

What were 'first impressions ' when you began attending BPC?

Very friendly and remarkably “normal” people! After my previous experience of church it was quite a surprise to be asked within the first few weeks if I would like to go on an outing to the Catford Beer Festival!

Is there any one aspect of the parish or worship do you particularly find attractive at BPC?

I like the combination of relatively formal services with an informal atmosphere outside of services. Obviously I feel very privileged to be able to sing in such a good choir as well.

Is there an aspect within the Church of England, which you feel is particularly important?

I like the fact that as the established church it sees itself as a place for everyone – not just for those who are committed to what it stands for. It draws people in gently rather than grabbing them by the throat. And I think it is very healthy that it contains such a vast variety of styles, approaches and opinions. To be in the Church of England you have to accept that there will be people in the same organisation who think very differently from the way you do.

Do you think the Church should speak out on social issues or restrict it to spiritual matters only?

In the 1980's I felt that only the Church was speaking out coherently against the materialism and self-centredness, which was becoming the norm. Jesus showed consistent solidarity with the marginalized in society. I don't think the Church can avoid speaking out.

Christmas Day

Why does it begin at midnight with Holy Communion?

The hour was first chosen at Rome in the fifth century to symbolise the idea that Christ was born at midnight – a mystical idea in no way hindered by historical evidence! No one knows the hour of his birth.

Certainly in recent times, Holy Communion at midnight on Christmas morning has proved popular with modern families. One British writer pointed out its “domestic convenience” in 1947: “for where there are children and no servants, husband and wife may be unable to communicate at any other time.” (So things don't change, then!)

The Bells

I heard the bells on
 Christmas Day
 Their old, familiar carols play,
 And wild and sweet
 the words repeat
 Of peace on earth,
 good-will to men!

Longfellow