

God's quiet presence

God's presence, much to our frustration and loss of patience sometimes, is something that lies quiet inside us. It rarely makes a huge splash.

Because we are not sufficiently aware of this, we are forever looking for something beyond what God gives us.

We should know that faith needs to ground itself on something that is quiet and undramatic. Jesus was born into our world with no fanfare and no power, a baby lying helpless in the straw.

During his ministry, he never performed miracles to prove his divinity; only as acts of compassion or to reveal something about God.

Jesus' teaching makes clear that this presence is mostly quiet and hidden – think of an insignificant mustard plant, surprising us with its growth.

God lies deep inside us, in a way that's almost non-existent, almost unfelt, largely unnoticed, and easily ignored.

While that presence is never overpowering, it has within it a gentle compulsion towards something higher. If we draw upon it, it gushes up in us in an infinite stream that instructs, nurtures and fills us with endless energy.

God fully respects our freedom, never overpowers

us; but also never goes away ... precisely like a baby lying helpless in the straw, gently beckoning us, but helpless in itself to make us pick it up.

C.S. Lewis writes that, for years, he was able to effectively ignore a voice inside him, precisely because it was almost non-existent, almost unfelt, and largely unnoticed. In retrospect, he realised it had always been there, a gentle, incessant nudge, beckoning him to draw from it, something he eventually recognised as a gentle, but unyielding, imperative, which, if obeyed, leads to liberation.

Why doesn't God show himself to us more directly and more powerfully so as to make faith easier? That's a fair question for which, partly, there is no fully satisfying answer.

The answer we do have lies in understanding the manner in which God shows himself in our lives and our world. Unlike almost everything else that's trying to get our attention, God never tries to overwhelm us. God respects our freedom. God lies everywhere, inside us and around us, a quiet, gentle nudge and, if drawn upon, the ultimate stream of love and energy.

May you know God's blessing throughout this New Year!

Fr. Leon Carberry (Area Dean of Beckenham)

SAVE THE DATE

There will be a Quiz Night in St Mary's Church Hall on

Saturday 7th March, 7pm - 10pm

in aid of

St Mary's Pre-school, Shortlands
& The Peter Westropp Memorial Trust.

Special Events and Services

Sunday 11 January - Epiphany

10.30am Family Communion

Sunday 18 January

10.30am Family Communion

6.30pm Choral Evensong

Responses: Ayleward

Canticles: Stanford

Anthem: The Spirit of the Lord - Elgar

Sunday 1 February - Candlemas

10.30am Family and Parade Service
with the help of Tuesday Guides



FOOD AND FELLOWSHIP

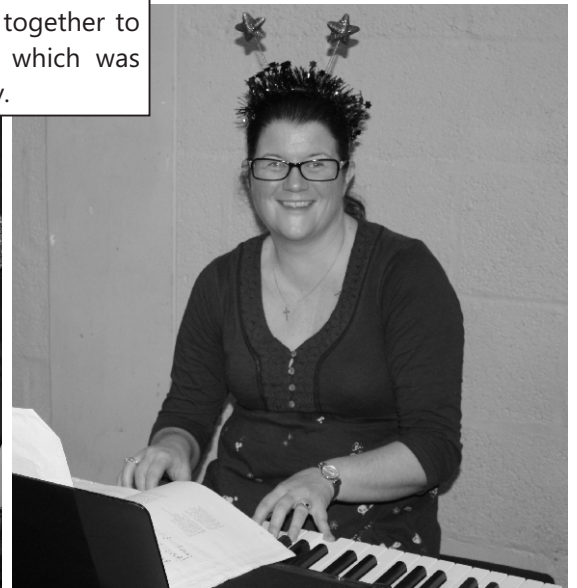
Members of the 2WW's Group enjoyed an excellent lunch at the Park Langley Tennis Club in December. The group thanked Mrs Annie Heyberd for all her work in co-ordinating the Group throughout the year.

The Choir have been invited to sing Choral Evensong at Rochester Cathedral on Saturday 3 January at 3.15pm - all are welcome.



ALL THE FUN OF THE FAIR

Members of St Mary's and the local community came together to enjoy the Christmas Fair. The Fair raised £2908.00 which was distributed between church funds and Welcare in Bromley.



Should I go back to church?

It's not unusual for people to fall out of the habit of going to church. Sometimes we may find ourselves asking 'What's the point?' Some people claim that you don't need to go to church to be a Christian, that what matters is living a good and upright life.

What makes a Christian is not our success in leading wholesome lives, but the humble realisation that we can't live without regular doses of God's love made real in the sacraments – especially in Holy Communion, the meal Jesus commanded his Church to share in his presence. In other words, the Church exists not for the self-righteous, but for those who know their need of grace.

Jesus says that he came to call not the righteous but sinners to be his followers (Matthew 9:13). People do fail. On the other hand, all of us will be able to think of at least a few Christians who radiate goodness and humility. They encourage us and teach us what it means to be holy.

The wisdom of centuries has taught us that our worship and prayers must be regular. The most important principle is to set a simple and realistic target and to stick with it, however we feel.

We have to live with the fact that the Church on earth will never be perfect. But this sense of our weakness is also our sign of hope, for it reminds us to put our whole trust in God who perfects his strength in our weakness and who sent his Son to us while we were still sinners.

'Should I go back to church?' @www.gospelimprint.com

Rainbow pack Leaders required!

Rainbows who meet from 3.45 - 4.45pm on Mondays during term time are in desperate need of two new leaders to take over. Full support will be given. If you are interested please contact Helen Last tel: 020 8460 1705 or email her at helen.last@btinternet.com.



Stay in touch!

To keep up with news from St. Mary's in between editions of SPAN, you can like our page on Facebook or follow us on Twitter – search for 'St Mary's Shortlands'. Don't forget our website www.stmarysshortlands.org.uk



Mission of the month

Deaf Access

Most of us take our hearing for granted but, without it, people are vulnerable to abuse and an increased risk of developing other conditions such as depression, confusion, and cognitive decline - including dementia. Life can be isolating, scary, emotional and challenging. That's where Deaf Access can make a difference.

Imagine if you could not speak to communicate with family, neighbours, work colleagues or service providers? Deaf Access do a lot to aid sign language users. Through advocacy they translate information, letters, and forms, helping clients to become more independent. Understanding their rights means that some have gained a voice for the first time. For these people, Deaf Access is the only place they can access help.

The team has over 45 years experience, so people can come for reassurance, emotional support or practical advice. They offer equipment demonstrations, lip-reading and peer support groups.

Deaf Access also does a lot to raise awareness across the Borough about Mental Health and Deafness, visiting organisations, service providers, groups and schools.

Your funding will help the drop-in Centre in Central Bromley, to assist and support vulnerable adults and children and their families with hearing loss.

If you think you or a friend would benefit from Deaf Access services, call 0208 315 2550 or visit the website: www.deaf-access.co.uk

As you pray for those in need of comfort and support, please include Deaf Access, their clients, staff and volunteers.

To find out more please take a look at the publicity boards at the rear of the Church.

Small but perfectly formed

The seniors mobility class has been 'running' for well over a year now.

Tom Boam, who established the class, has moved on to full-time employment with the NHS, so we have 'morphed' into a self-help group, following Tom's programme of exercises.

Each Monday afternoon, a group of around ten to twelve senior citizens meets in Church House for a session of gentle exercise with aids such as pilates balls, bands and various weights. Carrying these weights on the shopping walk seems to be a popular opportunity to gossip!

After all the hard work we follow up with tea, cake and conversation (more jaw exercises!) Those extra calories consumed ensure a return to the class the following week to burn them off - a self-perpetuating cycle of cake/ exercise/ cake.....

Our members have given the class a thumbs-up; they feel that this gentle, regular exercise has been of benefit, increasing their flexibility and mobility in their daily lives. Best of all they have an opportunity to socialise and have fun with like-minded people. It is all made possible by the band of volunteer tea and cake makers who are greatly appreciated by all!

If you are interested in attending the class, please contact the Parish Office.

Jan Boam

FoodBank: From Harvest to Home

St Mary's congregation donated generously this year at Harvest Festival. The collected food went to Bromley Borough FoodBank to be donated to households in need across the borough. The first step on its journey is to a giant greenhouse at Coolings Nursery, there to be sorted by volunteers. From there it goes to one of three FoodBank distribution centres across the borough: Bromley, Orpington and Penge. It is from these that voucher holders can collect food and other staples to match their household needs.

Vouchers to receive food are allocated not by FoodBank volunteers but by one of approximately 100 organisations. School Family workers, Social Services, and organisations such as Age UK and Bromley Mencap distribute vouchers to families or individuals they know to be in the greatest need. This way, the people making the judgement about where your donations are most needed are people who know the individuals closely and much of their family history.

The greatest concentration of poverty in Bromley Borough is amongst the working poor. The intention is that the donated food is to help people going through times of crisis. This may be whilst waiting to receive a salary after securing a new job, or struggling to cover the costs of a broken boiler or washing machine. The donations are not intended to replace benefits or tax credits. Households receive a maximum of three vouchers per crisis. I have occasionally had the privilege of witnessing the gratitude of families receiving your donations. Your generosity is deeply appreciated.

Victoria Nightingale

Save our Roof!

St Mary's Church roof is in need of repair! The steel trusses holding up the roof have started to rust and need treating to stop the rust.

We held a gift day in October, which is an opportunity for people in the Parish to make a one off gift to the Church. Gift Day this year was to raise funds to pay for repairs to the roof. So far this year's Gift Day has raised £5,000. However, the likely cost of the roof repairs is in excess of £20,000 so we still need to raise a further £15,000. If you would like to make a donation the way to give is to please send or drop off your donation to the Church Office.

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School news

Planning permission has been granted for the Harris Primary School in Kingswood Road. We understand that it is planned that the school will open on the site during the 2015/16 academic year.

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WORSHIP

Every Sunday

08.00	Holy Communion
10.30	Family Communion, except the first Sunday in the month in term time. During term time there are separate groups in the Church Hall for children aged 0-18.
10.30	All Age Eucharist or Parade Service (1st Sunday in the month, term time).
18.30	Choral Evensong (3rd Sunday in the month)

Every Monday

17.00 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
	revfinch@btinternet.com	
Associate Vicar	Rev. R. Finch	8464 8065
Associate Vicar	Rev. J. Peters	07531 617302/8460 5682
Reader Emeritus	Mrs. A. Gimson	8460 6494
Reader	Mr. P. Stotesbury	8650 3259
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	Mrs. D. Speller	8466 1184
	Mrs. M. Westropp	8650 5178
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Assistant	Mrs. E. Parker	8460 5682
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	Dr. D. Jefferys	8460 6030
	Mrs. P. Chase	8464 6188
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	Mr. S. Clark	8464 0696
	Mr. D. Cooper	8460 0682
	Mr. B. Waring	07957 186027
PCC Secretary	Miss J. Rambridge	8650 0947
Treasurer	Mr. T. Dawson	8460 5884
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Organist and Director of Music	Canon C. Tillotson	8460 7368
Assistant Organist	Mr Daniel Beach	8289 6510
Electoral Roll	Mr. N. Stoffel	8460 0063
Stewardship	Mr. J. Westropp	8650 5178
Junior Church	Mrs. S. Aldred	8460 3978

PARISH OFFICE Tel/Fax 8460 5682

e-mail: office@stmaryshortlands.plus.com
Open 9.30 am - 12.30 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
Scouts GSL (Fri)	Mr. C. Wood	8658 1825
Cubs (Mon.)	Mrs. J. Garvey	8249 8785
Cubs (Tues.)	Mr. J. Griffiths	07954 437658
Beavers/admissions	Mr. J. Westropp	8650 5178
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.)	Miss. G. Attoho	07946 833576
Rainbows	Ms. W. Keeping	8466 1599
	Mrs. S. Tigh	8460 8122
Pre-School	Mrs. P. Chase	8290 6704 or 07960 988552
The 2WW's	Mrs. A. Heayberd	8460 9537
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

LOCAL CONTACTS

Cllr. M. Cooke	020 3665 0357
(Email: Mary.Cooke@bromley.gov.uk)	
Cllr D. Jefferys	020 8460 6030
(Email: david.jefferys@bromley.gov.uk)	
Highfield Infants' School	8464 7804
Highfield Junior School	8460 2597
Residents' Association	8460 4060
Shortlands Safer Neighbourhood	8721 2614

SPAN INFORMATION

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