

Love that truly lasts

At the beginning of February my social media feeds and the shops I visit are filled with Valentine's Day gifts and cards. It can feel daunting to choose the right gift or find the right words to express how we feel about someone. Valentine's Day doesn't have to be only about romantic love. I know some people who send Valentine's cards to those who are important to them simply to let them know they are loved. The original message associated with St Valentine was not about romance at all, but about the love of Jesus. The word love seems to be everywhere. I've noticed how freely I use it myself: "I love this cup of tea, I love that drawing, I love this story." But is this really what love is?

The Bible speaks often about love. A well-known passage says: *"Love is patient; love is kind; love is not envious or boastful or arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice in wrongdoing but rejoices in the truth. It bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."* (1 Corinthians 13:4-7)

Here we find a beautiful description of love. Love is not cheap or throwaway; it is lasting. It is not simply a feeling that comes and goes, or something measured only by gifts or words. It is patient, kind and faithful over time. This deeper understanding of love is captured by Henri Nouwen, who wrote *"Love is not something we give or get; it is something we become."* Love is not a transaction or a moment, but a way of life that shapes who we are through everyday choices.

This is the love we see most clearly in Jesus. His love was not easy or distant. It was shown in his compassion throughout his life and most clearly in his death on the cross. Jesus loved with his whole life, enduring suffering, remaining faithful and seeking the good of others above himself. This love is offered to all. As Valentine's Day approaches and we move into Lent, a season of waiting and preparation for Easter, we are reminded that love is more than a card, a gift, or a single day. To love is a calling to grow into the kind of love Christ shows. This is the love that truly lasts, and I pray that you may know this love for yourself.

Rev Dave Edmondson



St Mary's choir supports the charity ABCD through an annual carol concert: find out more about ABCD's humanitarian work in Palestine on page 3.

Special services and events

Sunday 8 February

4.00pm Tea Time Together

6.00pm Youth Club

Sunday 14 February

10.15am Taketime meditation group

Wednesday 18 February – Ash Wednesday

10.30am & 8.00pm Holy Communion

(Said service)

Sunday 22 February

8.00am Holy Communion *(Said service)*

6.30pm Choral Evensong

Sunday 1 March

6.30pm Informal service with Music Group



Memorial service

We extend our sympathy to those who loved:
Janet Codling 7 Jan

Your local community Youth Club

Back in May 2022, Shortlands Youth Club opened its doors to the youth of Shortlands. We were delighted by the number of young people who came to see what the club could offer them, and numbers have steadily grown over the last four years.

Those who come have the opportunity to play video games, table tennis, table football, board games and in the summer lots of outdoor games too. There's always great music (we take requests!) and **free** snacks which always go down well. But most importantly it is a space for our young people to go once a month to chill, hang out and to make new friends.

If you are in Year 6 or above and are looking for somewhere to go once a month, Shortlands Youth Club is the place for you. We meet at St Mary's on the second Sunday of every month, 6 – 7.30pm, and we would love to see you there!

Rachel Tillotson

8am service

Last Autumn at St Mary's we wanted to discern if there was interest in restarting the said 8am Holy Communion service. We are delighted to announce that we are going to restart the service once a month on the 4th Sunday in the chapel at St Mary's. The first of these services took place on Sunday 25th January and you will be very welcome at our next 8am service on 22nd February.

Rev Dave Edmondson

Wartime memories

We continue our occasional series of articles drawn from recollections displayed at our 2025 VE Day exhibition.

In 1938 when Mary Thomson was nine she moved with her parents to Shortlands and they worshipped at St Mary's (the old church). Mary remembers it as being a happy church with a sense of community and everyone got on together well.

She joined the Brownies as a Pixie and then became a Girl Guide, ending up as a Patrol Leader which made her feel very proud. Uniformed organisation meetings were held in the Church Hall in Shortlands village.

Mary remembers there being a landmine in Kingswood Road and an aerial torpedo in Den Road. She remembers sheltering in Chislehurst Caves during an air raid and then in the shelter built in the garden of their home in Kingswood Avenue.

In 1940 there was a bombing raid and one gentleman went back into his house to listen to the 9 o'clock news on the wireless, his house was struck and he sadly died. Mary's present house stands on what was a bomb site.

Mary's best friend Muriel went to live in Scotland because of the war and towards the end of the war Mary was sent to Letchworth to live with her aunt for three months because of the risk from the Doodlebugs.

Mary can visualise the reredos from the old church (an ornamental screen placed behind the altar) which now stands in the corridor in Church House. Mary had moved by the time the new church was built. She and her husband were married at the Parish Church in Bromley.

Reflection and fellowship

I first came to St Mary's in 1961 when my father Leslie Ellis became Organist and Choirmaster. I have attended Sunday services regularly since 1993: on moving to Beckenham in 2023 I have very much enjoyed being part of the Wednesday services too. The amazing music we have on a Sunday has always been a big part of my worship at St Mary's. I now also enjoy the contrast of the quieter and more reflective services on a Wednesday in the Chapel - both Morning Prayer and Holy Communion. The friendly people who attend are always pleased to welcome newcomers and I would really encourage anyone considering coming to try it. The services start at 10am.

St Mary's is a very important part of my life. I enjoy helping with the Thursday Toddler group and supporting the Community Cafe on a Wednesday. The friendships and fellowship of these groups together with Sunday and Wednesday services are very much an integral part of my week.

Andrea Hewitt

St. James Elmers End



The name 'Elmers End' dates back to medieval records which refer to the leasing of land from a Ralph Aylmer.

The New Beckenham to Addiscombe Railway opened in 1864 and included a station at Elmers End. During the 1870s, housing was built in three local areas: a small iron church in Upper Elmers End Road catered for the growing population. In 1879 a grant of farmland was made for the erection of a new church and a school. Both were paid for by public subscription and opened in 1880.

The church was still in the parish of St. George's: it was designated as a 'Chapel of Ease' so parishioners did not have to travel miles to the parish church. The school was behind the church and was idyllically described as being set 'among fields through which flowed the Chaffinch Brook'.

In 1924 a new parish of St. James was created from part of St. George's parish. The Vicar and congregation of All Saints Chaffinch Road moved to St. James's. All Saints church was demolished in the 1920s. The church structure had two distinct phases of development. The original deep red brick church with stone mullions was designed by A. R. Stenning and now forms the north aisle: it was built without a tower or steeple. In 1934 G. Swarder Powell added a contrasting coloured brick nave and double gabled south aisle. The resulting building is a large, open space, and the minimal stained glass windows allow the natural light to flood in.

As with many churches in South London, St. James was badly damaged during the bombing raids of WW2. However, this failed to stop a single service! In 1992, St. James parish merged with St. Michael's and All Angels with St. Augustine parish and then St. Michael's became the parish church. (Photograph courtesy of www.londonchurchbuildings.com).

Help us to shine

At the corner of St Mary's Avenue and Kingswood Road, St Mary's church stands tall as a beacon of faith and community. More than a beautiful building, St Mary's is a vibrant, living church dedicated to worship, mission, outreach, providing a welcoming space for all. It is also a place of peace, reflection, and connection for everyone who walks through its doors.

Alongside regular worship we offer a wide range of community activities that reach far beyond Sundays, supporting people from all walks of life. Our church halls are a vital meeting place for local groups and provide a unique community space, as there is no other venue like it within Shortlands.

To sustain this work funding is essential. For 2026 our operating budget is £199,000: this covers staffing, maintenance and the mission and community programmes we run, and does not allow for unexpected costs.

St Mary's is entirely self-reliant. We receive no funding from the Church of England, the council or government. Every penny required to keep the church and halls open and thriving comes from the generosity of our congregation and the wider community. Our income comes primarily from donations and from hiring out our church and hall spaces. At present our costs exceed our income by £3,000, so every contribution makes a real difference.

There are many ways to support St Mary's. Our doors are open on weekday mornings, and inside the main (south) entrance you'll find a card reader and QR code for contactless giving. Donations can also be made by bank transfer to our Lloyds account: sort code: 30-84-51, account number: 47608468.

Better still, join us for worship on Sundays at 10:30am or Wednesdays at 10:00am and discover how you can be part of St Mary's story, helping this cherished community hub continue to shine for generations to come.

Rev Dave Edmondson and Tim Dawson (Treasurer)

Gospel Pairs

During Lent, beginning on 18th February, we are inviting people to read through the Gospel of St Mark with one other person. Lent is the 40-day season leading up to Easter, a time of reflection, prayer and preparation as we remember Jesus' journey to the cross and then his resurrection.

Have you ever wanted to read the Bible in more depth? *Gospel Pairs* is a relaxed and meaningful way to study one book of the Bible with one other person (or sometimes two). Over six sessions, pairs will read Mark's Gospel and meet at a time convenient to them to discuss what they have noticed or found striking.

You will receive a booklet that divides the whole of Mark's Gospel into six parts, with discussion questions and reflections. There's no commitment beyond the six sessions. It's a great way to get an overview of one Gospel and explore it with someone else at a time that works for you.

You can sign up on your own, and we will pair you with someone else: perfect if you'd like to get to know someone new or deepen an existing friendship. You can also sign up as a pair or a group of three.

On Easter Saturday 4th April, at 6pm there will be a simple soup supper for everyone to gather and share reflections on reading the Gospel together.

If you would like to be part of *Gospel Pairs*, please email Dave Edmondson (vicar@stmaryshortlands.church), or fill out a form at the back of church, by 11th February.

MISSION OF THE MONTH

Action around Bethlehem Children with Disability

In 1985, Val Jourdan spent a year working as a paediatric physiotherapist in the West Bank. Recognising the dire needs of disabled children and young adults in the area, and with no one to take her place, Val and the late Georgina Mortimer endeavoured to improve the situation.

A year later **Action around Bethlehem Children with Disability (ABCD)** was established as a UK registered humanitarian charity. Its main aim is to improve the lives of children with disabilities across Palestine regardless of faith, race or gender.

Today the charity works with local partners supporting community based outreach services and rehabilitation centres in refugee camps and providing day care for the most vulnerable and severely disabled children and young adults.

In Palestinian refugee camps, thousands of children and adults live with untreated hearing loss. Many were born with conditions that have never been assessed. Others developed hearing impairment due to chronic ear infections, trauma, limited access to medical care, or the ongoing challenges of displacement. Yet most of these cases are preventable or treatable - if only the right services were available.

Refugees must travel long distances for hearing tests, hearing aid fitting, or ear-health: journeys that are often impossible due to financial hardship, mobility issues, or movement restrictions. The result is life-changing: children struggle to learn, falling behind simply because they cannot hear their teachers, adults lose opportunities for work and social connection and families face isolation, misunderstandings, and avoidable suffering.

In the charity's 40th year, it has launched a special appeal to establish a fully equipped Audiology Centre in one of the refugee camps, offering comprehensive hearing assessments, hearing aid fitting and maintenance, ENT referrals and ear-health services and early screening for infants and school-aged children. This centre will be staffed by trained audiologists and supported by local healthcare workers, creating sustainable long-term change.

St Mary's has supported ABCD for many years, and our choir performs a carol service at St George's Bloomsbury for the charity each Christmas (pictured). For more information, visit www.abcdbethlehem.org or visit the display at the back of church.



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For more information contact the Parish Office or visit

www.stmarysshortlands.org.uk

PARISH DIRECTORY

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

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PARISH OFFICE

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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. Swinfen	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	
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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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