

Seeing God in the ordinary

Happy New Year - I hope you've had a blessed start to 2026! Celebrating my first Christmas across all the different services at St Mary's Shortlands was a joy. Thank you so much to those who worked so hard to make them happen. It was wonderful to welcome so many people: we hope to see you again soon and that you too make St Mary's your home.

As we welcome in the new year, it's natural to look back and to wonder what lies ahead. For me and my family 2025 was a year of transition and change, and we've felt so warmly welcomed into Shortlands: thank you to those who have welcomed us.

Now I look to 2026 with a heart full of hope for our community and all that is to come. Have you ever had an epiphany, that sudden "aha!" moment or new realisation when something clicks? In the Church of England, Epiphany, which is celebrated on 6th January, is about seeing things clearly.

We celebrate the Wise Men finding Jesus, a sign that God's love is for everyone, not just those of a particular nation, religious community or ethnicity. We also remember that God often appears in the ordinary and everyday events which are happening across the world: a newborn child, a family in a small town, a star in the night sky.

Epiphany invites us to pay attention, because God's presence is often quiet and easily missed. It's also about light breaking into darkness. The Wise Men trusted a star to guide them, even when the journey was uncertain. In the same way, we're invited to look for signs of hope and guidance in our own lives. Where might you see light this year? What new perspective might you discover?

Epiphany challenges us to seek, to notice and to respond when God nudges us toward something new.

As we look to 2026, my prayer is that we all experience those moments of clarity and hope. You're always welcome at St Mary's to explore these questions with us. Why not join us this Epiphany season as we encounter God in the everyday?

Rev Dave Edmondson



WELCOME! Ugochi Michelle Orachia joined God's family in a service of baptism at St Mary's in November.

Special services and events

Sunday 11 January

4.30pm Tea Time Together

6.30pm Youth Club

Sunday 18 January

4.00pm Choral Evensong

Sunday 25 January

6.00pm Nachos and Natter

Talking together about faith for those at secondary school



From the Registers



Holy Baptism

We welcome into God's family: Ugochi Michelle Orachia 30 Nov



CROWNED WITH SUCCESS: Rev Dave welcomed QianHan Wu, one of the winners of our Christmas card competition, with her sister QianYu, to the Christmas Fair.

Wartime memories

Last year St Mary's commemorated the anniversary of Victory in Europe (VE) Day. We continue an occasional series featuring contributions from the display of parishioners' memories.

I was evacuated to Yeovil for two or three years. My mother kept threatening me as to what would happen to me if I didn't keep hold of my brother. When we got to Yeovil people came and said 'I'll take this girl' but I said 'I cannot come with you without my brother' because I was determined not to be separated from him. In the end Mrs Wilson, who was in charge of placing us with families, took us both.

I had a wonderful time because I prefer the country to the town. They were extremely kind and I wish now I had appreciated them more in days gone by. Mr Wilson was in the local Home Guard. He used to go off with his gun once a week. He told us that if we were playing in the fields and a van or truck came past with a Swastika and a German flag on it, we were to stand by the road and wave and smile at them. The adults really thought we were going to be invaded.

Our house in Walworth had been badly damaged by a land mine but had been repaired. My parents disagreed as to whether to return to that house or to go to live in Peckham, in a house that my aunt knew of that had been abandoned by people. My mother won, which was just as well because that same night the Walworth house was destroyed by a flying bomb!

I was about 18 by VE Day and I was used to going up to Victoria on a Sunday night to hear Dr Sangster at the Central Methodist Centre. We took the number 12 bus to Victoria. We walked from there to the Palace. There were soldiers, sailors, and airmen of different nationalities. Every now and then a group would surround you and join you to dance with various people. We saw Princesses Elizabeth and Margaret on the balcony but weren't fortunate enough to see them in the crowd.

Old Queen Mary came on the balcony as well as the King and Queen. We stayed because we wanted to see the King and Queen again, and every time the curtains drew back a great cheer would go up. By the time we decided to go home it was so late that we missed the last bus, and it was a long walk home to Peckham.

Heather Donovan

All the fun of the fair



The Guides and St Mary's Community Café were among the many who joined in the fun at the Christmas Fair last month.

Learning together

During Advent three groups met, two in church and one online, to follow a course called 'They Sang'. We studied and discussed the four songs of the Christmas Story in the Gospel of Luke – the Benedictus, the Magnificat, the Gloria, and the Nunc Dimittis.

Although these songs were sung two thousand years ago by Zechariah, Mary, the angels and Simeon respectively, we still use them today as part of our church services. The beginning of Luke's gospel is just like a theatrical musical, with people bursting into song. We discussed how these biblical songs look back to the Old Testament, are 'in the moment' of when they were said or sung, how they affect our daily lives, and look forward to the coming of God's glory in the future. There were opportunities for personal reflection, prayer, praise and music.

At St Mary's we hold groups like these to help people understand the Bible better, to explore questions they may have, to build a relationship with Jesus and to look at their own lives. We have groups that meet throughout the year as people find them very helpful.

Our next course will be during Lent: do look out for details in SPAN. They are open to everyone so please do come and join us!

Ann-Marie Jefferys

Wildlife in winter



Winter is an unloved season. We do our best to glamourise it, imagining Dickensian snow scenes and idealised family gatherings around tables groaning with food, while the air is filled with cries of fellowship and kindness to all.

I'm afraid nature has a more Scrooge-like view of the season. For birds and animals it is a season of dearth and cold, when their resources will be tested. Some, like the jays, nuthatches and squirrels, have hidden their autumn loot of nuts and seeds. Now they just need to remember where, and hope nobody else has got there first! The urban foxes will need to scavenge ever more diligently.

Many small birds, like the tits, robins and goldfinches, will rely on us to feed them now, more than at any other time of the year, and visits to feeders are part of their daily routine. Nature provides few comforts at this time of the year. If there has been a mild autumn, there may still be some berries unpicked for the thrushes and blackbirds. The winter berries of holly and ivy are most welcome now.

Life is hardest for those who depend on insects, like the wren and the goldcrest. Dense cover like thick hedges and ivy provides them with the best chance of finding the small spiders, woodlice and other insects they need.

Winter can provide a wildlife spectacle, but for that we need to go to the coast to see the huge flocks of wading birds and Brent geese that winter on the mud there, or perhaps to see the fantastical shape of a murmuration of starlings coming to roost under Brighton Pier, wheeling and swirling in perfect synchronisation to confuse a predatory peregrine falcon.

For those who can't venture far from home, now is the time to keep your feeders full and, if we have a hard frost, provide fresh unfrozen water. That way we can enjoy our own miniature feeding frenzy and know that we are providing support to our garden birds when it is most needed.

David Linstead



THANK YOU to all those who help us to keep our church buildings clean and well maintained throughout the year. A team came together to help get the church looking its best for Christmas.

MISSION OF THE MONTH

The Leprosy Mission

Leprosy should be a thing of the past but it still devastates the lives of thousands of innocent children every year. The annual number of new cases diagnosed amongst sufferers of all ages remains at the staggering figure of around 200,000, with more than three million sufferers of this disease living with irreversible disability. They will require ongoing treatment and support for many years to come.

Left untreated, leprosy can cause progressive and permanent damage to the skin, nerves, limbs and eyes, not to mention the effects of stigma and rejection.

The Leprosy Mission (TLM) is a global Christian charity formed just over 150 years ago that provides a range of medical and social projects that truly transform the lives of those affected.

Research undertaken by TLM and its partners continues in order to find a fully effective and reliable vaccine.

Meanwhile, a freely available cure in the form of a multi drug therapy can, if administered in promptly diagnosed cases, render the patient free from further damage and no longer infectious. However, fear and stigma associated with the disease can lead to a reluctance on the part of sufferers to come forward for prompt treatment.

TLM's work today is extensive and includes diagnosis, cure and rehabilitation, as well as providing water, sanitation, housing, education and sustainable livelihood opportunities.

Further information on TLM is available from the display at the back of the church throughout January and at www.leprosymission.org.uk.

Burns Night Dinner



The Friends of St Mary's have booked a Burns Night dinner in conjunction with Langley Park Golf Club for the evening of Friday 23 January (pre dinner drinks at 6.30pm for dinner at 7.15pm).

The evening includes a three course meal, with half a bottle of wine, coffee, mints and a "wee nip", a piper and a Scottish dancing caller, all for £49 per person. Dress code: lounge suit or Highland dress.

There will be a raffle, with proceeds to St Mary's church and the Golf Club's Captain's charity.

Tickets are on sale in church after Sunday morning services, at the community café and on weekday mornings from the Church Office.

St. Mary's Shortlands

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WORSHIP

Sunday 10.30am - Holy Communion in the church and online at

www.facebook.com/stmarysshortlands

Wednesday Worship 10.00am in the Chapel

For more information contact the Parish Office or visit

www.stmarysshortlands.org.uk

PARISH DIRECTORY

Vicar	Rev. Dave	07592136421
vicar@stmarysshortlands.church		
Churchwarden	Mrs G. Sherman	07500751265
Churchwarden	Mr R. Hogg	
robinwarden@stmarysshortlands.church		

Licensed Lay Ministers	Mrs C. Bingham	8460 0324
	Mrs A-M. Jefferys	8460 6030
	Dr. D. Jefferys	8460 6030
Pastoral Assistants	Mrs. S. Harrison	8464 0284
	Mrs. D. Speller	07941415082
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Treasurer	Mr. T. Dawson	8460 5884
Junior Church	Miss. R. Tillotson	07503680612
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secretary@stmarysshortlands.church		
Director of Music	Canon C. Tillotson	8460 7368

PARISH OFFICE

Telephone: 020 8460 5682

Email: office@stmarysshortlands.church

Open 10.00am - 12.00pm weekdays.

Contact the office for Baptisms and Weddings

ST. MARY'S ORGANISATIONS

Toddlers	Mrs. J. Runicles	07790 304711
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 7132
Cubs (Mon)	Mr O. Swinfin	07758458077
Cubs (Tue)	Mr. J. Griffiths	07954437658
Beavers	Mr. T. Nickalls	
thomasnickalls@gmail.com		

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 (Thu)	fourthbromleybrownies@outlook.com	
Rainbows	2ndshortlandsrainbows@gmail.com	
Pre-school	Mrs. C. Hall	8290 6704 or 07960988552
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Mission Chair	Mrs. S. Shelton	8402 3299
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LOCAL CONTACTS

Cllr. G Turrell	Gemma.Turrell@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

Editorial Parish Office

Distribution Mr. M. Harrison 07821 691567

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