

THE WINDRUSH BENEFICE

ALDSWORTH ❖ THE BARRINGTONS ❖ SHERBORNE ❖ WINDRUSH

Church of England – Diocese of Gloucester

DECEMBER 2022

04 Dec *Advent 2*

11.00 SHERBORNE
Morning Prayer CW

11 Dec *Advent 3*

11.00 LITTLE BARRINGTON
Morning Prayer BCP

18 Dec *Advent 4*

11.00 ALDSWORTH
Carols Service

6.30 GREAT BARRINGTON
Carols Service

23 Dec *Friday*

6.30 SHERBORNE
Carols Service

24 Dec *Christmas Eve*

6.30 WINDRUSH
Carols Service

25 Dec *Christmas Day*

11.00 LITTLE BARRINGTON
Festival Holy Communion

FOR YOUR PRAYERS

For Advent

Almighty God,
give us grace to cast away
the works of darkness
and to put on the armour of light,
now in the time of this mortal life,
in which your Son Jesus Christ
came to us in great humility;
that on the last day,
when he shall come again
in his glorious majesty
to judge the living and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal. **Amen.**

For the Homeless

We pray for all women and men
who are homeless.
For families broken because
they cannot afford to pay the bills.
For those who have no relatives or friends
who can help them.
For those who have no place to keep things
that remind them who they are.
For those who are afraid and hopeless.
For those who have been let down by others.
Jesus, help us to see your face in the eyes
of every person experiencing homelessness,
so that we may, through word and deed,
by your grace, help those who are homeless. **Amen.**

For Christmas

Eternal God,
in the stillness of this night
you sent your almighty Word
to pierce the world's darkness
with the light of salvation:
give to the earth the peace that we long for
and fill our hearts with the joy of heaven
through our Saviour, Jesus Christ
that, when he shall come again
in his glorious majesty
to judge the living and the dead,
we may rise to the life immortal. **Amen.**

‘Fear Not...’

or, Finding the Way when it’s Dark

As the days draw in, curtains close and blinds come down earlier in the darkening afternoons. Lamps are switched on and fires burn in the grate. Collars are turned up, hats, coats, scarves and gloves are donned at the bite of the weather. Our thoughts turn towards family togetherness. That is, always supposing that we have secure homes, warm clothes, enough food, an income to pay for heating, and indeed, families to love and to be loved by. Those who have all of these things are in the minority in the world and, quite possibly, in this country too.

Christians, and for many others who know that there is more to Christmas than what shopping, eating and drinking can offer, will be looking for a special moment. That moment when—perhaps in singing a carol, or when saying a prayer, or in hearing a familiar Bible reading—a unique stillness falls. In that moment it seems as if the world, with all its fevered busy-ness, is holding its breath. In that stillness we are once again being reminded that the living God came into our world.



Jesus Christ, was born into the muck of a stable, amidst the pettiness and preoccupation of simple lives, and was in that wonderful moment God’s answer to the conceit of the powerful in every age: the mistaken belief that they are ‘in charge’.

King Charles III will be making his first Christmas broadcast this year, in a tradition which began 90 years ago. From their biographies we learn that none of his predecessors ever found that duty an easy one, although over the years his late mother, The Queen, found ways of using it to communicate her sense of duty and compassion, and of her sustaining Christian faith.

When King George VI contemplated the his Christmas message in 1939, he had good reasons to be afraid. As a young man he had seen the consequences of a world war that was to have been ‘over by Christmas’. He was also privileged to know more than most did at the time about our great vulnerability as a nation as another world war had begun.

In his message that Christmas he did not speak of our nation or empire’s strength of arms, still less of its power or even of his authority. Instead, he chose to quote some words which had been given to him (we now know from a book published in 2010), by his daughter, Elizabeth, our late Queen.



The words the king read that Christmas were written in 1908 by a Gloucestershire-born poet and academic, and came from a poem called *God Knows*. For more than a century these words have been a comfort to those who have cause to fear for the future, and never more so than in that broadcast:

*"I said to the man who stood at the gate of the year,
'Give me a light that I may tread safely into the unknown.'
And he replied, 'Go out into the darkness and put your
hand into the hand of God. That shall be to you better
than light and safer than a known way!' So I went forth
and finding the Hand of God, trod gladly into the night."*

Minnie Louise Haskins (1875-1957)

It was into a fearful world and at an anxious time that Jesus Christ was born on that first Christmas. God’s gift of love was given both to ‘comfort the disturbed and to disturb the comfortable’.

I trust that if you are present at one of our church services this Christmas, or if one catches you by eye or ear through TV or radio, and you once again hear St. Luke’s simple account of the first Christmas, that you will find in it a source of hope that no fear can destroy:

"Fear not, for I bring you good news of a great joy which will come to all people. For to you is born this day in the town of David a Saviour, who is Christ the Lord."

St. Luke 2: 10-11

May God bless you—and may you know it was God’s blessing—this Christmas.

Gerard

