, remains an inspiration today. His readiness to respond to God's call and his commitment to sharing the life-transforming Good News of Jesus Christ, remains the call of all of God's people today.

As we look forward to celebrating this golden anniversary we do so mindful of God's generous provision and faithfulness over the last 50 years. Most recently, this is evident in the re-opening St Aidan's, having been closed for five years, as a 'worship & outreach centre'. The imminent new Community Café, along with growing opportunities to reach out to the local community, requires St Aidan's to continue to be both 'light' and 'salt' - to the glory of God the blessing of the community we serve.

Grace Church Barrow
 'a local church community for Holbeck,
 Roose & beyond'
www.gracechurchbarrow.com

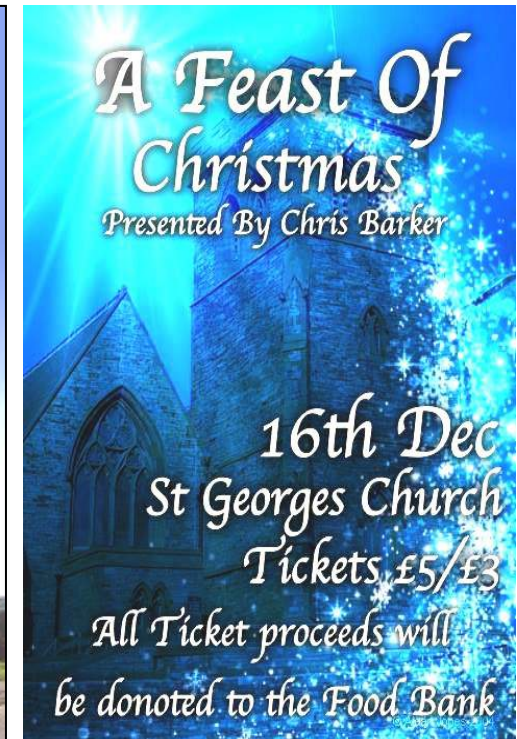
It's now been about two months since **Grace Church** began, as the next step in our aim of planting a new church community in the Holbeck & Roose part of St George's parish.

We meet each week on a **Sunday afternoon at 4-5.45pm at Yarlside Academy**, and in a sense we don't do anything particularly revolutionary! But we hope that all that we do is done in such a way that it has people who aren't used to church in mind. There's the usual blend of singing, prayers, a Bible reading and a talk. But we also try and make a lot of time for relationships and community: we have refreshments at the start, and people stick around for a hot meal at the end too. There's a chance to discuss what we've heard from the Bible, as well as to ask questions, and we'll regularly celebrate the Lord's supper together with bread and wine.

Of course, whilst this has been part of a much longer journey, we are only just taking our first 'baby steps' as Grace Church. We've been averaging between 8-20 adults, and it'd probably be normal to have 5-7 children present. Our weekly midweek Grace Group on Tuesday evenings is a chance for folk to connect with each other, dig deeper, and support each other in prayer. There's also the fortnightly Coffee Club at Roose School, and talk of a day-time midweek group with creche too.

We are running an All Age Carols event on Sunday 17th December at Yarlside Academy, which will also feature a Nativity Walk before hand too. People will meet at 3.30pm on the corner of Leece Lane and Ashdown Road to walk together to Yarlside - along the way we'll pick up various characters from the nativity! We hope & pray this will be a fun event for the community and a chance to introduce people to Grace Church, and the message of God's grace in Jesus Christ!

Robin Ham, December 2017.



CHRISTMAS... the motive...the event.... the reason:

THE MOTIVE BEHIND CHRISTMAS	'For God so loved the world....
THE EVENT REMEMBERED AT CHRISTMAS	... that He gave His only Son...
THE REASON FOR CHRISTMAS	... that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life'.

A Feast Of Christmas, presented by Chris Barker

Hi Guys, this is my next concert at St Georges Church Barrow on Saturday 16 December at 7.30 pm! its going to be a mix of Musical delights and Christmas wonders. including performances from Cast Theatre Company; Shine Theatre Company; Hopeful Harmony and many more! All ticket proceeds will be donated to the Barrow Food Bank! Tickets £5 and £3 - payable on the door! *Chris Barker*

Buildings Update - St George's

As you may know extensive work is planned for St George's Church - some of this work relates to necessary repairs and others to improving our buildings to ensure they are welcoming and 'fit for purpose'. The last Quinquennial Inspection identified significant work needs to be carried out to the south elevation of the church building—the estimated cost is likely to be in the region of £300K and as St George's is a listed building we plan to make a grant application to the Heritage Lottery Fund. Improvements to the heating in St George's is long overdue - we had hoped to at least begin this work in Autumn 2017; however, the Diocesan Advisory Committee wish to do a site visit and the earliest this could take place is in January 2018. Monies from the sale of St Luke's have been set aside for this capital project, though there is a shortfall of around £20K and a GIFT DAY is one of the options being considered by the PCC.

Regarding the Church Hall, which is used significantly by the wider community, there are plans to replace the existing wooden floor and carpet, as well as improve and extend the existing heating provision. We would also like to decorate the Hall to complement the improvements to the kitchen. We are most grateful for the following grant awards which will enable work in the hall to progress in early Spring 2018: Cumbria Community Trust: £3000; Cumbria Foundation: £1000; All Churches Trust: £2500 and, we have recently been notified that the Sir John Fisher Foundation have awarded a very generous grant of £10,000! Give thanks for these grants and for the support they represent for the work St George's is doing to actively demonstrate the love of God through serving the local community, regardless of status, ethnicity, gender or religion. Pray too for the remaining funding and a useful site visit with the DAC in January.

Gary Cregeen

Christmas Shoe Box Appeal

Thank you to all those who participated in this year's OPERATION CHRISTMAS CHILD Appeal; 49 gift-filled shoeboxes were donated (compared to 41 last year)! Well done to everyone who took part, including the Townswomen's Guild - each shoebox will bring joy and hope to a needy child this Christmas. People of all ages participate in this simple, beneficial hands-on project that reaches out to suffering children while remembering the true meaning of Christmas – the birth of Jesus Christ, God's greatest gift.



St Luke's Mother's Union

On October 5th we held our Overseas Afternoon with a bring and buy and raffle in aid of the work of the Mothers Union overseas. While on October 19th we had an afternoon of memories of St Luke's with lots of photographs and anecdotes—this was especially poignant as the Members had decided a few months ago that that Branch would close at the end of 2017.

On November 2nd Ted Fenton gave a very interesting and enjoyable talk on the Isle of Wight where he and Ruth were born and married. He told us of its history and had photographs of the beauty spots and walks. While on November 16th we enjoyed our Christmas lunch at the Lisdoonie. A lovely afternoon of good food and fellowship.

Doreen Finch

Gary, our Team Rector writes...

On Thursday 30 November the St Luke's Branch of the Mother's Union met for a Closing Service - it was a time of thanksgiving, for recalling happy memories & an opportunity to especially thank Doreen Finch (Branch Leader), Eileen Jones (Treasurer) and Pat Hughes (Secretary) for their dedication and service over many years. These three special ladies alone have totted up over 120 years as members of the Mother's Union! The decision by the members to close the St Luke's Branch of the MU was not an easy one and though there is a feeling of sadness for those involved there is also a real thankfulness & looking forward. Some MU members have opted to become deanery members and so the opportunities for fellowship, prayer and worship will continue. As this significant chapter ends and a new one begins we look back with thanksgiving for the MU & look to God, whose love and grace is sufficient for all our needs.

ST AIDAN'S - CELEBRATING 50 YEARS' WORSHIP & WITNESS!

Further to the article about St Aidan's 50th Anniversary (on page 5) here are some of the events taking place around the anniversary weekend!

Wednesday 13 December at 5 pm: **REMEMBRANCE SERVICE at St Aidan's Church, Middle Hill, Newbarns.** This service has been arranged and sponsored by George Hall (Funeral Directors) and will be conducted by Gary, our Team Rector.

Thursday 14 December at 3.30 pm: **FESTIVE FAMILY CAFÉ** (in the hall) followed by a **CHRISTINGLE** (at 4.15 pm in the church)

Saturday 16 December – **50th Anniversary of the Consecration of St Aidan's Church.** Flash Mob Carols in Barrow town centre!

Sunday 17 December at 10.30 am: **50th ANNIVERSARY SERVICE OF CELEBRATION & THANKSGIVING** at St Aidan's Church with the Bishop of Penrith, followed by mulled wine and mince pies.

Please come along to these 'golden events' and invite your family and friends to join you!



'REAL LIFE' BREAKFASTS

Saturday 6 January &

Saturday 3 February 2018

10 am until 11.15 am at St George's Church Hall

Join us for delicious breakfast buns (contain bacon, sausage or both!), good company and the opportunity to be encouraged and inspired by a 'real life' story of someone living out their Christian faith.

NB Food will be served between 10 am and 10.45 am (Donations, if desired)

PAUSE FOR THOUGHT

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. ²Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author & perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb.12)

Thank God for those whose faithfulness to Christ inspires you.

- What sin do you need to 'throw off' at the beginning of 2018: Jealousy? Bitterness? Selfishness? Lack of love for God or other people? Anger? Indifference? Self-control?

- Ask God to help you to persevere in godliness and to be a means of enabling others to do the same - 'Let us fix our eyes on Jesus'.

BISHOP'S HARVEST APPEAL & BARROW FOODBANK

The Harvest Thanksgiving Services provided an opportunity to thank to God for providing for all our needs and to remember our dependence on Him. Over £350 was given by South Barrow Team to the 'Bishop's Harvest For The Hungry Appeal' to help those less fortunate than ourselves overseas. (St Aidan's - £71; St George's - £114 and St George's School - £165. Also, there was a tremendous amount of donations for Barrow Foodbank. Thank you to everyone who gave so generously. Jesus said, *"Whatever you did for the least of these, you did for me"* Matthew 25 v.36

"If you believe what you like in the gospels, and reject what you don't like, it is not the gospel you believe, but yourself." Saint Augustine



CONFIRMATION 2018

There is to be a Confirmation Service in South Barrow on Palm Sunday 18 March with Bishop James. Adults and young people (school year 9 & upwards) who wish to confirm their faith in Jesus Christ please contact Gary Cregeen, the Team Rector (01229 877367); he will provide details of preparation which will help you in this important decision. Alternatively, if you would like to know more about Confirmation generally Gary or Robin will be glad to help you.

Flash Mob Carols hit Barrow!

Saturday 16th December 12.30 pm until 1.30 pm

In the run up to Christmas the Salvation Army can often be heard playing Christmas Carols in the centre of Barrow. In recent years Churches Together in Barrow have joined them to provide some voices to accompany the music. This year, as part of Believe in Barrow a combined 'flash mob' carols is planned! The idea is that groups of singers and musicians, from various churches across Barrow, will be stationed at five different locations on Dalton Road and elsewhere in the town centre:

Station 1 - Thorntons

Station 2 - Debenhams, Portland Walk

Station 3 - Sports Direct Area

Station 4 - Marks and Spencer's Area

Station 5 - Barrow Market Area



Starting at 12.30pm these groups will play their own selection of carols with whatever instruments or styles they so desire. At precisely 1 pm a lone trumpet will play the opening bars of O Come All Ye Faithful! The scattered groups will then join in and walk to the area outside Thorntons to join together in a Celebration of Carols!

It is hoped that the Flash Mob Carols would be an opportunity to bless the community, for the growing unity of Christians across the town to join together in worship and witness and to celebrate the good news that Jesus is alive, both visibly and audibly.



Please aim to be in town on Saturday 16 December between 12.30 pm (St Aidan's, St George's & Grace Church are linking up with St Mark's outside Sports Direct, Dalton Road) and 1.30 pm as we celebrate the joy of Christmas! *Everyone welcome!*

December 2017 Messy Church Update



Many of you will remember with happy memories when South Barrow's Messy Church was launched back in 2013!

It quickly became popular and those monthly Sunday afternoons in St George's Church have introduced lots of families to the Christian faith, as we enjoyed crafts, games and hot food together. Although it was Jo Northey's idea, it was very much a real team effort: some folk brought cakes & refreshments, some served in the kitchen, others led crafts & games. There were some months where we had as many as 100 people at the event, and we were often averaging between 50-75.

More recently though, particularly in the first half of 2017, we have been having much lower numbers. Of course, as you'd expect, some folk who were regulars have moved away or their children have just grown that little bit older, and we've also struggled to recruit new team members. But we've also seen the ministry landscape of the South Barrow Team evolving in new and exciting ways: there's been the emergence of the thriving Family Cafe at St Aidan's; the developing of Grace Church, our church-plant on Holbeck & Roose; as well as the monthly Big Brekkie outreach at St George's. We're also conscious that where we once had four clergy (and their families), it's now the case that we have two.

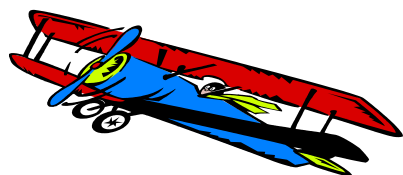
All this meant that over the summer we began reflecting on the future of Messy in South Barrow. We were realising that a monthly Sunday afternoon event didn't seem sustainable, nor did it seem to be appealing to those whom it used to appeal to. After reflection & prayer, we now feel it's right to call time on Messy in its current form. This gives us the freedom and clarity to think afresh what we might do to better reach out to children and families in the future, especially in the St George's parish (given that Newbarns is being well served by the Family Cafe) and through our church school, where we're grateful to have church members serving as governors and volunteers. Of course, that's not to rule out Messy re-emerging in a different form at some point in the future, but given it'll probably look quite different, it's probably wiser to make this decision rather than to just 'press pause'.

Thank you to all who have prayed, baked, served, given, invited and helped in so many different ways over the last four years! We're thankful to God for all that He's done through Messy - and part of that is your dedication, generosity and service. If you'd like to chat more about this decision, or suggest ideas for the future, please do get in touch with us.

Robin Ham & Alison Otto

JESUS IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON!

Did you know that December marks an important anniversary in the history of aviation? It was in December 1903, after many attempts, that the Wright brothers were successful in getting their 'flying machine' off the ground! Thrilled by their achievement they telegraphed a message to their sister, Katherine, which read: "**We have actually flown 120 feet. Will be home for Christmas**". Katherine, excited by her brothers' achievement, hurried to the editor of the local newspaper. He glanced at the telegram and said, "How nice. The boys will be home for Christmas". He had totally missed the point, the BIG news - that man had actually flown!



Many people make the same mistake when they hear the word **CHRISTMAS**. They don't think of Jesus and His miraculous birth. Instead, they think of hectic shopping sprees, parties at school and at work, family gatherings, festive meals, decorations and gifts! For many, Christmas brings nostalgia and memories of childhood!

Now all this celebration isn't wrong. But if that's all Christmas means to us, we've 'lost the plot'; we are missing its **true significance**. The true meaning



of this special time is summed up in the words of the angel to the shepherd's on that night long ago, "**I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to you and to all people. For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord**" (Luke 2:10-11). That's the BIG news of Christmas!

During the next few weeks in our church services we will be returning to Bethlehem, to recall that momentous time when Jesus was born! What a contrast between the circumstances surrounding the royal child born long ago in a Bethlehem stable, to what we would expect of a royal birth today. Jesus' parents had no plush accommodation booked at the Jerusalem Hilton. No crowds of reporters competed to be the first to break the news that the Son of God had been born. No television cameras focused on His first public appearance, and Israel had prepared no national festivities in His honour. **When God's Son came He was born into a lowly peasant family, amidst the stench of a dirty stable, in a tiny remote corner of the Roman**

empire! Even so, He was indeed a Royal child, who has been known and is known by millions of men and women, boys and girls, as the King of kings, and Lord of lords!

In Luke's account of Jesus' birth we read: "*and Mary gave birth to her firstborn, a son. She wrapped Him in clothes and placed Him in a manger, because there was no room for them in the inn*". Today there are still those who have no room for Jesus. Although they participate enthusiastically in the festivities of the Christmas season, they keep Him out of their lives. The NO VACANCY sign is there. **Christmas is an apt opportunity for us to consider where we stand with Jesus.** What better time to re-dedicate our lives to Him, or to receive Him as Saviour during this Christmas season. After all, that's why Jesus came 'to seek and save the lost' (Luke 19:10) - people like you and me.

No doubt many of us will have nicely decorated trees adorning our homes this Christmas. Well, in the Bible the cross of Calvary is described as a tree (Calvary was the place where Jesus died). In Acts 5:30 Peter says, "**The God of our Fathers raised up Jesus; whom you killed by hanging Him on a tree**". At



this time when much attention is paid to a tree that is covered with tinsel, ornaments and coloured lights, that rugged, unattractive 'tree' of Calvary might well be called the 'forgotten tree of Christmas'. Completely overlooked is the purpose for which Jesus came to earth. The true significance of His birth can be lost in the trappings associated with this holiday.

The baby at Bethlehem was born to die. He came to give His life as a ransom for our sin, by hanging on a tree - not a tinsel covered thing of beauty, but an ugly, cruel instrument of execution. Perhaps our Christmas trees may act as a reminder to us of the all too often forgotten tree of Christmas - Calvary's cross - which demonstrates **God's love for us** and provides us with **hope for the future**. God's greatest gift to us is Jesus and the greatest gift we can ever receive is Jesus. As we celebrate His coming into the world, let us make sure that there is room in our hearts and lives for Jesus!



May I wish you and those you love God's richest blessing this Christmas and throughout the coming year. Your friend & Team Rector,

Gary Cregeen

JESUS IS THE REASON FOR THE SEASON!