

Many of you know Sarah. She's expecting to become a grandmother any time now. Last week, the baby was in the wrong position so the doctors decided to do a C section on Monday but when the family arrived at hospital they discovered that baby had moved into the normal position. But a day or two later baby moved back and so they went back to the hospital for a C section but once again baby had moved and they decided to wait for a natural birth. They're still waiting.

We have been waiting for what seems like a very long time for Christmas. We have been waiting and getting ready and now it's here.

I don't know whether the baby Jesus was early or late. I don't know whether Joseph and Mary were relieved that he waited until they got to Bethlehem and found shelter in the stable, or whether they had expected to be back home before the baby came but all the travelling on a donkey or walking alongside had brought on Mary's labor and they were surprised he came so soon.

Sarah's family can't control when the baby will be born, and we can't control when God will arrive in our hearts and lives. The baby will come in her own time, and God comes in God's own time. We don't know when the angels will appear on a hillside and we will be surprised by joy. It's not up to us.

But what we can do is to prepare. I know that Sarah's family have been preparing for baby. They have bought all the special things and special clothes that babies need.

God doesn't need us to buy special things for him to be born or re-born or to grow in our hearts. But we do get to make space for him. Often our minds and our lives are so full up with busy things that there isn't enough room for Jesus. It's like the inn which was so full that there wasn't enough room for anyone else, even a young mother having

contractions. Bethlehem was full of people doing important things and there wasn't the room for Jesus.

Often my mind is full of important things and there isn't room for God to make Godself known to me in a new way.

Some of you will remember another friend, Dr Jean, who filled her house with things. There was one pathway through all her boxes which went from the kitchen to the bathroom and the bedroom. Sometimes my heart is like that. There is one route for God to take. The same pathway that God has been taking through my heart for a long time. God has been hanging out in the same old armchair and there hasn't been room for him to do anything unexpected.

But God longs to do new things. Just as God became a little baby in order to show God's love for us. That was a new thing which had never happened before. God wants to do new things in my life and in yours. But she is limited by the space which I make for her.

I expect that Sarah's family have made a special new place in their home for baby. Today God is asking us to make a new place in our hearts and lives for God. Not just the same old place, because that limits what God can do – God always respects the limits we place. But God longs to do new and wonderful things. God longs to surprise us.

So just as we open our presents this Christmas, let us open our hearts, open our hearts in new ways to the God who loves to bring surprises.