

*Christmas Services in  
South Warwickshire  
2013*



- Barcheston
- Barton on the Heath
- Burmington
- Cherington
- Long Compton
- Whichford
- Wolford

## Just a stranger on the bus?

I wonder if you're feeling Christmassy yet? If you're not, don't panic. There's still time to rediscover that special feeling before the big day. According to *Costa Coffee's* advertising campaign last year, all you needed to do to "Feel Christmassy Inside" was to consume a Gingerbread latte and your longing would be over. Alternatively, you could try a bit of Christmas shopping, especially at Sainsbury's (Christmas, so I hear, is now officially "brought to you" by them).

However, if all else fails there's always the Carol Service. According to posts on the leisure-time website *All In London* attending a church service and singing carols is the key to feeling Christmassy. One user, identifying himself only as Quizmaster Barry wrote, "I'm not really religious but I went to an evening mass on Christmas Eve one year - it was really good - loads of people all feeling Christmassy and being nice to each other whilst scoffing mince pies...It was brilliant."

Well, I hope that you will enjoy coming to one of our Carol Services this year. After all, there is something about the true meaning of Christmas that *ought* to make us feel something – that should give us goose-bumps, and inspire wonder, and rekindle our sense of self-worth. That special something is all to do with the person of Jesus, and it's summed up in these famous words in the Bible: "*The Word became flesh, and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth.*"

This is surely the most staggering claim ever made in human history. It says not only that the creator God is real, but that he has made himself known to us in the most intimate and personal way imaginable: by being born as a human being, by living among us in all our dirt and pain, and by showing us exactly what he is like. The singer Joan Osborne once put it like this: "What if God was one of us?/Just a slob like one of us?/Just a stranger on the bus/Trying to make his way home/Back up to heaven all alone/Nobody calling on the phone/Except for the Pope maybe in Rome?"

This is not a God who is remote or impersonal or irrelevant, but intimate, personal and shockingly down-to-earth. One scholar says, "[John] does not say that the Word became "man", but became "flesh". "Flesh" indicates humanity, but more than that, *vulnerable* humanity. It was a true humanity, marked by genuine exhaustion, hunger, thirst, grief and suffering. Thus, the eternal and divine Word became all that we are and are subjected to in the spectrum of life's experiences. In the person of his Word incarnate God has identified with humanity in the depths of our emotional and physical pain."

Isn't that extraordinary? Don't you *want* to believe in a God like that? A God who understands your life? A God who cares? A God who has revealed himself at a definite point in human history? A God who humbled himself so you could truly know him? That is the true wonder of Christmas. An invitation summed up in that simple yet most profound phrase: "*The Word became flesh*"

**Stuart Allen (Rector)**

## Christmas Services

### Sunday 1 December

St Peter & St Paul, Long Compton	4.00 pm	Advent Carols & Children's Activities
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### Sunday 8 December

Congregational Church, Long Compton	6.00 pm	Carol Service (led by Stuart Allen)
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### Sunday 15 December

St Martin, Barcheston	11.15 am	Carol Service
St Lawrence, Barton	4.00 pm	Carol Service
St Barnabas & St Nicholas, Burmington	10.30 am	Morning Prayer
St John the Baptist, Cherington	9.00 am	Holy Communion (BCP)
St Peter & St Paul, Long Compton	10.30 am	Family Christingle
St Michael, Whichford	10.30 am	Nativity/Family Carols
St Michael & All Angels, Wolford (at Little Wolford Village Hall)	10.30 am	Ecumenical Service

### Sunday 22 December

St Barnabas & St Nicholas, Burmington	3.00 pm	Family Carols
St John the Baptist, Cherington	10.30 am	Carol Service
St Peter & St Paul, Long Compton	5.00 pm	Carol Service
St Michael, Whichford	9.00 am	Holy Communion (BCP)
St Michael & All Angels, Wolford	6.00 pm	Carol Service

### Christmas Eve

St Martin, Barcheston (BCP)	11.30 pm	Midnight Communion
St John the Baptist, Cherington	4.00 pm	Nativity
St Michael, Whichford	6.00 pm	Carol Service

### Christmas Day

St Lawrence, Barton (BCP)	9.00 am	Holy Communion
St Barnabas & St Nicholas, Burmington	9.00 am	Holy Communion (BCP)
St John the Baptist, Cherington	10.30 am	Holy Communion
St Peter & St Paul, Long Compton	10.30 am	Family Communion
St Michael, Whichford	10.00 am	Holy Communion (BCP)
St Michael & All Angels, Wolford	10.30 am	Holy Communion

### Sunday 29 December

St Peter & St Paul, Long Compton	10.30 am	Benefice Communion
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