

Journey to the Cross

If you have been into St Mary's since Ash Wednesday you will have noticed the large wooden cross standing at the front of Church. You may recognise it as the cross we used at the War Memorial on Remembrance Sunday. On Remembrance Sunday we think of the sacrifice made by many to ensure our freedom and this reflects the sacrifice made for us by Jesus that first Good Friday.

During Lent we have been adding symbols each week to remind us of the season of Lent and the journey which Jesus made to the cross.

We have rocks and bread sitting at the foot of the cross to remind us of Jesus being tempted by the Devil. On the second Sunday of Lent we wrapped the cross in hessian to remember Christians in previous generations who wore sackcloth and covered themselves in ash to show their penitence.

We then added nails to remind us of Jesus suffering on the cross. On Mothering Sunday we draped purple cloth on the cross to help us remember that this is the colour we use in church during Lent: a time of repentance and reflection.

During April we will be adding further symbols as the journey towards the crucifixion unfolds. On Palm Sunday we remember the triumphal entry to Jerusalem, when Jesus arrived on a donkey and the crowd cheered and waved palm branches. We also hear again the events leading to Jesus' crucifixion.

On Maundy Thursday we remember the Last Supper and foot washing. This service often feels out of place in Holy Week, a time we often think of as sombre and reflective, as we sing the Gloria at the start of the service but it ends with the dramatic act of stripping the altar and we leave in silence. On Good Friday we follow the tradition of eating hot cross buns at the end of our 10.30am all age service and have a more traditional, reflective service at 2.00pm.

We are in the fortunate position that we know there is a happy ending to the story and we celebrate Jesus' resurrection on Easter morning. We use white in church as a colour of celebration and we renew our Baptism Vows, see the transformation of the cross and end our communion service with an Easter egg hunt.

Rev Morag Finch

Special Events and Services

Sunday 9 April – Palm Sunday

10.30am Procession of Palms and Eucharist for Palm Sunday

6.30pm A Passiontide Service of Readings, Anthems and Hymns for Holy Week

Thursday 13 April – Maundy Thursday

8.00pm Washing of Feet and Eucharist of the Last Supper

Friday 14 April - Good Friday

10.30am Family Service with the Music Group

2.00pm An Hour at the Cross

3.00pm Half an hour for private prayer

Sunday 16 April - Easter Day

8.00am Easter Communion

10.30am Eucharist of the Resurrection
Including the renewal of Baptismal Vows and the Easter Egg Treasure Hunt





From the Registers

At Rest

We extend our sympathy to those who loved:

Homer McCrick	17 Feb	aged 93
Vernon Blyth	24 Feb	aged 88
June Stotten	8 Mar	aged 85



SERVING ST MARY'S: the 'servers' team supports the clergy to prepare for the service, and participates in it. New members of the team are always welcome- ask the parish office to find out more.

Easter – 16 April

Easter is probably named after 'Eostre' the Goddess of Spring who, it was thought, caused the sun, which had died in winter, to be born again and get stronger.

Christians celebrate Easter as the time of Jesus' resurrection after he had been crucified. It is the event which gives Christianity its purpose and meaning.

Three days before Easter is Maundy Thursday remembering the Last Supper when Jesus celebrated Passover. Still today the Jewish feast of Passover usually falls in the week before Easter and this year it is 11-17 April.

Easter always falls on the first Sunday after the first full moon on or after the spring equinox, as per the Jewish calendar.

These days there are many traditions associated with Easter. The custom of giving eggs is very, very old and celebrates new life. The egg can be compared with Jesus' tomb: it is plain and looks dead, but it cracks and opens revealing new life inside especially in spring when chicks emerge. Easter Eggs – only comparatively recently made of chocolate – may be hidden by the Easter Bunny (whose origins are lost in history) resulting in Easter egg hunts.

Egg rolling (either painted hard-boiled eggs or more recently chocolate ones) down hills is a tradition in many places in the UK. The Easter Egg Roll on the White House South lawn in Washington was established in 1814 for children under 14 and is always attended by the President. Easter bonnets and the Battersea Park Easter Parade are now things of the past!

At St Mary's there are many services leading up to and on Easter Sunday, including an Easter egg hunt at the 10.30am Family Service.

Stay in touch!

The Parish Office email is now 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
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Signs of Spring

Last Autumn, Mowgli cubs were given some Tete a Tete daffodil bulbs by Coolings Nursery. These they potted up & gave to Merlin Court residents on their annual Christmas visit.

As there were many bulbs left over, we decided to plant them along the little border at the rear of the Church buildings. What a delightful sight now greets visitors when passing along the corridor to the Friends' Room and toilets! There, 'fluttering and dancing in the breeze' is a sight to cheer everyone. All things bright & beautiful – well done Mowgli!

'Chil' aka Tricia Braithwaite

South Hill Wood Fountain Clean Up

Friends of South Hill Wood and Kingswood Glen (FSHWKG) have applied for a Tesco/ Groundwork UK Bags of Help Scheme Grant: their application is one of three that have been successful in being put forward to a customer vote in local Tesco stores between 1 March and 29 April. The project with the highest number of votes across this region will receive up to £5,000, the 2nd placed project will receive up to £2,000 and the 3rd placed project £1,000.

With any money received, FSHWKG aim to hold a 'Fountain Clean Up' to clear the area around the fountain and survey the fountain for a future grant application. The South Hill Wood fountain is severely dilapidated and some of the displaced stones have been removed for safe keeping in Bromley Council stores. It is believed that the fountain dates from 1902.

It is intended to involve a range of local organisations and residents in the Clean Up event. Volunteers would be led and guided by the London Borough of Bromley Park Management Officers, a heritage landscape consultant, and surveyors to help clear debris from the fountain and remove fountain stones to temporary safekeeping.

FSHWKG should know the results of the voting in May, and when a date is confirmed for the Clean Up, it will be publicised on local and park information boards.

For this event to take place, your votes are needed: when making a purchase in a local Tesco store (of any value) you will receive a token in order to vote. If you are not sure what to do, ask a member of staff in store or let the Parish Office know your contact details and FSHWKG will contact you. There is also information on the FSHWKG Facebook page.

Mission of the month

Mothers' Union - Away From It All

Mothers' Union (MU) is a Christian charity of some four million members (single, married, male and female) in 83 countries. The charity supports families in the UK and around the world.

Away From It All (AFIA) is a MU holiday scheme, for people experiencing stress in their family life – helping them with all or part of the cost of a holiday and/or travel expenses. It is not necessary to be a member of a church or related organisation – most referrals are made by clergy, social workers or support groups.

AFIA helps some 2,500 people holiday each year – families spending time together away from their stressful situations at home, engaging in activities together and having fun. They often experience healing in their relationships by spending this quality time with each other.

AFIA organises family weeks where a number of families and a team of volunteers go away together with activities and outings arranged. AFIA also has mobile homes for families, usually near a beach, and arranges day trips for others.

Rochester Diocese MU funds AFIA self-catering accommodation – and donations from St Mary's will help to support this.

For more information, see www.themothersunion.org, and www.rochestermothersunion.co.uk – and the display at the back of church.

What is prayer visiting?

For the last nine years, during the summer months, a small team of people from St Mary's has been visiting homes in the parish. Introductory letters are delivered in advance to a number of roads asking people if they have anything they would like the church to pray for. This is then followed up a few days later with a brief visit where the team collects any prayer requests and bring them back to the church for inclusion in Sunday services and daily prayers. The team has visited nearly every home in the parish; they are only unable to gain access to gated communities.

There is no praying on doorsteps. The team goes out for an hour at a time, usually between 7 and 8pm. Most visits last just a few minutes – some a little longer. The team hopes that their visits will remind people that St Mary's is there for everyone. Many conversations that start out 'oh, I'm not a church goer' or 'I don't believe any of that' end up with people asking for prayer for loved ones or difficult situations in their lives. Confidentiality is respected, and for most prayer requests only first names are used.

As Christians we believe in the power of prayer. It is our experience that prayer releases God's love into the world and into our lives. Perhaps one of our teams has visited you in the past, or will be knocking on your door this summer. If you don't share our belief in prayer, or don't want to share personal matters with us, then we won't bother you any longer than it takes to say 'No thank you'. No one has knocked on your door, but you have a prayer request? Don't worry – we have a prayer 'tree' in the church porch where requests can be left.

Susie Shelton

What is God calling us to do?

The Diocese of Rochester has recently started consulting on its overall approach to its work to build God's kingdom in this part of the world.

The Right Reverend James Langstaff, Bishop of Rochester, suggests that society is undergoing cultural, economic and spiritual changes, and it's a time when many Christian people feel more isolated and less sure of how to express their faith. The church exists to give shape, meaning and voice to being a Christian, and the Diocese supports churches in West Kent, Bromley and Bexley to do this.

The Diocese is seeking to develop a shared vision for what it aims to achieve, and is consulting widely on this.

Here in St Mary's, we are thinking about our own mission – 'to bring the love of God into the everyday lives of the people of Shortlands'. How do we actually achieve this? What is our vision as to how we go about this? What is God calling us to do, here in Shortlands?

St Mary's Parochial Church Council has already done some initial thinking to inform our response to the Diocese, and there will be more opportunities to consider what we will do here in Shortlands in the coming months.

For more information about the Diocesan consultation, see <http://www.rochester.anglican.org/strategy/conversation/get-involved/> For more about what we're aiming to do in Shortlands, and to be part of the conversation, watch this space!



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Joyful praise

On the evening of Sunday 26th March, the St. Mary's music group led a special Songs of Praise service. This was an opportunity for members of the congregation and readers of SPAN in the local community to nominate their favourite traditional and contemporary hymns, Bible readings, prayers and poems.

During the service, these people told the stories behind their selections, sharing why they mean so much to them personally. As if this was meant to be, the various elements blended together into a journey of living faith through the day, from morning to night. Feedback from the people who attended was heartfelt and positive, for example: 'I came away feeling so uplifted after singing such lovely hymns and songs of worship'.

Look out for the next informal evening service with the music group. Everyone is made to feel welcome at these services, where we try to make it easy for people to participate in joyful Christian worship.

Graham Leech

Together in the crowd

This Lent, St Mary's home groups have been following the course, 'Place in the Crowd', developed by the Diocese of Rochester.

We considered the perspective of the crowds accompanying Jesus on the different stages of his journey to the cross. How did they feel when he called some to be his disciples? When he fed 5,000 people with five loaves and two fishes? When they praised him and shouted his name as he entered Jerusalem? When he was betrayed and arrested?

We ended by thinking about how, when we find ourselves in difficult circumstances, God is there, just as Mary Magdalene and the other Mary encountered the risen Christ.

In the Rochester Diocese, and at St Mary's, we are considering our aims and how we can achieve them: reflecting on how to share God's love with people whatever they are going through.

Home groups meet throughout the year, a friendly and informal way to learn more about our faith. To find out more, ask at the church office.



FOOD AND FELLOWSHIP:

The ladies of St Mary's enjoyed an evening together at Chom Chom in Beckenham in January

SPAN THANKS

We record our thanks this month for gifts amounting to £20.00



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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/
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PARISH OFFICE Tel: 8460 5682

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ST. MARY'S ORGANISATIONS

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	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

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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

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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
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