

Watching and Waiting

I wait for the Lord, my soul waits, and in his word I hope; my soul waits for the Lord more than those who watch for the morning, more than those who watch for the morning. (Psalm 130:5-6)

These words were probably written down about 3,000 years ago and they describe the deep longing that the writer had to see God. For people of faith the desire to be with God is the greatest desire of all, for when you are with God all will be fulfilled.

The Christian season of Advent is about watching and waiting for Christ, the Son of God. We remember the waiting for the birth of Christ that happened in Bethlehem over 2,000 years ago and we look forward to the return of Christ, the Second Coming.

As we watch and wait we have time to think about God and our relationship with God. The relationship is much more than any human relationship. What we can share with another person can be deep, full of love and shared intimate moments but the relationship with God is different.

What we share with God is beyond human understanding and the words that I will use have limitations. We share with God our being, the essence that makes us who we are. This sharing takes us into the transcendent, beyond human experience, what some call the Realm of God.

This is why it is good to spend some time watching and waiting. In the quiet times we can let our senses and awareness roam into that Realm and search for God. When we arrive at Christmas Day we can burst into songs of joy, a festival of sharing food and gifts, these are natural human responses – a celebration.

I hope you all have a special time of watching and waiting during this season of Advent and can join in the Christmas celebration when people around the world will sing 'Emmanuel' (God with us).

Rev Richard Finch

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



This Christmas, we invite you to add to your celebrations by coming to St Mary's Church for one of the services designed especially for children and their families:

Christingle Service, 4.00pm, Sunday 14 December

Enjoy seeing your children singing by the candlelight of the Christingle oranges, which remind us that Christ is the light who came into the world at Christmas. Celebrate the work of the Children's Society and see how long your child can keep the sweets on the Christingle before eating them!

Crib Service, 3.30pm, Wednesday 24 December

The traditional nativity story, enacted by the children and young people of St Mary's, with carols for everyone to sing. All children are invited to come to the service dressed as angels, shepherds, wise men or kings and join us in telling the wonderful story of the birth of Jesus.

These are relaxed occasions to which everyone is very welcome. If these services are a regular part of your Christmas, we look forward to seeing you again. If you have never been before, do come and add a new dimension to your Christmas.

Special Events and Services

Sunday 7 December

10.30am Toy Service with Parade

You are invited to bring a new, unwrapped toy or voucher suitable for children aged 8-13, which will become a gift for a local child in need of support through Welcare in Bromley.

Sunday 14 December

4.00pm Christingle Service

Sunday 21 December

6.30pm The Traditional Service of Nine Lessons and Carols

Wednesday 24 December - Christmas Eve

3.30pm Crib Service for Families

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

Thursday 25 December - Christmas Day

9.00am Holy Communion

10.30am Family Communion for Christmas Day

Do bring a newly opened present to show everyone.



From the Registers

Holy Baptism

We welcome into God's family:
2 November Luke Francis Arthur Cox

16 November Oscar Preston

At Rest

We extend our sympathy to those who loved:

Rex Nicholls 14 Nov aged 87



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



REMEMBERING: The community of Shortlands came together on Remembrance Sunday.



St Mary's bid farewell to Charles and Jenny Stokes, longstanding members of the congregation who have moved to Scotland to be nearer their children and granddaughter. We wish them well!

Globetrotting Guides

Friday Guides held a special presentation evening in November where the four girls who had been on international trips shared their experiences with the rest of the Guides and many invited guests. Guides Sarah Kleist, Charlotte Ellis-Keeler & Natasha Sethna gave a powerpoint presentation about their time at Asker Scout Jamboree in Norway, where they made many new friends.

Young Leader Lucy Ellis-Keeler showed slides and told of her activities with the Book Bus project in Malawi. She said it really impressed on her how many things we take for granted in this country, and how the children in Malawi who have so little were so excited about their one meal a day, and the books they could learn to read.

Freya Morgan (pictured) was presented by District Commissioner Helen Last with her Baden-Powell Challenge Award, the highest award which can be gained as a Guide. She also received a Jack Petchey medallion, and celebrated in traditional style with a giant cookie.



Highfield Winter Festival

Highfield Junior School, South Hill Road, Bromley BR2 0RL
Friday 12th December 6pm - 8.30pm
Adults £1.50. Children free.
Meet a family of live reindeer.



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 September, which was an opportunity for people to make a one off gift to the Church. So far this year's Gift Day has raised £5,000, which will be used to pay for repairs to the roof. However, the likely full cost of the 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 to help pay for the roof repairs please send or drop off your donation to the Church Office.



THANK YOU: In October, younger members of Junior Church were delighted to receive a large number of knitted figures, depicting a range of Biblical characters to use in their sessions on Sunday mornings. Junior Church Co-ordinator, Sally Aldred, said, "The children are already enjoying using the figures to re-tell the Bible stories they are learning. It is a great way of bringing the stories alive for this age group. Opening the box and seeing all the work that had gone in to such a gift was like opening a big box of love and we were keen to say a big 'thank you' to the group of knitters."

The figures were knitted by the Craft and Chatter group, which meets most Tuesday mornings between 10 and 12 in the choir vestry. Anyone is welcome - you don't have to be a knitter as the group also does other activities. The aim is to create items for use/sale by the church and the wider community. The group will next be knitting for the premature baby unit. Feel free to come along and chat over coffee.

PICTURED: members of the Craft and Chatter group receive their thank you card from Helen Seabrook, a Junior Church member.



St Mary's on tour

In late October a group of 20 members of St Mary's congregation and friends joined a guided tour to Turkey. The tour included a visit to Ephesus, the ruins at Pergamon, the Gallipoli peninsula and a couple of days sightseeing in Istanbul.

The group enjoyed astonishing views of Trajan's temple and the steepest ancient amphitheatre in the world in Pergamon, the peaceful solemnity of Australian, New Zealand and Turkish war cemeteries, and a visit to the Justinian Cisterns underground in Istanbul. Gloria Carpenter said 'I particularly enjoyed the visit to Topkapi Palace in Istanbul, its buildings and treasures.' The Rustem Pasha mosque was another highlight - a small mosque near Istanbul's Spice Market, with beautiful Iznik tiles throughout.

The group was privileged to enjoy a private service close to St Mary's house near Ephesus, led by Father Bruce Driver from Bromley College.

On the final day, a cruise on the Bosphorus provided wonderful views of the city, dolphins, and a stunning sunset over the Istanbul skyline.

Keep an eye on SPAN for news of further tours.



Mission of the month

The Children's Society

The Children's Society is a charity which helps children of all faiths and none, including children at risk on the streets, disabled children, young refugees, young carers or those within the youth justice system.

Their aim is to make childhood better for all children, especially the most disadvantaged and vulnerable. Their programmes and services transform the lives of around 45,000 children, young people and their families up and down the country each year.

They work in partnership with local authorities, voluntary organisations and agencies to share experiences and maximise their impact.

You are warmly invited to attend our Christingle service in St Mary's on Sunday 14 December at the new, earlier time of 4.00pm, which will be the highlight of our financial support for the Children's Society this year.

For more information, visit www.childrenssociety.org.uk or see the display at the back of church.

How to pray

Last month, we thought about the way that prayer is our way to keep in touch with God. But how to start?

To begin our conversation with God we need to get ready: to come consciously into God's presence, to sit or kneel in a way that is both comfortable and attentive.

Then we need to calm down. Normally our minds are full of distractions: thoughts just keep happening. One way of calming down is to listen to our breathing, the regular pattern of it. Another way is to repeat over and over 'Be still and know that I am God'. After a while, we settle down, our minds are less full, and then we are ready to pray.

When we are calm, then we can start to pray. Sometimes this means continuing to listen, just letting the awareness of God enfold us, like loving arms - we don't need to say anything else, the contact is enough. At other times, we need to say something. This can be anything: 'Dear Father...' or 'Hello God, it's me again...' Whether you're speaking aloud or silently, then say what you want to say. God doesn't stand on ceremony.

We need to take time to say what we want. 'Thank you'. 'Sorry'. 'Guess what?' 'I love you.' Take time to listen - to your breathing, to your thoughts and feelings. Be aware of yourself and don't push it. Give God time to speak to you. Conversations take time... and patience.

Traditionally, Christians pray every morning and evening. The more we are in touch, the better it gets. The more time we take, the more rewarding it can be. As we pray regularly, the more natural prayer becomes.

'How to Pray' ©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.

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WORSHIP

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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.

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Vicar	Rev. M. Finch	8464 8065
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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
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Friends of St. Mary's	Miss J. Rambridge	8650 0947
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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
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SPAN INFORMATION

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