

Focus on Christmas

I'm sure you've all heard the old cliché - never work with children or animals. I don't think it's because you can't trust them to do what you want but because they are bound to upstage you. We're looking forward to our Christmas celebrations here at St Mary's, as well as our regular services during Advent when we watch and wait for the second coming of Christ and prepare for Christmas Day itself. We will be hosting carol services for our local schools, toddlers group, pre-school and nursery schools. On Christmas Eve the children from the congregation will be taking part in a nativity play to help us remember the story of the first Christmas.

Somehow the most memorable bits of nativity plays are those which don't quite go according to plan. I imagine that we have all seen the video clips on television shows when the innkeeper says he has plenty of room, one of the angels falls off the stage in her excitement or one of the shepherds runs over to see his mum in the audience.

An abiding memory I have of a nativity play not going quite according to plan was when I was training to become a Vicar and the youngest of the angels went to the crib and picked up baby Jesus and began to wander down the aisle with him. As I knew her quite well I decided to try to save the day and 'rescue' Jesus. I tried to persuade her to do a swap for a cuddly lamb - but no luck, she wanted Jesus. It certainly brought out the 'aww' factor - but it always makes me think, do we want to make Jesus the focus of our celebrations this Christmas?

Rev Morag Finch

What's at the heart of your family's Christmas?

The lead up to Christmas can be so busy, especially if you have a young family. In the midst of shopping, children's plays and visits to Father Christmas, it can be easy to lose sight of why we are expending so much time and energy.

If you would like to make space for you and your children to reflect on what is at the heart of it all, why not come to one of our services for families this Advent and Christmas?

Christingle Service: Enjoy seeing your children singing by the candlelight of the Christingle oranges, which remind us that at the centre of Christmas is God's love for this world and its people. Listen to the Cubs playing the chime bars, join in with the carols and support the work of the Children's Society.

Crib Service: At the Christmas crib we remember the birth of a baby, God with us and for us. Children are invited to come dressed as wise men, angels, shepherds or kings as we re-tell the traditional nativity story through drama and song.

Family Communion for Christmas Day: Bring a newly opened present with you to show everyone.

These are relaxed occasions to which everyone is very welcome. We look forward to seeing you and your family as we celebrate together.

Sally Aldred



Special Events and Services

Sunday 6 December

10.30am Family Toy Service

You are invited to bring a new, unwrapped toy or voucher suitable for children aged 8-13 years, which will become a gift for a local child in need of support through Welcare in Bromley. Please, no soft toys. Wrapping paper also welcome.

Sunday 13 December

4.00pm Christingle service

Sunday 20 December

6.30pm The Traditional Service of Nine Lessons and Carols

Thursday 24 December - Christmas Eve

3.30pm Crib Service with Nativity Play

11.30pm Procession by Candlelight, Midnight Mass of the Nativity of Our Lord and Carols for Christmas

Friday 25 December - Christmas Day

9.00am Holy Communion

10.30am Family Communion for Christmas Day

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





From the Registers

Holy Baptism

We welcome into God's family:

1 Nov Jake Broadhurst
Daisy Broadhurst

Confirmation

Confirming their Christian faith:

15 Nov Wendy Weston
Gavin Seabrook

REMEMBERING: On Remembrance Sunday the community of Shortlands came together to remember those who have given their lives in the service of their country.



More wartime memories

Having enjoyed David Loades' and Stan Clark's articles about their wartime child experiences, I thought I would make it a trio with my memories of World War 2.

I was six when war was declared. I remember when the siren was sounded my parents and I immediately put on our gas masks. This was the first and very probably the last time that we used them.

Early in the war a large house on the corner of Westmoreland Road and Hayes Lane Beckenham was bombed, killing two teenage sisters which I thought was tragic.

I remember cycling in Kenwood Drive and gazing up to the clear blue skies watching the Battle of Britain develop and then the collection of shrapnel.

I recollect two incidents involving damaged German bombers. The first roared over our house seemingly just missing the chimney pot. It crashed near Park Langley Golf Course. The second occasion was when a German plane flew so low over our garden that we could clearly see the pilot's face. I believe it was able to return to northern France safely.

I was not evacuated. My sleeping quarters were in a small cupboard underneath the stairs which was considered the safest place in the house. By the time the doodlebugs arrived we had a Morrison shelter installed in the dining room. This was an iron structure and whilst in there on one occasion a doodlebug exploded nearby, buckling the windows. I also remember while on the hill at Otford watching a doodlebug descending below us to explode on the railway line near the local station.

My last memory of the war was a happy one. My father took me to the Victory in Europe celebrations in London. It was a wonderful night which ended by our going to Waterloo to catch the train to Bournemouth to join the family for a holiday.

David Wilcox

St Mary's Christmas Card

Due to very few entries being received for consideration it has been decided not to produce our own card this year.

Join us for an evening of beautiful Christmas music on

Tuesday 15th December, 7pm at St Mary's church, Shortlands

Singers from Highfield Community Choir, Highfield Junior Chamber Choir and Highfield Youth Voices will get you in the festive mood

Tickets £5 each (children go free but still need a ticket), from highfieldchoirs@yahoo.co.uk or apply in writing to either school office

Living well with dementia

Do you know someone who has dementia? Would you like to know more about living with the condition? It is estimated that there are 4,000 people living with the condition in Bromley.

Bromley Council has collected together information designed to help people with dementia and their carers live well with dementia and make informed choices about their lives. The website is at: <http://bromley.mylifeportal.co.uk/dementia>

Locally, there is a cafe suitable for those living with dementia, those caring for someone with dementia and older people looking for companionship. It's at St. Edmund's RC Church in Village Way, Beckenham on Thursdays from 2pm to 4pm. There is a varied programme which always includes fun, conversation and refreshments.



Keeping safe

At St Mary's we take very seriously our responsibilities to keep children and vulnerable people safe when they take part in activities at our church. To help us do this, we appoint a Safeguarding Officer, who, supported by Rochester Diocese, helps us to follow good practice.

Until recently our Safeguarding Officer was Andrea Hewitt: we thank her for her time and diligence in performing her duties.

John Westropp (pictured) has recently taken over this role: if you have any queries, his contact details are on the back of SPAN.

Coming to a home near you



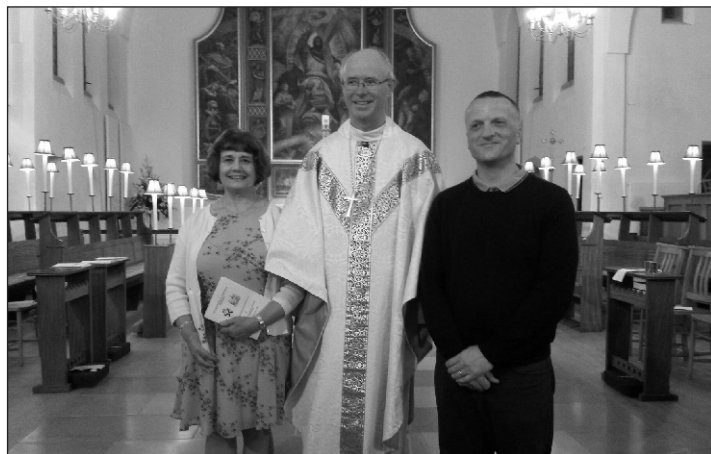
During Advent there are some special travellers journeying around Shortlands.

After a blessing in church on Advent Sunday, a knitted Mary, Joseph and their donkey will visit members of St Mary's congregation along with a flock of sheep. They will spend one night with each host family. The hosts then take them on to their next night's accommodation and they will be returned to the church for the Crib Service on Christmas Eve.

There is a short service with a prayer, hymn and lighting of a candle as they are passed on. The hosts usually offer some refreshment to those bringing the travellers, allowing an opportunity to meet and chat with other members of our congregation.

Some people invite neighbours and family members to join them as they receive the travellers into their home.

At this busy time of year it is a good way to pause and reflect on the true meaning of Christmas.



CONFIRMED IN FAITH: Wendy Weston and Gavin Seabrook were among 13 people confirmed by Bishop James at All Saints, Orpington on Sunday 15th November.

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Mission of the month

The Children's Society

The Children's Society is a leading national children's charity committed to making childhood better for all children in the UK. It provides vital help for tens of thousands of children every year.

There are four priority areas of work:

- Exposed to bullying, violence and deprivation, some children are driven to crime. The Children's Society seeks to provide preventative support and guidance to lead children away from the cycle of crime and custody.
- Each year in the UK 100,000 children run away from home, and many resort to begging, stealing and prostitution to survive. The Children's Society helps them find solutions to their problems at their point of greatest need.
- The Children's Society ensures that individual disabled children are given a voice in decisions that affect them now and in the future, to overcome the effects of exclusion, ignorance and disrespect.
- The charity is helping refugee children rebuild their lives in new communities, surrounded and supported by friends. Providing help with finding accommodation and education, and assisting with language barriers.

This forms the core of their work, and alongside this they also support projects involving traveller and gypsy children, and young people affected by adult drug and alcohol misuse. Work in children's centres, schools and churches gives children the chance to develop the skills and confidence they need to make the most of their childhood and play a full part in their local communities.

The Children's Society relies heavily on donations. This allows them to concentrate their work where the need is greatest and not just in areas where government funding is available.

You are warmly invited to attend our Christingle service in St Mary's on Sunday 13th December at 4pm, which will highlight our financial support for the Children's Society this year. More information is on the board at the back of church, or at <http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/>

St Mary's Annual Dinner

Our Annual Dinner will be held at The Langley Park Golf Club on Saturday 30th January 2016. Tickets are £39 each and can be purchased from the Parish Office.

We have booked Aiden Kent to entertain us after dinner. Aiden, a local singer, does a very good impression of Frank Sinatra and other singers of that era.

So if you like good food, convivial company, a little foxtrot or disco dancing, or prefer just to sit and enjoy the sounds of Frank Sinatra then St Mary's Annual Dinner is for you!



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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

- 17.00 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
(Sat - Thu)	revfinch@btinternet.com	
Associate Vicar	Rev. R. Finch	8464 8065
Associate Vicar	Rev. J. Peters	07531 617302/
(Sun, Mon, Wed)		8460 5682
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	Mr. B. Waring	07957 186027
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Stewardship	Mr. J. Westropp	8650 5178
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PARISH OFFICE Tel: 8460 5682

e-mail: office@stmaryshortlands.plus.com
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	Mrs H. Ashford	07979 504079

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

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		8249 0984
Brownies (Thurs.)	Mrs. S. Tight	8460 8122
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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)	
Residents' Association	8460 4060
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SPAN INFORMATION

Website	www.stmaryshortlands.org.uk
Editorial	Parish Office 8460 5682
Distribution	Mr. M. Harrison 8464 0284

Views expressed by contributors are not necessarily those supported by the publishers, and no responsibility can be accepted for accuracy. The publishers cannot accept responsibility for work carried out by advertisers.

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