

Christ who came to the edge

Often I like to think of Christmas as cosy: a time for beautiful warm lights. I like to get an additional set of fairy lights every year, to add another reminder that the light of the world is coming at the darkest time of the year. However, when I reflect on Christmas in the Bible, we find something far more surprising. Something which was not cosy and warm, but radical and very much on the edge of society. Malcolm Guite, a poet and a priest, writes in one of his many Christmas poems:

*"Christmas sets the centre on the edge;
The edge of town, the outhouse of the inn,
The fringe of empire, far from privilege
And power..."*

The stable was not warm and cosy, it was not the place expected for a birth. Especially not for a long-awaited Kings of Kings who would save the world. Bethlehem was not the heart of the empire. The very first visitors were those forced to live on the margins. Jesus was born not in safety or privilege, but in vulnerability.

Christmas is about God coming to those on the edge, the overlooked, the judged, the vulnerable and the weary. That's where light first broke into darkness, and where it still shines. When we look around our world today, there are still plenty of forgotten people who feel unseen and ignored. Places where fear or loneliness have settled in. Homes where Christmas might be a struggle this year. This is precisely where Christ comes: not to the centre of things, but to the edges, bringing light, hope and peace.

We are all called to bring light, to show Jesus' love and joy wherever we go. We are also called to notice those on the edge. This Christmas, may the Christ who came to the edge meet you in the quiet corners of your life. All are invited to come and reflect on this at St Mary's at any of our services. It will be a joy to celebrate Christmas with you this year.

Rev Dave Edmondson



St Mary's junior choristers welcome you to our Christingle service at 4pm on 14th December.

Special services and events

Sunday 14 December

4.00pm Christingle

Sunday 21 December

6.30pm Nine Lessons and Carols

Wednesday 24 December – Christmas Eve

4.00pm Crib Service

11.30pm Midnight Mass

Thursday 25 December – Christmas Day

10.30am Family Communion

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

Confirmed in faith

Freya Myers from St Mary's recently confirmed the promises of faith that were made for her at her baptism. We asked her to share what led her to seek confirmation

Freya said "I've been going to church my whole life and am very privileged to have had lots of Christians in my life to look up to. However, I wouldn't say that I really found my faith until a few years ago when, after a period of feeling very far from God, I met one of my best friends. She, along with some other Christian friends I've made in the past year, have been instrumental in reintroducing me to God and strengthening my habits so that I now feel I have a proper relationship with Him.

"Some recent highlights in my faith have been a church service I attended through one of my Christian friends where I really felt God's presence for the first time, and a Christian camp I went on this summer that helped me reflect on and strengthen my beliefs. My journey as a Christian is still a work in progress, but I feel closer to God now than ever before and so am blessed to be able to take this next step of confirmation".

Pictured: The Right Rev Dr Jonathan Gibbs, Bishop of Rochester, with Freya and Rev Dave



70th anniversary of St Mary's



St Mary's welcomed our local MP, Liam Conlon, on 16th November when we celebrated 70 years since the laying of the foundation stone for the new church building.



CONGRATULATIONS to QuianHan Wu who was one of the winners of our competition to design Christmas cards for St Mary's.

Informal worship at St Mary's

At St Mary's we are blessed to have a variety of different types of services, including the traditional 10.30am communion which takes place on most Sunday mornings. This is usually led by our choir, led by Director of Music Claire Tillotson.

Occasionally the music group leads the service, playing both traditional and more modern hymns/songs. The music group is currently composed of five musicians and five singers. Numbers ebb and flow over time and new members are always welcome.

Additionally, the music group writes and leads occasional informal evening services on different themes. Recently the group led a service entitled "Finding joy in times of ..." – that is, challenging times.

Three people spoke briefly about their life experiences. We agreed it can be really difficult to feel joy when you're in the middle of a crisis or the sadness of a major life event. Having the support of family and friends, including church friends, can make all the difference to how one gets through life's traumas.

In the closing prayer we asked God to be near us, and to comfort those who cannot sleep because of illness, worry or fear, or for reasons they cannot understand.

Everyone is welcome at all our services. We hope you will visit and then keep coming! Details will be found here in SPAN, on the church noticeboards or on our website.

Susie Shelton

Future Generations update



We are continuing to think about how our whole site can be more accessible, flexible and of use to the whole community. As part of this work, after receiving permission we have removed the heaters and the carpet at the back of the main body of the church. This means that it's safer, with less of a trip hazard, and it's much more flexible for many varied uses. We will continue to keep you updated on this important work.

Book of Remembrance

In May this year SPAN featured the discovery of a partially completed Book of Remembrance in our archives, dedicated to some of the men and women associated with Shortlands who had died as a result of enemy action in the First and Second World Wars. This hand painted book had been started in 1971 by Lucy Gonin and bound by Colin Chapman. Lucy was the daughter of a local doctor who lived at 'The Gables' in Kingswood Road.

Lucy died in 1978 without completing the book: F G Marshall Ltd have now completed the work. The book is now in St George's chapel in church, in a new display case, generously donated by Betty Rider in memory of her husband Brian.

Kay Coleman



St Mary's Toddler and Baby Group

The church is not just busy on Sundays! On Thursdays it's full of noise and young children as our baby and toddler group is held at the back of the church. We welcome babies as well as children up to five years of age.

The ethos of the group is to provide companionship and support for parents and carers of young children. There is a variety of play materials to promote both social and constructive play. We have a regular craft table, play dough and home corner. In the summer we extend the play area to the church garden. There is always a singing session followed by refreshments for all.

The crafts often reflect the church year. We have an informal church service at the end of each term, often with a puppet story, and in the summer we have a party with a bouncy castle and ball pond. We encourage people to bring a picnic and stay most of the day.

It is very much a drop in place of welcome and there is no need to book as we realise that life can be difficult to plan with young children. The sessions run from 9.30-11.30am and 12.30-2.00pm on Thursdays during term time.

The group is run by volunteers, many of whom have attended themselves with their children in the past. The more volunteers we have, the more interaction we can offer to the children and their carers. We welcome extra helpers as it can be quite busy.

For all enquiries, contact the church office on 020 8460 5682 or office@stmaryshortlands.church.

MISSION OF THE MONTH

The Children's Society

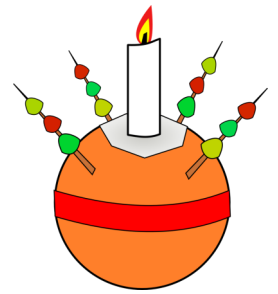
The Children Society works tirelessly to help vulnerable children cope with the trauma of their reality. This includes child poverty, hunger and neglect, trafficking and criminal exploitation. These kids would have nobody to turn to if the Children's Society did not look out for them.

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 14th 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



Mission of the month: looking ahead

Every year at St Mary's we support a mixture of charities, some international, some national and some local, as part of our planned giving and outreach. Many hold special meaning for someone from the congregation or parish. Many of the charities are Christian, but by no means all.

Each month, information about the current charity is featured on a display board in church and in an article in SPAN.

Once a year, usually in October, a meeting is held to discuss and agree the charities and good causes to be supported as missions of the month for the following year. Those nominating a charity commit to liaise with the charity on our behalf, writing the SPAN article and putting up the display at the back of church.

Anyone who would like to nominate a charity may submit their suggestion, with supporting information, for discussion at the meeting. You don't have to wait until October to suggest a charity for the following year.

Everyone is invited to attend the meeting to have input into choosing the charities supported by St Mary's. The date of the meeting will be advertised in the pew paper for at least a month before it takes place.

The following charities have been selected for support in 2026: The Leprosy Mission; Mercy Ships; The Primrose Breast Cancer Support Centre; Mines Advisory Group; Embrace the Middle East; RAMP (Access for all in Beckenham); Demelza Hospice care for children; Medecins Sans Frontiers; Memory Box Café (dementia friendly café in West Wickham); and Bromley Food bank and Trussell Trust; Welcare in Bromley; Open Doors (supporting persecuted Christians across the world).

Susie Shelton

Save the date!

The Friends of St Mary's have booked a Burns night dinner in conjunction with the Langley Park Golf Club for the evening of Friday 23 January 2026. More details in January's edition of SPAN.

St. Mary's Shortlands

You are welcome

Link Parish, St Francis of Assisi, Douai, France

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

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vicar@stmarysshortlands.church		
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Churchwarden	Mr R. Hogg	
robinwarden@stmarysshortlands.church		

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	Dr. D. Jefferys	8460 6030
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PARISH OFFICE

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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
Senior Singles	Mrs. A. Swatton	8650 1114
Church Flowers	Mrs. C. Willatt	07511885941
Mission Chair	Mrs. S. Shelton	8402 3299
Douai link	Mrs. G. Dawson	8460 5884
Fair Trade	Mrs. C Willatt	07511885941

LOCAL CONTACTS

Cllr. G Turrell	Gemma.Turrell@bromley.gov.uk
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Shortlands Safer Neighbourhood	8721 2614

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