

Come on in!

It is very hot in Durban, South Africa, in February, the upside-down equivalent of August here. There is no school, no money and little to do in Mariannridge.

Christ the King church boasted a red minibus with bald tyres and broken seats, held together with wire and prayers; it transported 12 young people and two or three 'tunnies' (older women) to the beach. It wasn't the worst vehicle on the road and traffic cops turned a blind eye to its shortcomings. The dog collar worn by the driver may have helped.

The first time, I was afraid we might lose our wild youngsters to the shops and other temptations but at the shore they simply stripped off and ran in to the sea whooping and hollering with excitement, children again! The waves off the Durban coast are roaring fierce and the currents strong; most people just jump and splash in the shallows, forgetting everything in the joy of sun, sea and sand. We 'tunnies' sat in the sand dunes drinking tea and bemoaning the inadequacies of the men of Mariannridge; no different to a beach in England.

August 1985 evokes a less happy but somehow loosely connected memory for me. We were just back from South Africa. Life around our rented house in Banstead seemed to shut down. Deane, my son, was two years old and my husband worked away a lot. I felt a stranger in my own country; no money, no friends, and a very unreliable Hillman Imp held together with wire and prayers. Frequently over-heating, the Imp would stop suddenly like a reluctant dog on a long walk. A journey to the beach or anywhere was not an option.

As August approaches I feel echoes of that loneliness and isolation and wonder if there are people in our community who feel that too. The church is open every morning in August. There are often people around doing things. If you want a change of space, somewhere to hang out, or a chat, come in or call me first on 07947 778441 so that, as they say in South Africa, we can make a plan!

Rev Jane Kustner

Special Events and Services

Sunday 11 September

4 - 5.30pm Tea Time Together

Activities for families of all ages on a theme

6 - 7.30pm Youth Club

A free social club for year 6 and above

Sunday 18 September

6.30pm Choral Evensong

Responses: Reading

Canticles: Brewer in Eb

Anthem: The Spirit of the Lord - Elgar

Saturday 24 September

1.00pm Accerfella Barbershop Choir

Concert



Tricia Braithwaite ("Chil"), pictured here with former Cubs and helpers, was presented with an engraved crystal block and other gifts on her retirement after 30 years with 7th Bromley Scout Group (see article on page 2).

Holy Baptism

We welcome into God's family:

Teddy Waters	3 July
Tamsin Paul	16 July
Blake Jefferys	17 July

Interment of Ashes

We extend our sympathy to those who loved:

Jean Jackson	26 May
Joan Cobley	11 July
Alfred Cobley	11 July

Reaching Out

St Mary's worship doesn't only take place within the walls of the church building on Kingswood Road. Members of St Mary's congregation regularly take worship to Durham House and Blenheim Court, both on Durham Avenue: as several people are unable to attend services at St Mary's, it makes sense to bring St Mary's to them.

Thankfully monthly services resumed following Covid at Durham House in the Spring. These have been adapted to suit the changing needs of the residents: less formal but still including some hymns, a bible reading and prayers. The 'sermon slot' has now evolved into an informal reflection and conversation. We try to follow the church calendar and after each service each person is given a relevant laminated prayer or 'thought for the day' to take away with them. After the service we practise a secular song in readiness for our popular singalong later in the year.

A few months ago some residents of Blenheim Court requested some regular informal services to include prayers and music. Services are held in the lounge about once a month and all are welcome. Residents are encouraged to bring along their own suggestions for prayers or hymns which can be used either on the day or in future services. Each month there is a different theme, celebrating either seasons in the church year or other topics. In May we celebrated Pentecost, the coming of the Holy Spirit. The services last about 30 minutes and are informal. Afterwards we all enjoy a cup of tea or coffee and a chat.

Jan Boam and Susie Shelton

Farewell to Graham and Hazel

This month we say goodbye to Graham and Hazel Leech who have been actively involved in the life of St Mary's for the past 20 years and are shortly moving to Bath.

Hazel had many associations with St. Mary's as a child, attending Sunday School, Brownies, Guides and the Youth group. She returned to Bromley with Graham in 1990 living less than a mile from where she was born. Their three boys, Tim, Chris and Jon, attended her former Primary School, Highfield, where her older brother had been in the first intake when it opened in 1959.

Initially Graham and Hazel attended Christ Church, Bromley, where they had been married. However, they became increasingly involved with St. Mary's through its connection with Highfield and the boys joining Beavers and Cubs. They were excited by Canon Paul Miller's vision to attract more young families and decided to become members here.

Hazel taught in Junior Church for 14 years, has co-led a home group and is a PCC member. Over the past year she has trained as a Street Pastor and can sometimes be found keeping a watchful eye on the streets of Beckenham late into the night: she hopes to continue as a Street Pastor in Bath.

Graham was on the PCC for several years and has regularly led the prayers on Sunday mornings. He set up the music group to introduce contemporary worship, playing keyboard in the band: under his leadership the group's involvement in church life grew rapidly. Reflecting the increasing variety of music at St. Mary's, Graham compiled the Shortlands Praise hymn book and during lockdown the group produced video and audio song recordings for online services.

So why the relocation to Bath? Hazel said: 'We have many family associations with the area and feel that as we have both (more or less) stopped working this is the moment for a new adventure and chapter of life. We will be very sad to leave St Mary's, as we have so many wonderful friends here, and hope that we will find a church that is equally welcoming in our new neighbourhood'.



Cub Scouting memories

I first joined the 7th Bromley to avoid doing the washing-up after I'd dropped my son off at Beavers – honestly! I moved onto Cubs when the hut keys were dropped into my hand and was told I was in charge due to a shortage of leaders - Kim Pack first, then Mowgli.

Charles, our Group Scout Leader, persuaded me to study for my Wood Beads (sign of office) which I gained in a year. My proudest memory was the award ceremony.

I've always tried to make our meetings fun and mindful of sensible values for the Cubs as they journey through life. We've supported charities, such as making Christmas cards for Seafarers or navigating a 'minefield' in the hut grounds to learn about Mines Advisory Group's work in war torn countries. The leader of the Kenyan Scout Group 'Timu Rafiki' was astounded when he visited and our cubs greeted him in Swahili!

'Cubs 100' was a special commemoration for Mowgli Pack: the Dean of Westminster Abbey allowed us to renew our Promise in front of Baden-Powell's memorial there.

Recently, to help raise funds to prevent the closure and sale of Downe campsite, I climbed the equivalent of 1/5 the height of Mount Everest and my generous sponsors donated over £950 to the successful campaign.

Thank you to my many scouting friends at the 7th and in the District for their comradeship over the last 30 years - it's rewarding to join together on camps and parades, not forgetting all those parents who've proved so supportive too. I know I shall really miss them all, especially the Cubs, but I've so enjoyed my journey!

'Chil' (Tricia Braithwaite)



The Coronation Coach

Exploring my calling

Growing up a Catholic, my choice of living out my faith was altar boy or nun. Neither appealed when I was eight.

I came back to what God was calling me to do in my forties and this exploration took me to an 'It's Your Calling' day run by the Diocese a few years ago. This signposted me to embark on the Bishop's Certificate course run by the St Augustine's College of Theology in East Malling. This is a two-year course with weekly classes with a fantastic group of friends.

We went online during Covid, went hybrid as people struggled to get lives back on track and all the time prayed, worshipped and learnt together. We covered topics such as the key themes in the Bible, pastoral ministry, living out Christian ethics in today's world and even sermon writing! We created such a joyful support group as we wrestled with what God was calling us to do and how to best serve him.

The retreats were the best (an amazing time to reflect) and the worst (no hot water, single beds and paper walls) part of the course. The culmination was the Celebration of Learning, led by Bishop Lawrie Green, on 12th July. He had led some of our retreats and egged us on when essay deadlines came upon us.

The group is still close; some have stopped their learning, some have gone on to be Licensed Lay Ministers - as many in our own family in Shortlands have done - and my journey took me to explore ordination. My amazing news is that I have recently been recommended to train for ordination starting in September. The learning journey continues.

Stephanie Maurel

From Coronation to Platinum Jubilee

As a youngster in 1953, together with my parents, I travelled to London to visit my uncle, who had recently acquired a television, to watch the coronation of her majesty Queen Elizabeth II. Whilst travelling to my uncle's home we passed many roads and houses with colourful bunting stretching from house to house and people were already setting up tables to picnic together later. The street where my uncle lived was colourful with flags and bunting. At my uncle's house he had already set the table ready for our picnic and placed chairs in rows in front of the television as if we were going to the cinema!

We watched in awe as the procession took place with crowds cheering. During the ceremony it was wonderful to watch what was taking place. On her way back to the palace, in her beautiful coronation coach, it was heart-rending to see and hear the cheering crowds. I had been given a replica model of the coach, together with all the people at the school I attended, which I treasure to this day.

Over the years I have watched Her Majesty perform her royal duties and this year celebrate her Diamond Jubilee. I went to my daughter's home and joined in with her street party, sharing our food but most of all talking about what she had done and seen during her long reign.

Ann Swatton



MISSIONS OF THE MONTHS

August - JusB

Some of us may recall the moving talk at St Mary's a few years ago by Ned McWhirter about the vital work of small local youth charity JusB. Its mission is to inspire and enable young people to develop, be confident and value themselves. One of the key aspects of JusB is its building (on College Road, Bromley): young people feel safe there, can relax and often call it their second home. It is where they feel comfortable sharing the key issues in their lives and can be assured of a hot evening meal and support for things such as homework.

Due to the pandemic the JusB building was closed for five months. During this time, over the warmer summer months, outdoor activities were organised. However, from the beginning of September 2020 JusB opened its doors once again for indoor activities so that the young people could be helped with their return to school. The centre gives them access to computers, printers and other materials needed for their extra studies and, just as important, the space to talk to youth workers who will listen when needed. It is now open five days a week for the homework club.

Please do take a look at www.jusb.co.uk or the display at the back of church to get a better idea of the many and varied activities that take place there.

September - Demelza Hospice Care for Children

Demelza is a children's hospice charity which provides clinical care, therapies, specialised activities and practical support across Kent, South East London and East Sussex. There are two beautiful hospices, one in Sittingbourne and one in Eltham, and it also provides a range of community-based support in the home across East Sussex and a programme of online activities. Demelza offers short breaks at home, overnight short breaks in the hospice, and day care in the home, community and in the hospice.

Demelza's vision is for life to be better for children and young people who have serious or terminal conditions; and for their parents, brothers and sisters, and those who love them, to receive support. It provides specialist care and emotional support for babies, children, young people and the whole family from diagnosis, during day to day family life, times of crisis, end of life and through bereavement. It believes every child and young person who has a serious or terminal condition should receive the care and attention they need to live the most fulfilling life they can, and that they and their families have the opportunity to build memories, for however long they have together, adding to the happiest moments as well as supporting in the difficult times.

Demelza Hospice Care for Children is grateful for all the support that has been given over the years by the people of St. Mary's, Shortlands. For more information please visit demelza.org.uk or see the display at the back of church.

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Further information about all services can be obtained from the Parish Office.

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Cubs (Tue)	Mr. J. Griffiths	07954437658
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