

Why go to church?

This is a very good question given the adverse publicity which 'the church' sometimes gets and the historical horrors which surface from time to time.

Church is full of seriously flawed human beings – not least we who are priests. It may come as a shock but we are hopelessly fallible at times – just like those who aren't priests! As for the people in the pews – they're a motley bunch - and we love them for that!

Some people grow up saying their prayers and having some belief. Some never hear what is 'our' – the Christian – story. Some hear it and it has no apparent relevance.

One of the stories told by Jesus (a real historical figure mentioned in the contemporary literature of the day and not just the Bible) was about seed being sown on different types of ground and why some flourished and some withered in the heat. If you want to read it, Google the Parable of the Sower.

We're a bit like that too. For some of us faith is deep rooted, albeit it with ups and downs and times of doubt, and that is why we go to church. For some, church is a place to see friends – most of us are quite decent people when you get to know us. For some it's a place which fills a gap in a lonely existence.

Many people don't come to church because they have a particular belief in God. That may remain the case or they might find a seed of faith which was in them and previously hadn't flourished. Many find a sense of belonging before they come to believe anything. We don't ask or pry, but we are always ready to listen and answer questions.



ON SONG: Megan Scobie was presented with the Chorister of the Year award by Rev Morag Finch and Canon Claire Tillotson, Director of Music. The award is kindly donated by the Friends of St Mary's.

If we don't know the answers we will find out for you.

If you wish to come and see what we do and what many of us believe, come to a service at 10.30am on a Sunday – that's probably the best place to start. Don't be daunted by the huge doors. Introduce yourself and ask someone handing out books to find you someone who knows their way through the service - they will help you.

Do come: St Mary's (which some people used to call 'the Cathedral of Shortlands') is welcoming, friendly and very much central to the community of Shortlands.

We hope to see you soon!

Rev Jane Peters

Special Events and Services

Sunday 14 May

3.30pm A service for Christian Aid week

Sunday 21 May

6.30pm Choral evensong

Responses: Sanders

Canticles: Wood in D

Anthem: Blessed be the God and Father - Wesley

Thursday 25 May - Ascension Day

8.00pm Holy Communion

Parish Picnic & Barbecue

Sunday, 11 June

in the church grounds
following the

10.30am Family and Parade Service

A great day for all the family!

Bring your own picnic,
or buy barbecue food and support the Guides
fundraising for international trips

They will also be selling soft drinks and ice creams.

Donation bar run by Friends of St Mary's
Bouncy castle, games, crafts and competitions

In the church hall if wet



From the Registers

Holy Baptism

We welcome into God's family:

25 March Rose Leveton-Smith
 Lily Leveton-Smith
 Liberty Smith

At Rest

We extend our sympathy to those who loved:

Alan Turrell 4 Apr aged 84
Caroline Farrar 11 Apr aged 63

Remembering

Caroline Farrar

Caroline was born in Aberystwyth Hospital and grew up on the family farm in Llangybi. One of four children, Caroline was a happy child and particularly loved her baby brother Richard who she would push around the farm in his buggy. She always loved children.

After leaving school she went to Teacher Training College in Bradford where she met Bob, who was in his second year at the university. They married in August 1974 having only met in June 1973 - once they had met, neither had eyes for anyone else.

Bob went to work for Boots, first in Bournemouth which separated the young couple by many miles, with weekend visits.

The next move was to Cheltenham in 1977 where Helen and Paul were born and then Sutton Coldfield in 1980 where Ruth later joined the family. The family moved to Shortlands in 1982.

Caroline had worked for a while in a school in Poole, and when they moved to Bromley she did locum work in Charlton, joining Highfield in 1987. She had the perfect skillset to be a teacher, and children would light up her eyes.

Caroline loved life and lived it fully. Among her many interests were singing, teaching, knitting, walking, art, theatre, holidays, cooking, badminton, tennis, the gym, being a homemaker and sun worshipping!

At St Mary's she was on the church council, was part of the choir (she loved music and was always singing) and the craft and chatter group, and she was Barney Owl in the Brownies.

Caroline totally embraced her community and was active in it, contributing to the lives of so many people from different groups.

A full church at Caroline's funeral was an indication of the high esteem in which she was held and the many lives she had touched.

Shortlands War Memorial - update

Considerable work has been undertaken since the sad events of last July, when a car collided with the Shortlands War Memorial at the junction of Church Road and Kingswood Road.

Expert consultants (Hall Conservation Ltd) were appointed to oversee the restoration of the stone cross which formed the War Memorial. It is intended to put the memorial back together, using the original stone, with some new pieces of stonework, and to return it to the original base which remains on site.

A listed building planning application has been lodged with Bromley Council including proposals for the restoration works, and Historic England and the War Memorials Trust have been consulted in relation to the application.

A suitably qualified stone mason is being sought to undertake the restoration work.

Consideration is being given to plans for rededication of the memorial: it is currently anticipated that the memorial will be reinstated and rededicated later this year. Further news will appear in SPAN as it is confirmed.

A great result!

The Guides' Cake Sale on Mothering Sunday raised a grand total of £810, which is £270 to each girl representing Girlguiding on an international trip. Many thanks to everyone for their support.

The girls still have a lot of money to raise, so are looking for useful jobs to do, such as babysitting, car washing etc. Please contact Gill Dawson on 07767 365318 if you have any jobs they could help you with.



Ascension Day – 25 May

Ascension Day commemorates the bodily Ascension of Jesus into heaven. It is traditionally celebrated on the Thursday which is forty days after Easter, as stated in the book of Acts: 'He appeared to them over a period of forty days'. Some Christian denominations however celebrate it on the following Sunday.

So, unlike Easter, it is easy to say when Ascension Day will fall – provided of course you know when Easter is!

The shrine marking the place where Jesus is believed to have ascended to heaven offers Christians a disappointing experience.

All that remains of the several churches built to celebrate the Ascension is a small octagonal structure on a property that is now part of a mosque. Plain and unadorned, the Dome of the Ascension stands in a walled compound east of the main road that runs on the top of the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. The location is just north of the Church of Pater Noster — which is built over a cave that the first Christians used as a more secluded place to commemorate the Ascension.

The last church on the site was captured by the Muslim sultan Saladin when he defeated the Crusaders in 1187. Since Muslims also believe in the Ascension of Jesus, it was converted into a mosque.

An unusual feature of the tiny building is that it contains what has been traditionally regarded as the last impression of Jesus' right foot on earth before he ascended into heaven. It is most pleasing for the gullible tourist!

At St Mary's there is a service at 8pm on Ascension Day, to which all are welcome. In recent years this has been followed (weather permitting) by the lighting of a rocket to commemorate the Ascension.

Mission of the month

Christian Aid

2017 marks the 60th anniversary of Christian Aid Week, which runs this year from 14 to 20 May. Christian Aid was founded by British churches in 1945 to support refugees who had lost their homes and possessions in the Second World War, and the Christian Aid Week appeal was started twelve years later to help fund this ongoing work.

Today, tens of millions of people around the world are fleeing their homes because of war, conflict and disaster, making dangerous journeys in search of safety, in the biggest movement of people since that time. So once again, in 2017, the Christian Aid Week appeal focuses on helping refugees.

The vast majority of today's refugees seek sanctuary in poor countries but more than a million refugees have crossed into Europe. They include people like Nejebar, who fled terrible violence in Afghanistan where a family member was killed and the Taliban threatened to murder her husband who was a teacher. Now she and her family are in a refugee camp in Greece. They thought they would only stay for ten days, but have been living in a tent there for more than six months with no end in sight. There is no school for their children and the youngest, five-year-old Sudai, is ill.

Please help us to support Christian Aid as it continues to provide security and basic necessities for refugees. A red Christian Aid envelope will be posted though your letter-box and collected by an authorised collector during the week beginning 14th May. Alternatively you can donate online at www.christianaid.org.uk. More information is on the board at the back of church.

There will be a service to mark Christian Aid Week at St Mary's Shortlands at 3.30pm on Sunday 14 May. This is organised by Churches Together in Beckenham and the speaker will be Richard Baker, Head of Youth and Campaigns at Christian Aid. All are very welcome.

News from the Annual Church meeting

Over 70 people attended St Mary's Annual Parochial Church Meeting in March.

The meeting heard that 241 people are now on the electoral roll, a slight increase from 2015. The Trustees Annual Report for 2016 was presented, detailing the range of approaches to worship and prayer at St Mary's.

Tim Dawson, the Treasurer, reported that overall there was a small surplus. Net income had been put aside for repairs to the church and hall, and further repairs to the roof had already been budgeted for.

Pat Chase, Robin Hogg, Keith Mills and Heather Wills were elected to serve on the PCC and Kate Buchanan, Jan Boam, Annette German and Ann-Marie Jefferys were elected to serve on Deanery Synod. Thanks were given to those who had formerly served and were stepping down.

Rev Morag thanked all those who do so much to help run the church, many whose contributions are unnoticed. She specially thanked Debbie Speller, who had recently stood down as a Pastoral Assistant.

Rev Morag reflected that change is necessary to grow, and that we aim to ensure that the glory of God is witnessed in our growth: we seek to discern what God is calling us to do.

Tim Aldred said that the church council was considering whether more can be done to ensure buildings on the church's site meet the needs of our church and community (see right of this article for more information).

Holy Roses: a floral celebration

Saturday 27 May – Sunday 4 June 2017

In and around the newly refurbished crypt at Rochester Cathedral
For more information, contact Sue or Helen on 01634 810066

Thy Kingdom Come - a Wave of Prayer 25 May - 4 June

During the period leading up to Pentecost, essentially Ascension Day until Pentecost Sunday, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has invited all Church of England churches to join the global wave of prayer for the witness of Christians in this country. The aims of this period are threefold: firstly to join in prayer with the whole family of God the Father, secondly that we as Christians may be an effective witness to God the Son, Jesus Christ and thirdly to pray for the empowering of God the Holy Spirit.

Prayer is a good way of contemplating the direction of our lives, the purposes of God's mission through His teachings and the work of His healing power. In praying 'Thy Kingdom Come' we all commit to playing our part in the renewal of the nations and the transformation of our communities, spreading God's message of love and peace.

At St Mary's we are setting up prayer stations depicting the words of the Lord's prayer in order to meditate what this period means for us, our community and the wider world. There will be seven areas relating to specific sentences of the Lord's Prayer displayed in church from 25 May to 4 June.

Anyone is welcome to view these exhibits. Just come into the church and have a look. We are open every day from 9am to 1pm. Whether you come to contemplate the direction in your life or the church as a whole, talking to God through prayer is a valuable exercise. Who knows where it may lead?

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CONGRATULATIONS

Peter and Diana Stotesbury recently celebrated their golden wedding anniversary with friends at St Mary's, the location for their wedding fifty years ago.

Planning for the future

The team here at St Mary's is starting a consultation about our church hall and meeting rooms, what these should deliver in the future, and whether any replacement buildings are needed. We want local residents to be fully informed and have the chance to share their views.

St Mary's has a mission statement 'to bring the love of God into the everyday lives of the people of Shortlands'. An important way that we do this is through the use of our halls and meeting rooms for the whole community in Shortlands – for community groups, pre-school and toddler groups, children's clubs, social events, and of course to support church activities. There are not many community buildings in Shortlands, so the halls play an important role for many people.

Our predecessors in the 1950s had the vision and courage to rebuild the church after it was bombed in the war. We have a responsibility to maintain our assets here, building on what they achieved: we want to ensure these facilities continue to provide the best possible service to Shortlands into the future.

Some of our key buildings will need costly repair work. For example, in the main hall, we would expect to start thinking about replacing the roof and windows in the coming years.

Additionally, there is cracking in the hall and cloakroom walls. The cracks are being monitored: at present these problems do not affect the integrity or use of the hall. However, if this movement were to continue it might become necessary to underpin part or all of the hall walls and floor.

As we know we will need to spend money on repairs and maintenance, it is right to take this opportunity to think about whether there are alternatives to continuing to repair our current hall. A major building project could take a long time to fundraise for, so it's our responsibility to think about these things in advance.

We want to consult widely with an open mind, to better understand the needs and interests of everyone associated with the site, to plan the best way forward. We want to look at the option of replacement buildings, but we have made no decisions or assumptions and will take the time needed to consult fully.

To support our thinking, we have appointed a firm of architects who have significant experience of working with churches on similar projects. They are talking to lots of people locally and will then design some feasible options for us to consider.

There will be an open morning at the church on Saturday 1st July: all will be welcome to discuss the range of activities at the church and hall, consider what more we could do, and share their views with the architect. Residents in close proximity to the site and regular hall users will also be contacted individually.

There will be other opportunities to hear more and share your views as our thinking develops – watch this space! And, of course, if you have any comments at any time, please do contact me via the church office.

Rev Morag Finch



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WORSHIP

Every Sunday

- 08.00 Holy Communion
- 10.30 Family Communion, except when notified. During term time there are separate groups in the Church Hall for children aged 0-18.
- 18.30 Choral Evensong (3rd Sunday in the month)

Every Monday

- 17.30 Evening Prayers

Every Wednesday

- 10.00 Holy Communion

Further information about all services can be obtained from the Parish Office.

PARISH DIRECTORY

Vicar	Rev. M. Finch	8464 8065
(Sat - Thu)	revfinch@btinternet.com	
Associate Vicar	Rev. R. Finch	8464 8065
Associate Vicar	Rev. J. Peters	07531 617302/8460 5682
(Sun, Mon, Wed)		
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	Mrs C. Bingham	8460 0324
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	Mr. S. Buchanan	8777 8008
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	Mrs. M. Westropp	8650 5178
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Assistant	Mrs. E. Parker	8460 5682
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	Mrs C. Corbin	07973295134
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Assistant Treasurer	Mr. R. Hogg	8290 0613
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Assistant Organist	Mr Daniel Beach	8289 6510
Electoral Roll	Mrs. M. Shaw	8460 9681
Stewardship	Mr. J. Westropp	8650 5178
Junior Church	Mrs. S. Aldred	8460 3978

PARISH OFFICE Tel: 8460 5682

e-mail: office@stmaryshortlands.church
Open 9.30am - 12.30pm weekdays.
Information regarding Baptisms and Weddings can be obtained during these hours.

ST. MARY'S ORGANISATIONS

Mothers & Toddlers	Mrs. J. Runicles	8650 4553
Mothers' Union Fellowship Group	Mrs. P. White	8460 9357
Friends of St. Mary's	Miss J. Rambridge	8650 0947

For admissions to Beavers, Cubs & Scouts please contact email: 7bromleyadmissions@gmail.com

Scouts (Fri)	Mr. R. Howe	8462 7132
Cubs (Mon)	Mrs. P. Braithwaite	8460 4152
Cubs (Tues)	Mr. J. Griffiths	07954 437658
Beavers	Ms E. Hay	07932758801

For admissions to Rainbows, Brownies & Guides please tel: 08001695901 or go to www.girlguiding.org.uk/interested

Guides (Tues.)	Ms. N. Keast	07516 650940
Guides (Fri)	Mrs. G. Dawson	8460 5884
Brownies (Mon.)	Miss. K. Higgs	8462 3285
Brownies (Wed.)	Mrs. R. Kateswaran	8249 0984

Brownies (Thurs.)	Mrs. S. Tight	8460 8122
Rainbows	Ms. H. Last	8460 1705
	Mrs. S. Tight	8460 8122

Pre-School	Mrs. P. Chase	8290 6704
	or 07960 988552	

The 2WW's	Mrs. A. Swatton	8650 1114
Church Flowers	Mrs. M. Parr	8249 7127
Mission Chairman	Mrs. S. Shelton	8402 3299
Douai Link	Mrs. G. Dawson	8460 5884
Fair Trade	Mrs. C. Willatt	8313 0246
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LOCAL COOKS

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(Email: Mary.Cooke@bromley.gov.uk)	
Clr R. Jefferys	020 8460 6030
(Email: david.jefferys@bromley.gov.uk)	
Residents' Association	8460 4060
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