



# CHRISTMAS DAY

Revd. Cara Heafey, Associate Minister, Summertown URC



Photograph by Carolyn Wheeler

## READ: LUKE 2:1-20

---

"...you will find a child wrapped in bands of cloth and lying in a manger..."

## REFLECT:

The reading for this week is, of course, none other than Luke's account of Jesus' birth; words spoken by narrators of nativity plays every year, words so familiar we can probably almost recite them by heart.

Hearing them this year, what stands out for me is the provisional, make-do, less-than-ideal circumstances of the Christ-child's arrival into the world.

I've never had the experience of giving birth to a child, but I have a vague idea, gleaned from the experiences of my two younger sisters and of friends who are parents, of the planning and preparation that precedes the event. Things might have been simpler in Mary's time, I don't know. These days there are NCT classes to attend and specialist equipment like sterilizers and car seats to gather. Mums-to-be draw up birthing plans, making choices around who will be present; where to give birth (hospital, home or midwife-led unit); what pain relief to have; whether to consider a C-section or an epidural; whether to use a birthing pool; what music they might want on a playlist to accompany the event... the list goes on.

Things often don't go quite as planned. At the end of the day there's so much that's outside the parents' control. But having to give birth on the floor of a stable... well surely that counts as pretty disastrous and traumatic in any era. I doubt it's what Mary and Joseph had in mind.

This Christmas a great many people's best-laid plans have been thwarted by the pandemic, and the shifting landscape of the rules and restrictions on gathering. It might be that your Christmas day is not at all what you had hoped, and if this is the case you have my deep sympathy. I suspect that all of us, in some way or another, are having to adjust and make do.

So I offer you this Good News of great joy: into the provisional, the imperfect, the lonely, the uncomfortable, the disappointing, the terrifying... Love is born among us. To be vulnerable, like us, in the midst of it. To bring peace and goodwill. To be with us.



## PRAY:

- For new mums, mums to be, and women who face having to give birth in unsafe or unsanitary conditions
- For all who are lonely, afraid, or struggling at this time.
- That we will experience the gift of God's presence with us this Christmas.

## RESOURCES:

Our friends at Wheatley URC have a huge archive of online sermons you can listen to, and are regularly posting new resources on their website:

[www.wheatleyurc.org.uk](http://www.wheatleyurc.org.uk)

## SUPPORT:

Pauline and myself, and your elders, are here for you if you need someone to talk to, have a prayer request, or just fancy a chat! Ping us an email or give us a ring.