## SAINT Barnabas CLARKSFIELD

# December 2023

barnabas-oldham.co.uk

### Services at St Barnabas' Church

Sunday 9:30 amParish WorshipWednesday 10:00 amBible studThursday 10:00 amHoly ComThursday 4:00 pmFab = fait

Bible study Holy Communion (said) Fab = faith at Barnabas! (praise for young children)

The first Wednesday of each month: Holy Communion at the Alexandra Nursing Home in Glodwick, at 11:15 am. Baptisms and marriages by arrangement with the Vicar. Please submit items for the January 2023 magazine by 15 December. Please e-mail files to paulmonk111@gmail.com

### People at St Barnabas' Church

#### Vicar

The Revd Dr Paul Monk

St Barnabas' Vicarage, Arundel Street, Clarksfield, Oldham OL4 1NL Tel: (0161) 624 7708

#### Lay Readers

#### Wardens

Administrator Community Worker Treasurer Parish Hall bookings Peter Haslam Lucie Reilly

Peter Haslam Lucie Reilly

Sarah Gura MaryAnne Oduntan Mrs Vicky Heaton The Vicar (0161) 345 0215 (07880) 861 751 J

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(07468) 463 753

(0161) 624 7708

Many people treat the Christmas story as an annual event to accompany the carols, mince pies, and special TV. Seen this way, the Christmas story becomes an end in itself, to be forgotten when the supermarket decorations come down on Boxing Day. (Many people treat Easter as another stand-alone story. Jesus' atoning sacrifice becomes a different seasonal item to accompany the bunnies, eggs and chocolate. Again, it is not.)

The underlying problem is the way we live: we are always too busy. We lose the essential distinction between 'doing' and 'being', preferring to concentrate on preparation and publicising, visiting and services, with the result that we lose the bigger picture and dwell on the small details instead.

So this year, before we start the rush and expense, let's recall the bigger picture. Christianity, when authentic and true to itself, invites us to look at God making Himself available to ordinary people like us. Viewed this way, the bigger picture becomes very simple: God came to earth as a human being—Jesus—in order that we can see what God is truly like. Jesus went to the cross to remove our sins completely and utterly, to remove the barrier that separates us from God and his love. Therefore, when the blinds between us and God come down, we don't mistake the sentimentality and glitter for the real being of love we call God.

Which explains why we need the season of Advent. It's neither a buffer between Christmas and the remainder of the church year nor is it a designated period in which to do the special shopping. Nor a time for celebrating Christmas itself. Rather, it's best used as a time of spiritual preparation, making our soul ready for the immensity of the love revealed through the Christmas story.

Enjoy the beauty of Christmas. Enjoy the tinsel and the glitter. Enjoy the presents and the fun. Enjoy the sight of wonder in children's eyes. But try also to remember that we celebrate the birth of this special baby *because he enables us to encounter God*. Now that is something worth celebrating!

Wishing you all a joyful and peaceful time of great love this Advent and Christmas:

PAUL



### From the church and parish

We have received two grants during the past month:

- £30,000 (in three increments of £10,000) from the Council for Social Action, to enable us to expand the church's community project into other, local churches.
- £2,220 for a holiday club during the first week of January 2024. A simple poster on page 19 describes the dates and activities. It's open to everyone, with preference given to children in receipt of free school meals.

#### **Your love is singular when all you delight is in Jesus Christ and in no other thing finds joy and comfort.** Richard Rolle

## Placement student

Hello my name is Dean Stott. I am a retired police officer. I am married with two children and a wonderful little granddaughter.



I am in my second year of three years of training to be a self supporting priest.

I am part of a mission community team in Shaw that covers five churches and have been worshipping in my local church, St Mary, High Crompton for 28 years.

I will be on placement at St Barnabas and Holy Trinity as part of my continued development towards ordained ministry from Advent through to Easter.

I look forward to worshipping, walking alongside you with Jesus and getting to know you all over the next few months.

## **Bible readings for December**

#### Sunday 3 December Advent Sunday

First: Isaiah 64:1–9 Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:3–9 Gospel: Mark 13:24–end

#### Sunday 17 December Third Sunday of Advent

First: Isaiah 61:1–4, 8–end Epistle: 1 Thessalonians 5:16–24 Gospel: John 1:6–8, 19–28

#### Monday 25 December Third Sunday of Advent

First: Isaiah 9:2–7 Epistle: Titus 2:11–14 Gospel: Luke 2:1–14

#### Sunday 10 December Second Sunday of Advent

First: Isiah 40:1–11 Epistle: 2 Peter 3:8–15a Gospel: Mark 1:1–8

#### Sunday 24 December Fourth Sunday of Advent

First: 2 Samuel 7:1–11, 16 Epistle: Romans 16:25–end Gospel: Luke 1:26–38

#### Sunday 31 December First Sunday of Christmas

First: Isaiah 61:10—62:3 Epistle: Galatians 4:4-7 Gospel: Luke 2:15-21

## Church diary

Saturday 10 December	2:30 pm: <b>Christmas Swing Band Concert</b> —sadly we have had to postpone this event.
Sunday 17 December	6:00 pm: <b>Carol service</b> in the Church.
Weds 20 December	7:00 pm: <b>Nativity service</b> in the Waterhead Parish Centre ( <i>not the Church</i> ).
Sunday 24 December	4:00 pm: Christingle service in Waterhead Church.
Sunday 24 December	11:30 pm: Midnight Mass in Waterhead Church.
Monday 25 December	9:30 am: Christmas Day service in the Church.
Tues–Fri, 2–5 January	10:00—2:00: Holiday activity club, in the Main Hall.
Sunday 7 January	9:30 am: annual <b>Covenant Service</b> .

## Barnabas CLARKSFIELD

# **Carol Service**

## Sunday 17 December at 6:00 pm

Holy

with the Tame Valley Brass at St Barnabas Church, Clarksfield (OL4 1NL) barnabas-oldham.co.uk

## Christmas Eve

Midnight

Service starts at 11:30 pm

All are welcome

# Christingle Service

## Christmas Eve at 4:00 pm

All are welcome holytrinitywaterhead.co.uk

# **Christmas Day** Celebration and Eucharist

Service starts at 9:30 am : all are welcome

barnabas-oldham.co.uk

Barnabas



## Colour this page

#### In Memoriam A. H. H. OBIIT MDCCCXXXIII: 106

Ring out, wild bells, to the wild sky, The flying cloud, the frosty light: The year is dying in the night; Ring out, wild bells, and let him die.

Ring out the old, ring in the new, Ring, happy bells, across the snow: The year is going, let him go; Ring out the false, ring in the true.

Ring out the grief that saps the mind For those that here we see no more; Ring out the feud of rich and poor, Ring in redress to all mankind.

Ring out a slowly dying cause, And ancient forms of party strife; Ring in the nobler modes of life, With sweeter manners, purer laws.

Ring out the want, the care, the sin, The faithless coldness of the times; Ring out, ring out my mournful rhymes But ring the fuller minstrel in.

Ring out false pride in place and blood, The civic slander and the spite; Ring in the love of truth and right, Ring in the common love of good.

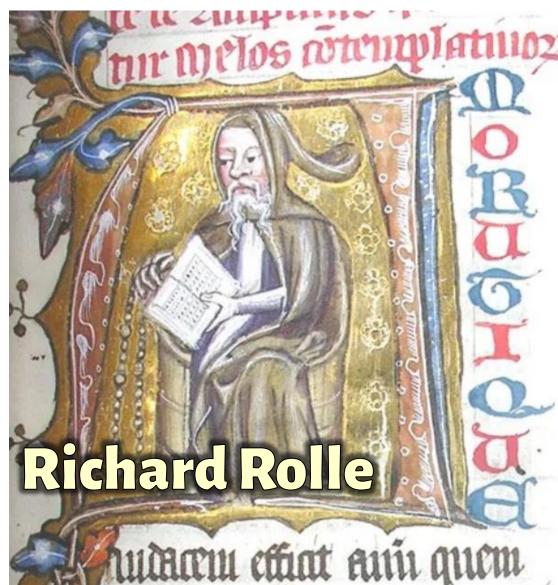
Ring out old shapes of foul disease; Ring out the narrowing lust of gold; Ring out the thousand wars of old, Ring in the thousand years of peace.

Ring in the valiant man and free, The larger heart, the kindlier hand; Ring out the darkness of the land, Ring in the Christ that is to be. Alfred, Lord Tennyson Richard Rolle (c. 1300–1349) was an English devotional writer, who was born around 1300 into a small farming family at Thornton-le-Dale in North Yorkshire, where, it is claimed, he showed such academic promise as a youth that the Archdeacon of Durham sponsored him to study at Oxford. Unfortunately, the subjects on offer at Oxford did not suit the nineteenyear-old Richard, who was more interested in biblical studies than secular studies such as philosophy, and so he dropped out before graduating. Not wishing to join a religious community, he spent the next few years living as a recluse, initially in the woods near Thornton and then, fearing his family might have him arrested, wandering around the countryside until he was spotted by an acquaintance from university, the squire John de Dalton, who invited him to live as a hermit on his estate at Pickering. Legend has it that it was during this time that Richard's sister gave him a couple of her dresses to turn into a hermit's robes.

This was also the period when Richard made great strides in the contemplative life and is thought to have had his first mystical experience. About it he said, 'I did not think anything like it or anything so holy could be received in this life.' Sadly for Richard, the secular life in the form of politics intervened and his old friend's lands were confiscated in 1322, which forced Richard onto the road again. After several years wandering from place to place—reportedly pitching up in Paris, where records from the Sorbonne suggest that he studied theology—he finally arrived back in Yorkshire, at the village of Hampole, near Doncaster in South Yorkshire. It was here at the Cistercian nunnery that he died in 1349, having become something of a spiritual adviser to the nuns resident there. For this reason, Richard is sometimes referred to as 'Richard Rolle de Hampole'. He also wrote spiritual guides for the nuns and religiously inclined women generally. His main devotee was Dame Margaret Kirkby, a religious recluse (an anchoress) who he is claimed to have cured of an ailment that rendered her speechless merely by visiting her. It was for her benefit that he wrote a commentary on the Psalms and, in particular, The Form of Perfect Living, a guide to the reclusive life, when she was still a young woman embarking on her spiritual journey—both of which were written in (Middle) English. It was Margaret who, after Richard's death, was instrumental in establishing his reputation. She even moved into the priory at Hampole where he died, to spend the last ten years of her own life there.

Richard Rolle was one of the first pre-Reformation writers to write in the vernacular, the native tongue of the readers. His works were even more widely read than those of Chaucer in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries,

and his influence endured right up until the Reformation itself in the sixteenth century. His works include letters, poems, scriptural commentaries, and treatises on spiritual perfection. The famous poem *The Pricke of Conscience* was for a long time attributed to him. Perhaps his best known work is *The Fire of Love* (written in Latin with the title *Incendium Amoris*), in which Rolle provides an account of his mystical experiences, which he describes as being of three kinds: a physical warmth in his body, a sense of wonderful sweetness, and a heavenly music that accompanied him as he chanted the Psalms. It is because of such rapturous accounts of spiritual development that Rolle is regarded as one of the great English mystics.





#### **Holy Baptism**

Sunday 19 November	Stephen, Mia, and Theo Trubswasser
	at Waterhead Church.

#### Christian funeral

Andrew McClung
at Waterhead Church,
then Hollinwood cemetery.
Margaret Wharfe
at St Barnabas Church,
then Oldham Crematorium.

#### Confirmation

On Sunday 26 November, by the Bishop of Middleton: Daniel Reilly Lilly Reilly Sarah Immanuel Lesley Standring

and 17 other candidates from six other churches within our Mission Community, and from Oldham Parish Church. The service occurred in Waterhead Church.

#### Reception

#### Marta Ochnio

Marta was formally received into the Church of England during the confirmation service.

## Those magi

-hijacked into foil-gilded greeting cards, sung into libretti over organ chords. Sultans or astrologers? They trekked into the unknown on a hunch, launched out from some far land of distress or empty comforts looking for a shred of truth, or inspiration, through an aperture of prophecy. Did they seek liberation, or simply a moment to see into the ultimate? No matter they tumbled into a tyrant's path, beneath a comet's tail, stumbled into more misery: an outcast couple and infant sheltered in a cattle-scented shed. Yet these Magi still show up at the centre of the story, coax us out of the mire of our own luxury. They bucked the pressure to simply save their skins, discovered a light, not just a star streaking through ancient skies. Whatever stirred in the slim incense of cow breath a revelation in sheep-swaddled straw—bid them leave their treasure behind. Might have been his mother's eyes, or the silence of her still-mystified spouse that bid them leave by another route, hearts changed.

Kathleen O'Toole





## Born to give us second birth

In our poverty of spirit Christ arrived as God's good Word; (Grant us, God, good grace to hear it.) Christ was born to be our Lord.

In the gloom of deep, dull darkness, In the shade of endless night, Jesus came a child, a baby, Born to give us hope and light.

When we felt our hearts were broken, Jesus met us face to face, Loving us in word and token— Born to give us peace and grace.

Wisest one of all the ages Christ came here, a babe so small, Early blessed by wizened sages, Born to lead and bless us all.

#### Jack Brown

This poem was inspired by Isaiah 9:53, 60, 61; Matthew 2, John 1.

The poem can be sung to the tunes of the hymns, In the Cross of Christ I Glory or Brother let me be your servant. Being human can seem very complicated. Many of us will do almost anything to appear pleasant, willing, and competent; it's simply human nature. But at heart we can also feel overwhelmed or shy, or maybe just not very confident in our own abilities. Then again, social factors tell us not to admit having some feelings and drives because we think that our friends and families would not like them ... and hence they would not like us. They might judge us or even turn us away. For all these reasons, all of us have both a 'public face' and a 'private life', which are likely to differ, perhaps very greatly indeed.

Most of us suffer considerable stress when these two aspects differ beyond a certain extent, so most of us merely pretend—sometimes to ourselves and certainly to other people—not to acknowledge the way they differ. It's always the inner thoughts and drives that get suppressed. That suppression is rarely conscious, so it's unhelpful to think in terms of 'hypocrisy' or 'being two faced' because all of us live two opposing lives in this way.

God is infinite and knows everything. He therefore knows our real self as well as the self we try to project to other people. He knows the whole truth, and yet He always loves us with His trademark infinity and nothing can ever stop Him from loving us. He knows our inner, shadow life better than we do.

All of us pray but which of these two selves (the outer and the inner) does the prayer originate from? If it's the self that looks outwards, then we may be praying for things that we think are respectable, nice, helpful such as peace and requests for healing—for our friends and family, but maybe for us as well. But if we are not really in touch with our *inner* thoughts, then our prayers are incomplete.

If we pretend to God that we are always nice, always Christian, then we are hiding parts of our lives from Him and are, in effect, refusing to let God deal with the inner hurts and unhealthy drives. *We therefore limit the scope in which we can serve Him and be healed by Him.* 

As we grow in faith, there will always come a point when it feels as though God is not listening to our prayers, or that He hears them but ignores them, or is completely absent. That's entirely normal. At such times it's almost certainly we ourselves who are limiting what God can do in and through us, because we are telling God not to look closely or be aware of our inner lives. We're ashamed of them and don't want anyone, let alone a 'nice' God, to see them. But in this way we prevent a huge amount of their power from helping our prayers.

But we still need to talk to God, although one temptation is to think that God is so holy that He won't want someone like us to bother Him. This instinct is not wise because, as Jesus said to his first disciples, 'It's not those who are well but those who are poorly who need a doctor' (Luke 5:31–32).

We may feel shame or worse if we think this is happening to us as we approach God. It's probably best to be very matter of fact and simply confess as each part of our private inner life comes to light. God wants us to speak honestly, saying something like, 'Please help me to cope with being the person that I really am' or 'Please heal the bits of my life I don't like, can't face, won't acknowledge'. This growth into honesty as we pray will energise our prayer and make it more authentic.

As Christmas approaches, it can be useful to remember that Jesus came to earth precisely for people like us, to bring us closer To God. As John 3:16 says, 'God so loved the world that He gave His only son, that whoever truly believes in him will not perish but have everlasting life'. And, as he said, 'The truth will set us free' (John 8:21).

> Tell God that you love Him and want Him. In silence, confess those things you feel safe acknowledging. In each case, say sorry but don't dwell too long: rather, ask for forgiveness then gently move on. Ask God to give you enough courage to confront whatever He wants us to consider next. Keep reminding yourself that God loves you deeply.

Being honest with God

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Find the words below in the grid above

ANGELS, BETHLEHEM, BIBLE, CHRISTMAS, HEROD, INCARNATE, JOSEPH, GOLD, INCENSE, MAGI, MARY, MYRRH, SHEPHERDS, **STABLE** 

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Tuesday–Friday, 2–5 January: 10:00 am—2:00 pm All children must always be accompanied by an adult. barnabas-thrive-oldham.co.uk



# Nativity service

Wednesday 20 December at 7:00 pm.

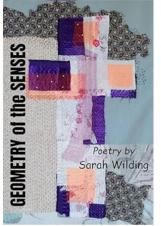
in the Parish Centre. All are welcome.

holytrinitywaterhead.co.uk

## New book

Church member Sarah Wilding has published a book of poetry *Geometry of the Senses*. Some have previously appeared in the church magazine, so we already know something of their depth, clarity, and skill.

The book can be downloaded as an electronic file through Kindle, Amazon, and e-book sites such as SmashWords or Nook. To find links to all the retailers, the universal book link (UBL) is: https://books2read.com/Geometry-of-the-Senses



Geometry of t	he Senses Kindle Edition	Ċ
by Sarah Wilding (Author)	Format: Kindle Edition	
		See all formats and editions

This little book of 25 poems is drawn from 40 years of writing and there is a variety of poetry here. There are straightforward poems and obscure ones; rhyming poems and free verse; personal poems and general subjects. Most of the poems come out of struggles in spirit, mind and emotions, but some are about nature and others on quite random subjects.

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## Festival of light

This year's *Festival of Light* takes place on Monday 4 December at the Queen Elizabeth II Hall on Rochdale Road, Oldham OL1 1NL. It starts at 6:30 pm and ends with a simple shared buffet meal.

All are welcome. To book a ticket, please contact the Oldham Interfaith Forum on oif-events @ outlook.com.

## Jesus: the reason for the season

The Bible often describes Jesus as 'the *Son* of God'. That title needs unpacking because it's so huge.

Jesus lived on earth as a human being during a very short period of human history (between approximately 4 BC and 29 AD). That period began when his mother Mary became pregnant by the Holy Spirit and ended after his Ascension, when he returned to Heaven.

Despite his unusual conception, the Bible is always keen to demonstrate that Jesus was fully human. Like us, he matured from being a baby, became a teenager, and thence grew into adulthood, so it describes times when he needed sleep, food and warmth, just as we do. It also displays him as having the full range of human emotions: he was angry, wept, and so on. And he could be killed and die. Being fully human, this God-man also had a perfect understanding of what it's like to be human, which is surely what the whole thing is about.

We give the name *Incarnation* to this mind-boggling event of God becoming human. The word literally means the 'en-flesh-ment' of God—so Jesus is God wrapped, often almost hidden, in a human body.

The Bible talks about this idea in several places, but each example needs a little bit of explaining. The most dramatic instances refer to 'The Word'. The most famous is John 1:14, 'The Word became flesh and dwelt among us'. The Creed we say each Sunday describes it with the words,

> For us and for our salvation, he came down from heaven, he became incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and was made man.

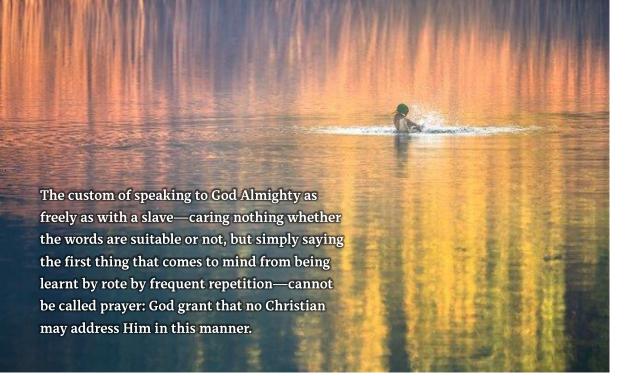
The Incarnation ended when Jesus returned back to Heaven—'back' because he first entered the physical world *from* Heaven. That's why Sirach 24:8 (in the Apocrypha) describes the Incarnation with the beautiful phrase, 'The Word leapt from heaven to earth'.

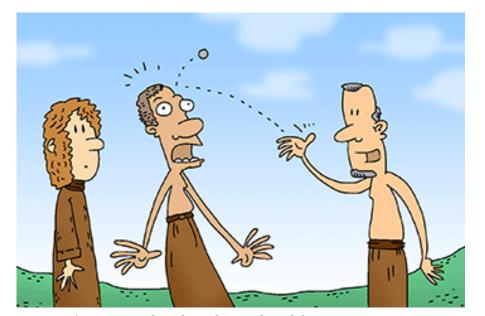
And Jesus was active in Heaven before the Incarnation; Colossians

1:16 shows him as being somehow instrumental in forming the world. It's therefore our job as Christians to live with God within us, which is a different but related form of Incarnation. It also helps if we ask

God (through prayer) to help us to understand these things in our souls.

OLD HAM Vietnamin And Vietnami





'I was saved early today and God forgave my sins. That means I'm without sin, so ... *first stone!' (with apologies to John 8:1–11)* 

## Did you know?

Mary gave birth to her firstborn son and wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a manger, because there was no place for them in the inn. *Luke 2:7* 

Jesus' stepfather Joseph was 'of the house and lineage of David' (Luke 2:4). He would had been something of a celebrity if he could prove this genealogy, for true descendants of David were quite rare. It's therefore likely that he would have sent notice of his intention of travelling to Bethlehem before setting out, for his pedigree made it imperative that he was received well; it would have caused dishonour if a true descendent of David was not received with honour.

Reading the account of Jesus' birth in Luke's Gospel through this cultural lens suggests we need to read the narrative differently.

Luke 2 says that all the inns of Bethlehem were full when Mary and Joseph arrived (Luke 2:7), which implies their arrival did not occur according to schedule, which seems quite likely given Mary's pregnancy reaching full term and the high tension surrounding the census. Their pre-booked accommodation was otherwise rented out. Luke suggests that an innkeeper found them emergency accommodation, but that bed could not have been the stable of popular imagination because of Joseph's high status.

Most people in the Middle East kept animals for transport, milk, and food. It represented economic necessity. Some animals—especially those

regarded as ritually 'clean'—were kept indoors, particularly during the colder times of year, in a Sectioned-off part of the house. They would have been safer that way, and the larger animals' body heat would also have helped warm the room.

Read this way, the holy family were not lodged in a draughty stable but were safe inside the

innkeeper's own rooms, and Jesus was probably born on the Innkeeper's own bed.

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### **Richard Rolle**

For love is a wilful stirring of our thoughts unto God, so that it receive nothing that is against the love of Jesus Christ, and therewith that it be lasting in sweetness of devotion; and that is the perfection of this life.



"And here's the receipt for the myrrh in case you want to swap it for a different gift" (with apologies to Luke 2:1–16)

