

Bah - Humbug!



By Christmas Eve I will probably be the stereotypical Grumpy Old Man. I will have attended, or led, about fifteen Christmas services and nativity plays, been 'nice' to hundreds of people, had Christmas adverts and lights thrust at me from every direction, succumbed to the temptation of eating too many pies and cakes and I will be tired, and yet ... 'is it true, this most tremendous tale of all...?'

The words of John Betjeman's poem "Christmas" help me to focus on that moment –when a child was born in Bethlehem over two thousand years ago and how that child has affected my life.

Jesus is often called Emmanuel – which means 'God with us'. This name is at the heart of Christian belief – that God is present in the world, as Creator from before the dawn of time, in the human life of Jesus and for all time as Holy Spirit – God is with us.

The child was born, he grew, became a great prophet, teacher, healer and gave himself to death in a selfless act of love and rose to new life. God was, and is, present with us.

God is present in the ordinary and can make it extraordinary, and precious. When I preside at a service of Holy Communion the most precious moment for me is when I say the words of consecration over the bread and the wine. In that moment I am connected through the ordinary, the bread and wine, to that extraordinary moment

when Jesus told his friends that he was giving his body and his blood to us and that when they shared bread and wine they will remember him.

Maybe you have something ordinary, of this world, that connects you with the extraordinary, with God? It could be a memory, a special place, a particular flower, a gift – something that makes you stop and have a moment of wonder. In that moment you are connected with the love of God. In that moment you are taken out of your everyday worries and connected with something far deeper and meaningful, with life in all its fullness.

This is what we celebrate on Christmas morning, in the moment of the birth of a child, our connection with God.

May you have a blessed Advent and Christmas.

Rev Richard Finch

Special Events and Services

Sunday 3 December - Advent Sunday

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.

6.30pm Advent Carol Service

Sunday 10 December

4.00pm Christingle

Come and see the children's faces glowing in the candlelight

Sunday 17 December

6.30pm The Traditional Service of Nine Lessons and Carols

to be followed by mince pies and mulled wine

Wednesday 20 December

3.00pm Dementia Friendly Carol Service

Sunday 24 December - Christmas Eve

10.30am Communion Service

3.30pm Crib Service with Nativity Play

11.30pm Procession by Candlelight and Midnight Mass of the Nativity of Our Lord

Monday 25 December - Christmas Day

9.00am Holy Communion

10.30am Family Communion for Christmas Day

SPAN - St Mary's Parish Newsletter – aims to reflect news and topics of interest from St Mary's church, and the parish of Shortlands. If you have any ideas for articles, please let the Parish Office know.

HAVE YOU SEEN... our website has been updated and redesigned. Take a look at www.stmarysshortlands.org.uk

Stay in touch!

The Parish Office email is office@stmaryshortlands.church
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

At Rest

We extend our sympathy to those who loved:

Mary Perkins 8 Nov aged 88

Douglas Smith 20 Nov aged 93

Interment of Ashes

We extend our sympathy to those who loved:

Caroline Farrar 5 November

Rededication and Remembrance

On Remembrance Sunday we were delighted to be able to rededicate the War Memorial as well as holding the two minutes' silence and the laying of poppy wreaths by a councillor, our MP, St Mary's church, Shortlands Residents Association, the Royal Marines Association, Metropolitan Police, Highfield schools, Harris Primary Academy and Langley Park Rotary Club as well as poppy posies by the children and young people from the guides, scouts, brownies, cubs, rainbows, beavers, St Mary's junior choir and junior church.

After the severe damage to the memorial in July 2016 and its absence since, it is wonderful to see it restored and replaced in its rightful position.

It was poignant during the silence looking at the memorial and seeing where cracks had been repaired and damaged stonework replaced and comparing that with the damage and destruction caused by war to individuals, communities and places and the need for healing and restoration afterwards.

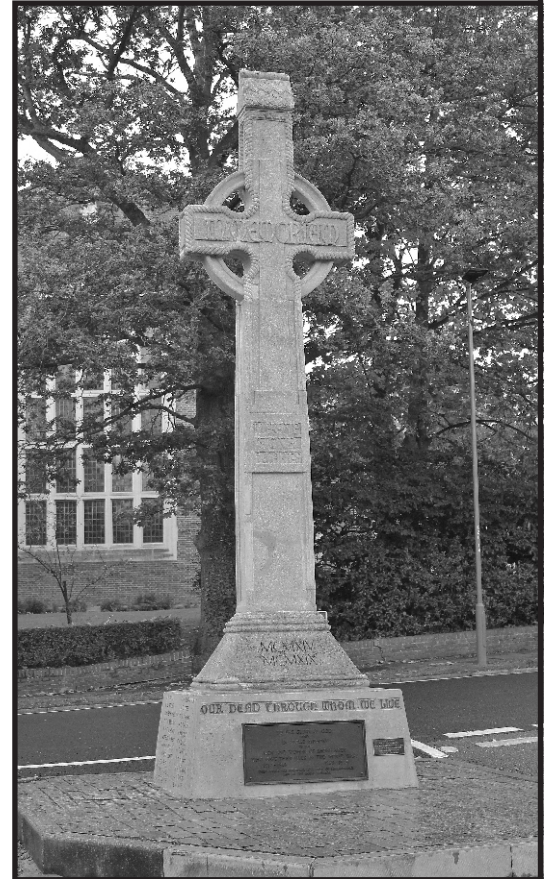
We remembered those who were killed and those whose lives were destroyed or scarred by world wars and conflicts past and present.

Col Bob Stewart MP told us the history of the Kohima Epitaph before reading it; "When you go home, tell them of us and say, for your tomorrow, we gave our today."

It was good to see so many people present, ranging in age from 2 months to 102 years.

Our grateful thanks go to all those who worked so hard to make this possible and especially to the skilled conservators from the Skillington Workshop in Grantham.

Rev Morag Finch



Highfield School Choirs

For the third year in a row, the choirs from Highfield School will again be performing in St Mary's Church an extravaganza of Christmas music and carols on **Tuesday 12th December at 7pm**. There will be performances by the Highfield Community Choir, Youth Voices and Chamber Choirs. Expect lots of festive sparkle with audience carols and Christmas favourites! Join us afterwards for wine and mince pies.

Tickets £6 adults, £2 children available at:

Highfieldchoirs.ticketsource.co.uk

The Friends of St Mary's invite you to their

Annual Dinner

to be held at Langley Park Golf Club
Saturday 13th January 2018 7pm for 7.30pm

Evening Dress or lounge suits

Tickets £39 each

Tickets available from the Church Office

Everyone is welcome.

THE ST MARY'S CHURCH

CHRISTMAS FAIR

**SATURDAY 2 DECEMBER
FROM 2-4PM**

IN THE CHURCH HALL

COME AND SHARE IN THE FUN!

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OR OTHER CLEAN SALEABLE GOODS**

**TO THE PARISH OFFICE
MONDAY TO FRIDAY FROM 9.30AM TO 12.30PM**



Memorial garden

THANK YOU to Anna Martin who has tended the memorial garden at St Mary's for the past four years. Could you be the person to take on this much-valued role? Ask in the Parish Office for more details.

Mission of the month

The Children's Society

The Children's Society is a children's charity which helps children of all faiths and none. Its aim is to make childhood better for all children, especially the most disadvantaged and vulnerable.

The charity has championed disadvantaged children throughout its 130-year history. Today these children are often young runaways, victims of abuse, children in trouble with the law, young refugees or disabled.

Through lobbying and research, the Children's Society seeks to influence child protection policy and perceptions at all levels so young people have a better chance in life. As a leading children's charity it transforms the lives of around 45,000 children and young people each year.

Each year its programmes and services help thousands of children and their families up and down the country. It defends, safeguards and protects the childhood of all children and young people throughout the UK through its network of programmes and services.

The Society's lobbying and child protection policy priorities focus on: children at risk, including children who go missing, child sexual exploitation and youth justice; disabled children; young refugees and migrants, including young Roma gypsies and travellers; and poverty in a child's early years.

You are warmly invited to attend our Christingle service in St Mary's on Sunday, 10 December at 4.00pm, which will highlight our financial support for the Children's Society this year. More information is on the board at the back of church and at www.childrensociety.org.uk

Making a difference

St Mary's Shortlands is a Fair Trade church. This means that we promote fair trade wherever possible, such as with the refreshments that we serve. We hold a monthly sale of fairly traded goods, with a wide selection of drinks, food, gifts, toys and cards. You can find the dates on the church noticeboard.

Fair trade really does make a difference to thousands of people's lives. We buy most of our goods through the company Traidcraft: they work with some of the poorest and marginalised farmers and producers in the world. The improvement of their income with the help of fair trade enables them to meet some of the most basic needs like feeding their families, clothing their children and paying for their schooling.

Susheel Singh is one of the artisans who craft the beautiful Christmas reindeer. When his wife became very ill while expecting their second child, she was turned away from hospital as they could not pay. A Fair Trade company set up to support artisans called Noah's Ark stepped in and paid for the treatment, saving the life of his wife and child.

When thinking about your Christmas shopping do pick up a Traidcraft Craft catalogue: there are always some in the church porch and you will find some lovely Christmas gift ideas. My details are in the catalogue and you do not pay delivery when ordering through me.

I would like to say an enormous thank you for all the support the trade craft stall has received over the years: please do continue as it does really make a difference to many lives.

Cecilia Willatt

Christmas Travellers

Mary, Joseph and their donkey will be travelling with a flock of sheep around Shortlands again this year. Our craft and chatter group knitted a nativity set for us a few years ago and each year during Advent they travel around the parish to help us remember their journey to Bethlehem.

This year they will be sent out on Advent Sunday (3rd December) and on Monday will go to Harris Primary Academy Shortlands where I will lead an assembly. They will spend the night in school and on Tuesday a group of children will bring them to church where they will meet with a group from Highfield schools who will take them back to school and they will spend time in both the infants and juniors before continuing their journey. We look forward to welcoming them back into church at our crib service on Christmas Eve.



Rev Morag Finch

Christmas - 25 December

Christmas celebrates the birth of Jesus Christ in a stable in Bethlehem as described in the Bible. However there is no biblical basis for the date. The first recorded date of Christmas being celebrated on 25 December was in 336, during the time of the first Christian Roman Emperor Constantine. A few years later this was officially confirmed by Pope Julius I. It may also be that 25 December was chosen because the Winter Solstice and the ancient pagan Roman midwinter festival called 'Saturnalia' took place in December around this date.

Christmas as we know it today stretches back to the 1840s. In 1848 Queen Victoria and Prince Albert introduced to Britain the German custom of decorating evergreen trees.

The first Christmas cards had been sent in 1843. The cards had three panels, the outer two panels showed people caring for the poor and in the centre panel was a family having a large Christmas dinner! Some people didn't like the card because it showed a child being given a glass of wine! The introduction of the Penny Post in 1840 meant that cards could be sent cheaply, in bulk and speedily using the new railways.

The giving of gifts at Christmas dates back many, many centuries. At first, gift-giving had religious significance, following the gifts to Jesus from the three kings, but the Industrial Revolution and the rise of advertising since the nineteenth century have helped to turn Christmas into the commercial holiday it is today.

The image of Father Christmas wearing red and white robes dates back to Coca Cola's advertising in the 1930s.

Christmas is now celebrated by people around the world, whether they are Christians or not. It's a time when family and friends come together and remember the good things they have. This year why not come to one of our special Christmas services at St Mary's? You will be most welcome!

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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)		
L.L.M.	Mrs S. Aldred	8460 3978
	Mrs C. Bingham	8460 0324
Readers	Mr. P. Stotesbury	8650 3259
	Mr. S. Buchanan	8777 8008
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	Mrs. M. Westropp	8650 5178
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Assistant	Mrs. E. Parker	8460 5682
Churchwardens	Mr. A. Williams	07914343495
	Mrs C. Corbin	07973295134
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	Mr. S. Clark	8464 0696
	Mr. D. Cooper	8460 0682
	Prof. M. Fox	8650 3365
	Dr. D. Jefferys	8460 6030
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Assistant Treasurer	Mr. R. Hogg	8290 0613
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Assistant Organist	Mr Daniel Beach	8289 6510
Safeguarding Officer	Mr. J. Westropp	8650 5178
Electoral Roll	Mrs. M. Shaw	8460 9681
Junior Church	Mrs. S. Aldred	8460 3978
Stewardship	Mr. J. Westropp	8650 5178

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		
Friends of St. Mary's	Mrs. P. White	8460 9357

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
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
Mobility Class	Mrs. Jan Boam	8460 7101

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
Shortlands Safer Neighbourhood	8721 2614

SPAN INFORMATION

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