

An important visitor



Once upon a time back in a little town called Bethlehem an innkeeper had a dream. In the dream an angel told him that he would get a very important visitor the following night. People would be arriving late and would require a comfortable place to stay. They are very important people because they are about the business of the King.

The innkeeper is very excited, and he and his wife get the best room ready: clean linen, new towels, scented soap, even a little chocolate on the pillow with a welcome note and a voucher for the restaurant.

Bethlehem is very busy with the census and people are arriving from miles around.

Very soon all the rooms are full. The special people have not arrived and it is getting late. The innkeeper is turning people away. None of them look like emissaries from a King. Most of the people are dusty, exhausted and frankly poor looking, not regal, or well-dressed like you would expect courtiers to be.

It is very late now, and the innkeeper and his wife are looking up and down the road for their premier guest.

Just coming around the corner there is a couple. They have obviously travelled very far. The woman is young and ripe with pregnancy, she is trying to sit comfortably on a donkey, but obviously in pain and bone weary. The man is looking worried.

It was so hard to turn them away. His wife said that maybe the important visitor was not coming or had booked in somewhere else. She was tearful thinking about the poor girl at the beginning of her first labour.

But, no, they should wait. There was an angel. They cannot lose faith now. The Very Important People may have been delayed. They might be angry if the room is not available.

The night goes on and nobody comes to occupy this beautifully and lovingly prepared room. The innkeeper's wife smooths the sheets again, re-arranges the chocolate and the welcome card and sighs to herself. They sit together and the night passes; no-one arrives. Eventually, after a second mug of cocoa, the innkeeper says, 'come on dear, let's go to bed.'

Sad, they climb the stairs. In the distance, as they fall asleep, they can just hear what sounds like angels singing and out of their small window they see a great light over the fields of sheep just outside Bethlehem, towards Jerusalem.

'The shepherds must be having a party', the innkeeper's wife says just before she drops into a deep sleep.

Blessed Christmas! Please make room for Jesus, the New-Born King. He might appear unexpectedly and not as you imagine!

Rev Jane Kustner

Special Events and Services

Sunday 11 December
4.00pm Christingle

Sunday 18 December
6.30pm Service of Nine Lessons and Carols

Saturday 24 December - Christmas Eve
4.00pm Crib Service
11.30pm Midnight Mass

Sunday 25 December - Christmas Day
10.30pm Family Communion for Christmas

This month's SPAN includes a card with our Christmas services for you to keep as a handy reminder



At Rest

We extend our sympathy to those who loved:

Bernard Lane 22 Nov Age 93

David Wilcox



David was a life-long resident of Beckenham. His memories of World War Two included watching the Battle of Britain alone on his bike on Kenwood Drive, the sky full of airplanes.

Like many children he was sent away for his own safety: he boarded at Sevenoaks School. Sadly, he lost his baby brother, and later both of his parents at a young age.

After national service in the RAF he joined Stephenson Clark as a ship broker and remained with the company for many fulfilling years. It was there that he met Christine: they married in 1963 and enjoyed a long and happy marriage, living in his childhood home to which he remained very attached.

His favourite place was undoubtedly his beautiful garden, where he grew a large array of flowers, vegetables and fruit and which was subsequently enjoyed by his much-loved seven grandchildren.

David retired in his early sixties and was able to enjoy an active retirement: he and Christine travelled widely and he embraced other cultures

He was a highly accomplished sportsman and a real all-rounder, participating in tennis, rugby, cricket and squash. He ran the London Marathon 11 times in a row, raising tens of thousands of pounds for Cancer Research UK.

David was thoughtful and generous, with a great sense of humour. As well as his family, his friends were very important to him and he loved to socialise.

David served as a sidesman at St Mary's: his quiet and kind personality was ideal for this role, welcoming people into the church.



The Music Group took part in the communion service on 30 October, using wording from the Iona Abbey Worship Book. Look out for news of the Music Group's next service on 29 January, at 4pm, with the choir!



CONGRATULATIONS

to Eileen Abbam, one of St Mary's church family, who recently celebrated her 95th birthday.



A cuppa and a chat

Faith and fellowship are two words that I frequently use to describe what I think are the advantages in being part of a church near my home; what I call a community church. Faith can definitely be experienced in churches far from one's home, and many people practise faith without attending a church.

However, fellowship (a friendly association with people who share one's interests and/or values) with those who share one's faith is so much easier to experience in a nearby church. I love seeing people from church when I'm shopping, riding on the bus, or out walking. St Mary's has many activities that offer fellowship: keep reading SPAN for information about those that are coming up.

Each week we share tea, coffee and biscuits after the 10.30am morning service on Sundays. There is plenty of space to mingle and chat; to catch up on our families, to share our good and not so good news, to support each other, to ask for help and offer it, and to welcome visitors. When you join us for a worship service be sure to stay to have a cuppa and a chat.

Gloria Sherman



PICTURED: Some of the friendly team of 'baristas' ready to welcome you!

Wartime memories continued

As a Bromley Parish Church choirboy under the great Bromleian music master Frederic Fertel, I sang the Easter service on the Sunday prior to the destruction of the church by German bombs on Wednesday 16 April 1941. The church had been decorated beautifully, as always, and it was as well that we could not have foreseen the near future. It was to break Professor Fertel's heart.

Nine Bromley churches were destroyed that night, and I can still feel the thunderous vibration of the blow, as we lived in Church Road directly opposite the devastation. Our own roof was blown off and our front window finished up inside our piano – but we survived and I was later to become a chorister at the new church.

Fires raged along the row of shops at the north end of the High Street opposite the old Royal Bell Hotel: George Weeks' ironmongery store, Howards Stores, Dewhursts the butchers, towards Daniel Grinstead's old-established corn merchant's business. Next day we would salvage packets of washing powder and other miscellaneous valuable household items from the official 'dump' at the rear of our garden.

We slept, of course, in Anderson shelters. Ours was home to a family of four, plus any visitors, and was host to some splendid marrows which thrived on the roof. Night-time was a period of being read to by candlelight, games, French knitting, and English knitting of squares for patchwork quilts to be sent to refugees.

David Alston

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 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 have chosen to support the Children's Society.

St Mary's does this by making The Children's Society the mission of the month of December and celebrating Christingle in a special service to raise funds for The Children's Society.

We invite everyone to come and join us at St. Mary's on 11 December 2022 at 4pm. Alternatively, you could join us in the Community Café every Wednesday where we will have DIY christingles for you to use to join the service online.

Please donate whatever you can spare as it will have a huge impact on a child's life. We also have a fabulous luxury Christmas hamper which we are raffling on 11 December: tickets are available from the Church Office.

If you can't attend the service in person, you can donate by bank transfer to St Mary's Shortlands PCC, Sort Code 30-84-51, Account Number 47608468, reference: Christingle.

For more information see the display at the back of church or www.childrenssociety.org.uk.

Crib Service

Join us on the journey to Bethlehem with the cast of Nativity characters at 4pm on Christmas Eve at St Mary's. There is no sitting down on this pilgrimage – unless you need to.

We will hear about Gabriel's message to Mary, the long arduous trek by Mary and Joseph and the donkey, the problems at the inn in Bethlehem, the miraculous army of angels, the startled shepherds, and the exotic Magi from the East. At each station we will pause, hear a bit of the story, say a prayer, and sing a great song. Rachel Tillotson will be playing the drums to keep us in time.

When you have finished all the busyness of preparations, come and start your Christmas celebrations with us. It will be great fun for children of all ages: 0 to 99.



Save the date

The Friends of St Mary's Race Night

Saturday 11th February 2023



A fund-raising and social evening for adults and children

Finding help

We know that many in our community will be concerned about rising costs as winter approaches. There are also opportunities, for those who can, to contribute to groups which support local people in need. We're listing below a few organisations providing help and support in the local area: we will be pleased to feature any other suggestions in future editions.

The Bromley Homeless Charity Day Room at 20A Widmore Road is providing a warm space for warmth, welcome and help from Monday to Thursday, 10am – 4pm.

The Bromley Borough Foodbank works with local agencies to provide support to people in financial crisis. Call 0800 920 2324 or email info@bromleyborough.foodbank.org.uk to be directed to a relevant agency, or visit bromley-borough.foodbank.org.uk/give-help to find out how to help.

Living Well Bromley provide support to vulnerable people in Penge and the surrounding areas. Their foodbank and community cafe is open three times a week and their partners can help with drug and alcohol addiction, debt, managing money and benefits. A community lunch takes place every Friday where you can have a free hot meal and pudding. They offer a warm welcome, time to talk or just to

be still and rest in a safe place. You do not need a voucher or a referral: information on opening times is at livingwell.life/p/food-bank. To offer help, visit livingwell.life/p/volunteer.

Bromley and Greenwich Age UK can help older people ensure they are getting all the benefits they are entitled to. For

Information and Advice enquiries, call 020 8315 1850. To see how you can help, visit www.ageuk.org.uk/bromleyandgreenwich/get-involved.

For the Government's summary of sources of help, visit www.gov.uk/cost-of-living.



Canon Claire Tillotson recently formally welcomed Althea Cooke as a new chorister at St Mary's (pictured with Rev Jane Kustner).



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WORSHIP

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Wednesday 10.00am - Holy Communion

You can access these services online at:

www.stmarysshortlands.org.uk

www.facebook.com/stmarysshortlands

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

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PARISH OFFICE 020 8460 5682
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ST. MARY'S ORGANISATIONS

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Friends of St Mary's	Mr. T. Chase	8464 6188

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

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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)	Mrs S. Tight	8460 8122
Rainbows	2ndshortlandsrainbows@gmail.com	
Pre-school	Mrs. C. Hall	8290 6704 or 07960988552
The 2WW's	Mrs. A. Swatton	8650 1114
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LOCAL CONTACTS

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CLLr. Felicity Bainbridge	Felicity.Bainbridge@bromley.gov.uk
CLLr. Adam Jude 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

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