

## He is here!

We're a funny old lot aren't we – human beings? We watch things like Dr Who and Game of Thrones on TV... programmes about mysterious beings and beasts, about the impossible being possible. We enjoy our minds being taken out of reality into a different sphere.



And yet! We reduce the greatest mystery of all, which we celebrate on 25 December, to a pretty card showing a dear little baby, a very clean stable with sheep, shepherds and wise men! A very hygienic nativity scene.

I like those cards too. I have been known to send them. But they somehow reduce God to pocket size and make Jesus totally one of us. He wasn't.

The incarnation – God made flesh and dwelling among us – does not reduce God to human scale. It's the other way round. The incarnation enables us to be part of God.

Jesus was 100 per cent human – and for that we are eternally grateful. It means that we have a God who understands our joys, our griefs, our bad temperedness, our tiredness, our struggles.

But Jesus, the baby we celebrate today, was also completely divine. The first man to overcome death, to show us how to have a relationship with God. Don't get cosy and think he was exactly like us!

When the wise men came from the East they asked Herod: 'where is he that is born King of the Jews?' I ask you the same question this Christmas. Do you think he is still in Bethlehem? Yes he is, because that area is oppressed and in turmoil. He is definitely there.

Is he still in a stable? No because the story doesn't get stuck there – it moves on. After Christmas we will be continuing our Saviour's story through the year until we begin again next Advent. Come along and listen if you want to know more.

He is still in Nazareth, in Jerusalem, in Egypt – and he is here! Unless the story continues it means nothing. It is only when Jesus can be found and acknowledged in the hearts of each of us that Christmas comes alive.

You don't need to turn on the TV for a mystery. We hold the story for ourselves and for successive generations. The greatest mystery and the greatest blessing ever! May the light of the Christchild lighten your hearts and homes this Christmas.

*Rev Jane Peters*



### ***Special Services and Events***

**Sunday 1 December - Advent Sunday**

**6.30pm Advent Carol Service**

**Sunday 15 December**

**4.00pm Christingle**

**Sunday 22 December**

**6.30pm Service of Nine Lessons and Carols**

**Tuesday 24 December - Christmas Eve**

**4.00pm Crib service**

**11.30pm Midnight Mass**

**Wednesday 25 December - Christmas Day**

**10.30am Family Communion**

## Happy birthday!



PICTURED (left to right): Pherenice Worsley-Buck (co-founder FSHWKG); Cllrs Will Rowlands, Jonathan Andrews and Gemma Turrell; Rachel Bailey (co-founder), Patrick Phillips (Chair).

In October members of the local community, volunteers, friends and family came out to celebrate the 15<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Friends of South Hill Wood and Kingswood Glen (FSHWKG).

Those attending had the opportunity to find out more about the activities of the volunteers and to see a digitised cine film of the original house and its gardens at 1 South Hill Road, in the 1930s. The house was built in 1887 for Sir Thomas Dewey, former Charter Mayor of Bromley, and the film was kindly donated by the family of Arthur Chilton King who owned the house after Sir Thomas Dewey. Kingswood Glen was originally a small Iron Age hill fort.

Now, thanks to FSHWKG volunteers, the London Borough of Bromley and Idverde, the Wood and Glen are important wildlife habitats for trees, wildflowers, bats, birds, insects and amphibians, as well as tranquil green spaces for people to enjoy.

FSHWKG volunteers meet on the second Saturday of every month from 10.30am to 12.30pm at the bowling club pavilion, Tootswood Road for litter-picking, pruning and weeding, with refreshments served afterwards. Everyone is welcome!

Patrick Phillips, FSHWKG Chair, said: 'It's fantastic we all came together to celebrate achievements over 15 years, encouraging biodiversity and ecosystems in these cherished green spaces. It was wonderful to welcome everyone and have a lot of fun! Thank you to the Bromley Friends Forum for their generous support for this event and our sponsors, Loco and Tesco.'

## Telling the Christmas story

Come and join us at 4pm on Christmas Eve for an interactive telling of the Christmas story through readings and carols. Children attending are invited to come dressed as a character from the nativity scene (shepherds, angels, wise men, Mary, Joseph, sheep or a donkey) or there will be costumes supplied as you enter church. We hope to see you there!

## Junior Church

All children from 0-16 are welcome  
10.30am Sundays on

December: 1st, 8th, 15th    January: 12th 19th, 26th

We meet in church at the  
10.30am service and go together to our  
activities in the hall just after the start.



## MISSION OF THE MONTH

### The Children's Society

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



That's why we as a church family support the Children's Society.

We invite everyone to come and join us at St. Mary's for a celebration of Christingle on the 15<sup>th</sup> December at 4pm. All donations at this service will go to the Children's Society.

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. Please donate whatever you can spare as it will have a huge impact on a child's life.

For more information see the display at the back of church or visit [www.childrenssociety.org.uk](http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk)

## Light a candle



A 'votive' candle is a small candle burnt as an offering in an act of Christian prayer, symbolising the prayers the person is offering for themselves, or for other people. The word 'votive' signifies that the candle lighting is done in fulfilment of a vow (from the Latin, 'votum'), although in most cases the intention is to seek help.

At St Mary's we have a votive candle stand, donated in memory of Canon Doug Redman who was a curate here and then our vicar from 1980 to 2000.

We also have a prayer tree, designed by Sue Harrison and David Merritt and made by David to act as a focal point for those who wished to raise prayers by writing on a blank prayer leaf. Prayers placed on the tree are generally kept for one month from the date written on them and are prayed for again at the pastoral team meeting before they are taken off.

The tree has been recently been moved alongside the votive candle stand in front of the lectern in church, underneath the front, right hymn number board. The church is open from 9am to 12noon every morning – and there are also prayer leaves on the table in the porch.

We hope that you can use either or both means of channelling prayers for those people or memories that you hold dear.

## A day in the present moment

At the beginning of October, 23 people met at St Mary's to explore a way of finding the almost 50% of life we too often miss through inattention.

The 'retreat' was a day of discussing Christian mindfulness and experiencing full attention to the present by learning and singing together simple songs of faith. We learned that singing is being in the present moment: while singing, it is difficult to be anywhere else but in one's body right here and right now.

What we pay attention to shapes our lives. For many of us, that means our lives are shaped by the output of media and communication technologies. Practising being mindful, whether on a meditation cushion or while doing any of the work of everyday life, liberates our attention. In this way one chooses what is shaping one's life, instead of being captive to the output of others.

Our discussions included ways in which secular mindfulness can be melded with mindfulness of God and Spirit. At the end of the day we worked together as a group, and in less than 90 minutes we wrote and sang a song that encapsulated what we had learned and experienced. It was a wonderful way to end a day of discovery and community.

St Mary's offers two quiet times for worship each month. Come, Holy Spirit on the first Sunday of the month at 5pm (next on 2<sup>nd</sup> February) is a short service of silence, prayer, music and readings. Take Time is a period of relaxation and meditation on scripture on the second Saturday of the month, 10.15 – 11am.

*Glo Sherman*

## Celebrating our volunteers

Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> October was Volunteer Sunday. During the 10.30am service we celebrated the contributions of the 35 teams who carry out different tasks for the parish on a volunteer basis.

These activities are many and varied and include operating the audio-visual desk in services, helping with the Community Café, moving furniture, laundering linen, gardening, cleaning and buildings maintenance, distributing SPAN and supporting fundraising for our missions of the month. Thank you again to everyone who helps out.

New volunteers of all ages are always welcome – it's a great way to make a contribution to your local community and meet new people. Young people looking for volunteering opportunities for their Duke of Edinburgh award are also very welcome!

If you're interested in finding out more, please contact one of the churchwardens (details on the back of SPAN or via the Church Office).

*Robin Hogg*

## Christmas carolling

There are several opportunities to hear St Mary's choir singing carols this month, starting with the Advent carol service at St Mary's on December 1<sup>st</sup> at 6.30pm.

The choir will be singing carols at The Bricklayers Arms, Masons Hill in Bromley at 5pm on Sunday December 8<sup>th</sup> in aid of Diabetes UK.

On Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup> December at 6.30pm the choir will sing at the annual carol concert at St George's Bloomsbury, in aid of the charity Action around Bethlehem Children with Disability.

All are welcome to the traditional service of Nine Lessons and Carols at St Mary's on Sunday December 22<sup>nd</sup> at 6.30pm, which this year will also be the Civic Carol Service, attended by the Mayor and Mayoress of Bromley, the Deputy Mayor and Mayoress, local councillors and other officials. Come to join in the singing – and enjoy mulled wine and mince pies afterwards!

## Mid-term mayoral reflections



What is it like to be Mayor and Mayoress? The answer is busy (90 events per month and rarely a day off). It is also fascinating, humbling and life affirming. We meet volunteers doing extraordinary things serving others and can thank them on behalf of the Borough.

The Bromley Mayor is especially busy since we attend civic events both in Kent and across London, from Dover to Barnet.

There are four Mayoral functions. Firstly, representing the Borough at Civic events such as Remembrance Sunday, the Lord Mayor's Installation and the Battle of Britain Commemoration. I present awards on behalf of the King and every Tuesday I lead the ceremony for new UK Citizens.

The second is chairing Council meetings. I opened the Council Chamber in the new civic centre headquarters in Churchill Court on 14<sup>th</sup> October.

Thirdly, Mayors raise money for their charities. Mine are Welcare in Bromley, Bromley Youth Music Trust and Alzheimer's Research.

Fourthly the Mayor has a role to highlight and support other charities. This has included the Ambulance Walk, the Chartwell Cancer Trust run and joining the 10 for 10 commemorative walk for Anna Chaplaincy. Huge thanks to those who supported me so generously.

My Mayoral themes are health, wellbeing, the environment (litter picking and encouraging recycling) and promoting community collaboration. We will combine these in the celebrations of the 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the creation of the London Borough of Bromley next April.

There are frequent interactions between the Mayor and Bromley faith communities, including taking part in new clergy installation services. Hopefully there will be one at St Mary's this Mayoral year. We welcomed Bishop Jonathan and his wife as the last guests to the Old Palace, former home of the Bishops of Rochester.

Do come to the Civic Carol Service at St Mary's at 6.30pm Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup> December and follow us online for the Mayor's monthly reflections: [www.bromley.gov.uk/mayor-bromley](http://www.bromley.gov.uk/mayor-bromley).

*Cllr Dr David Jefferys*

**The Parish Church of St. Mary, Shortlands**



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**WORSHIP**

Sunday 10.30am - Holy Communion (in church)

Wednesday 10.00am - Morning Prayer. Holy Communion will take place once a month

You can access Sunday services online at:  
[www.stmaryshortlands.org.uk](http://www.stmaryshortlands.org.uk)

[www.facebook.com/stmaryshortlands](https://www.facebook.com/stmaryshortlands)

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

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office@stmaryshortlands.church		
Licensed Lay	Mrs C. Bingham	8460 0324
Ministers	Mrs A-M. Jefferys	8460 6030
	Dr. D. Jefferys	8460 6030
Pastoral Assistants	Mrs. S. Harrison	8464 0284
	Mrs. D. Speller	07941415082
Parish Administrator	Mrs. E. Woolven	8460 5682
Church wardens	Mrs. G. Sherman	07500751265
	Mr. R. Hogg	8290 0613
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Organist and Director of Music		
	Canon C. Tillotson	8460 7368
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Electoral Roll	Mrs J. Sharma	07900971867
Junior Church	Miss. R Tillotson	07503680612
Stewardship	Mr. T. Dawson	8460 5884

**PARISH OFFICE**

Telephone: 020 8460 5682

Email: [office@stmaryshortlands.church](mailto:office@stmaryshortlands.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](mailto:7bromleyadmissions@gmail.com)

Scouts (Fri)	Mr. R. Howe	8462 7132
Cubs (Mon)	Mr O. Swinfen	07758458077
Cubs (Tue)	Mr. J. Griffiths	07954437658
Beavers	<a href="mailto:thomas.nickalls@gmail.com">thomas.nickalls@gmail.com</a>	

For admissions to Rainbows, Brownies or Guides please go to [www.girlguiding.org.uk](http://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)	<a href="mailto:fourtbromleybrownies@outlook.com">fourtbromleybrownies@outlook.com</a>	
Rainbows	<a href="mailto:2ndshortlandsrainbows@gmail.com">2ndshortlandsrainbows@gmail.com</a>	
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The 2WW's	Mrs. A. Swatton	8650 1114
Church Flowers	Mrs. C. Willatt	07511885941
Mission Chair	Mrs. S. Shelton	8402 3299
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**LOCAL CONTACTS**

Cllr. G Turrell	<a href="mailto:gemma.turrell@bromley.gov.uk">gemma.turrell@bromley.gov.uk</a>
Cllr. F. Bainbridge	<a href="mailto:Felicity.Bainbridge@bromley.gov.uk">Felicity.Bainbridge@bromley.gov.uk</a>
Cllr. A. Grant	<a href="mailto:Adam.Grant@bromley.gov.uk">Adam.Grant@bromley.gov.uk</a>
Residents Association	8460 0395
Shortlands Safer Neighbourhood	8721 2614

**SPAN INFORMATION**

Website	<a href="http://www.stmaryshortlands.org.uk">www.stmaryshortlands.org.uk</a>
Editorial	Parish Office
Distribution	Mr. M. Harrison 07821 691567

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