

What next?



Do you ever wonder what the Shepherds and the Magi in the Christmas story did next?

Looking closer at the mystery of Christmas and the supporting characters, we begin to realise that the shepherds and the Magi - or kings - have much in common. Far from being uneducated roughnecks, shepherds are now widely believed to have been experts in rearing flawless lambs for rituals in the Temple, fully understanding their religious and traditional responsibilities as written in their holy scriptures. They discern a crucial link between their swaddled lambs and the babe in the manger.

The kings come from a sophisticated culture of ancient writings, exotic ritual and hidden magic. From their astronomical studies of the stars and prophetic texts they discern that something magnificent and significant is beginning in the land of Palestine. They come prepared to greet the King of the Jews with costly gifts in humble curiosity.

We are left to wonder what happens to them, what they take back to their families, their community. We wonder what they are thinking as they wait thirty years and what they make of the sacrifice of the lamb of God, the king of the Jews.

At Christmas, if we are wise, we approach the Nativity story again with humble curiosity as pilgrims expecting something magnificent and significant to change. We wonder what might happen next in our own lives as we journey with the babe born in Bethlehem to the cross in Jerusalem and on to the glory of the heavenly host around the throne of God.



JOIN Althea Cooke and the rest of St Mary's choir in celebrating Christmas at St Mary's this year!

Special Services and Events

Sunday 3 December - Advent Sunday

6.30pm Advent Carol Service

Sunday 10 December

4.00pm Christingle

Sunday 17 December

6.30pm Service of Nine Lessons and Carols

Sunday 24 December - Christmas Eve

10.30am Parish Communion

4.00pm Crib Service

11.30pm Midnight Mass

Monday 25 December - Christmas Day

10.30am Family Communion

Sunday 31 December - New Year's Eve

10.30am Parish Communion

Sunday 7 January - Epiphany

9.00am Holy Communion (Said)

10.30am Children's Service



Holy Baptism

We welcome into God's family:

Samuel Braithwaite	19 Nov
Isabella Goode	26 Nov
Maya Goode	26 Nov

MISSION OF THE MONTH

The Children's Society

The Children's Society works tirelessly to help vulnerable children cope with trauma in their lives. This includes child poverty, hunger and neglect, trafficking and criminal exploitation. These kids would have nobody to turn to if The Children's Society did not look out for them.

That's why we as the church family of St Mary's Shortlands have chosen to support the Children's Society.

We invite everyone to come and join us at St. Mary's for a celebration of Christingle and to support the Children's Society on Sunday 10th December 2023 at 4pm.

Please donate whatever you can spare as it will have a huge positive impact on a child's life. If you can't attend the service in person please donate by bank transfer to St Mary's Shortlands PCC, Sort Code 30-84-51, Account Number 47608468. Reference: Christingle.

For more information, please see the board in church or visit www.childrenssociety.org.uk.



Church buildings update

Some years ago we started to look at options for the church hall, which was beginning to show structural problems. We spent some time considering potential ways forward, and then COVID happened...

As a result of these delays, this year we decided to review the whole project. Over the coming weeks, in consultation with the Diocese and the new Archdeacon, we will appoint an architect to review the progress we have made and look at how to take the project forward.

In the meantime, work to maintain the church and associated buildings continues as normal. On the main body of the church, works are planned for both the external and internal sides of the nave roof. Externally the main task is to replace the existing ridge tiles with new ones, along with other more minor jobs. Internally, the work involves rubbing down and repainting rust spots that have been identified since the steelwork was last repainted between 2015 and 2017.

The PCC will also be considering plans to update the highly successful – but temporary – refreshment servery, used at the weekly Community Café, to comply with diocesan standards and integrate more harmoniously with the architecture of the building.

Carol Singing

All are very welcome to join with St Mary's church choir who will be singing carols at the Bricklayers Arms on Masons Hill from 6pm onwards on Monday 18 December, in aid of Diabetes UK.

Carols at Shortlands Station

Wednesday 20 December from 4 - 6.30pm
Do join us for carols and mince pies!

Spanning the generations

In the approach to Christmas Durham House, in Durham Avenue, will be entertained by two very different groups from St. Mary's Church.

On 1st December St. Mary's Preschool are repeating their very successful visit of last Christmas. They will walk to Durham House, along with staff and extra adult helpers, and will entertain the residents with a selection of songs they have been learning and practising for many weeks. Apparently, the promise of a Malted Milk biscuit will be used to encourage them to sing enthusiastically!

Then on 13th December the Durham House monthly service team will be hosting the popular Christmas carols and mince pies morning. They will be using short readings and accompanying carols to tell the joyful Christmas story. This will be rounded off with a hearty rendition of Jingle Bells and other seasonal songs and, of course, mince pies!

Jan Boam

Wilding the church grounds

Churches are being increasingly encouraged to turn some of their grounds over to wildflowers to encourage and feed bees, butterflies and other insects, and I am pleased to report that St Mary's is joining in with this initiative – with the help of Beckenham Rotary Club which has offered 'labour' and provided some funding.

We intend to remove or scarify parts of the lawns and sow seeds; this is too extensive to do all in one go but we are starting it off this Autumn with two areas – a strip a metre or so wide alongside the steps down from

St Mary's Avenue, and another from behind the hedge and bushes near the main entrance gate down to Kingswood Road.

In the first of these we will sow a wildflower mixture; at least some should germinate in the Spring, and we can re-sow then if necessary. In the second strip the grass will be scarified, and Yellow Rattle sown – the seeds

need cold winter weather in order to germinate. The plant is parasitic on grass roots so is a good way of keeping the grass down in future years, and hopefully next Spring we will have a sweeping bed of bright yellow flowers.

A couple more areas will follow next year, so watch this space – or rather those spaces.

Tony Chase



Join the Three Travellers (Wise Men)



**A short celebration of Epiphany for
children
(with puppets and music)**

**7th January 2024
10.30 am
St Mary's Church, Shortlands**

Carol Concert

6.30pm, Wednesday 6 December
St George's church, Bloomsbury, WC1A 1SA

In aid of

ABCD (Action around Bethlehem Children with Disability)

Tickets £10, including nibbles and wine, from
info@abcbdethlehem.org

WWDQ

The teenagers of St Mary's will be addressing the difficult questions about being a Christian in our increasingly secular and dare I say pagan world. We are calling this initiative, Wrestling With Difficult Questions – WWDQ. The next meeting is at 12 noon on Sunday 10th December, topic to be confirmed. Please send your suggestions! If you would like to wrestle with us, come and bring your friends. There will be "posh" snax and open debate! Contact vicar@stmaryshortlands.church or 07947 778 441 for details of meetings.

Volunteers needed

St Mary's Parish News (SPAN) is distributed to every house in the parish of Shortlands. In order to sort and deliver several thousand copies each month we need more helpers. Please contact the Parish Office office@stmaryshortlands.church if you can lend your support to sort the magazines into batches on one Saturday a month and/or deliver one or more of the batches. We are a happy team, and you will have fun and make new friends.

Celebrating a community treasure

Denise Janes (known to her friends as Dee), the Station Master at Shortlands station, has become a community treasure, known for her acerbic wit, rebellious spirit and generous heart for the community and individuals in need.

An enterprising 15-year-old, Dee left school and the care system. Always rebellious, Dee was called 'the devil's child' by the catholic nuns. She worked for a butcher securing accommodation and free meat. Twenty one years ago she joined the rail industry for better career prospects.

Often controversial, her extraordinary displays at the station have raised £460,000 for charity, individuals, schools and the community, notably Help for Heroes, Demelza Hospice and treatment for a woman with cancer.

The annual Halloween party is a Shortlands highlight. The animated, lighted displays are shrouded in smoke and accompanied by spooky music. Hundreds of people whilst laughing, crying, screaming and eating cupcakes, donated over £1,100 for Valley School.

The models, worthy of a professional stage, are funded by Dee and created and assembled with the help of Bob, her station assistant. Dee may get her interest in anatomy and dissection from her stepfather who works for Transcare International at Battersea Hospital heliport.

The National Rail modernisation programme, which threatened closure of the ticket office, will bypass Shortlands after community intervention, and Christmas carols will be sung at the station again this year.

Dee has two children and six grandchildren as well as a little army of dachshunds who can be seen in the station office.

Rightly, Dee's work was recognised with the Bromley Hero award: characteristically she gave the prize money to charity. She has recently been awarded the Life Saver award for preventing a stabbing on the station and locking the culprits up until the police arrived!

When she retires she hopes to hold a Halloween party in Highgate cemetery and spend time in her home in Spain. Meanwhile she continues her role as matriarch of Shortlands with her significant fund-raising activities and quiet acts of kindness to those in need.



Tea Time Together
(children aged 2 – 6 and their families)
4 - 5.30 pm

Youth Club
(years 6 -13)
6 - 7.30 pm

14 January, 11 February, 10 March
Contact: racheltillotson3@gmail.com

The Parish Church of St. Mary, Shortlands

Link Parish
St Francis of
Assisi, Douai, France



WORSHIP

Sunday 10.30am - Holy Communion (in church)

Wednesday 10.00am - Holy Communion

You can access Sunday services online at:

www.stmarysshortlands.org.uk

www.facebook.com/stmarysshortlands

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

PARISH DIRECTORY

Vicar	Reverend Jane Kustner	07947 778 441
	vicar@stmarysshortlands.church	
Licensed Lay	Mrs C. Bingham	8460 0324
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	Dr. D. Jefferys	8460 6030
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Junior Church	Mr. T. Dawson	8460 5884
Stewardship		

PARISH OFFICE

Telephone: 020 8460 5682

Email: office@stmarysshortlands.church

Open 10.00am - 12.00pm weekdays.

Information regarding Baptisms and Weddings can be obtained during these hours.

ST. MARY'S ORGANISATIONS

Toddlers	Mrs. J. Runicles	8402 6599
Craft and Chatter	Mrs. J. Boam	8460 7101
Friends of St Mary's	Mr. T. Chase	8464 6188

For admission to Beavers, Cubs and Scouts please contact email: 7bromleyadmissions@gmail.com

Scouts (Fri)	Mr. R. Howe	8462 5132
Cubs (Mon)	Mr O. Swinfen	07758458077
Cubs (Tue)	Mr. J. Griffiths	07954437658
Beavers	Ms. E Hay	07932758801

For admissions to Rainbows, Brownies or Guides please go to www.girlguiding.org.uk

Guides (Tue)	Ms. E Thompson	07910340908
Guide (Fri)	Mrs. G. Dawson	8460 5884
Brownies (Mon)	Miss. K. Higgs	8462 3285
Brownies (Thu)	fourthbromleybrownies@outlook.com	
Rainbows	2ndshortlandsrainbows@gmail.com	
Pre-school	Mrs. C. Hall	8290 6704 or 07960988552
The 2WW's	Mrs. A. Swatton	8650 1114
Church Flowers	Mrs. C. Willatt	8313 0246
Mission Chair	Mrs. S. Shelton	8402 3299
Douai link	Mrs. G. Dawson	8460 5884 8
Fair Trade	Mrs. A. Willatt	07511885941

LOCAL CONTACTS

Cllr. A. Cuthbert	Aisha.cuthbert@bromley.gov.uk
Cllr. F. Bainbridge	Felicity.Bainbridge@bromley.gov.uk
Cllr. A. Grant	Adam.Grant@bromley.gov.uk
Residents Association	8460 0395
Shortlands Safer Neighbourhood	8721 2614

SPAN INFORMATION

Website www.stmarysshortlands.org.uk

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