

Long to reign over us

As I write, preparations are gathering pace for the Queen's Platinum Jubilee. I hope that, by the time you read this, you are reflecting on a successful and memorable celebratory weekend.

Reflection, thanksgiving and Jubilee are deep-rooted religious concepts. Jubilee is mentioned in Leviticus in the Old Testament and discussed by Jesus when he talks about forgiveness and the Year of the Lord in St Luke's Gospel. So, what are we celebrating with the Platinum Jubilee? A long reign? Most definitely. A long life, well lived? Yes again.

Yet this Jubilee encompasses so much more. I have been fortunate to be closely involved with the past three Jubilees. Each had a unique mood and character. This Jubilee feels different. There is a mixture of thanksgiving, celebration, commemoration and profound gratitude. However, there is a poignancy as we sense the end of an era.

The Queen has been a constant in our national and personal life. Often referred to as the mother of the nation, she is increasingly seen as the nation's grandmother and great grandmother. There is so much to appreciate. She personifies all that is best in the United Kingdom. She has sustained and inspired us, especially at times of deep crisis. We admire her wisdom and devotion to duty. Never putting a foot wrong, she is the most recognised person in the world yet remains an enigma.

In his address on Maundy Thursday the Bishop of Tonbridge, Bishop Simon, highlighted the importance of public service and that to lead is to serve. This is the challenge Christ set for his disciples and us, his Church, today. Service has been the Queen's guiding principle since she made her vow to serve the British people and the Commonwealth on her 21st birthday. All who know her mention her deep Christian faith, so evident in her Christmas broadcasts. She takes very seriously her role as head of the Church of England.

Without doubt she has, in the words of the National Anthem, 'ever give(n) us cause to sing with heart and voice, God save the Queen!' Perhaps the best tribute we can pay is to seek to follow her example of service and devotion to others and to God in our lives.

David Jefferys LLM

Special Events and Services

Sunday 5 June - Pentecost

10.30am All age and Parade Service

*Followed by the Platinum Parish
Picnic*

Sunday 12 June

4 - 5.30pm Tea Time Together

*Activities for families of all ages on
the theme of gentleness*

6 - 7.30pm Youth Club

Sunday 19 June

6.30pm - Choral Evensong

Good and faithful servant

Bishop Simon Burton-Jones, the Bishop of Tonbridge, recently designated Peter Stotesbury (pictured, with his wife Diana) as a Reader Emeritus in recognition of his long and faithful service as a Reader at St Mary's and his service to Rochester Diocese.





From the Registers

Holy Baptism

We welcome into God's family:

Oak Wallace	4 April
Willow Wallace	4 April



Remembering

Jean Jackson

Jean was born in 1927 in Enfield: when she was two her father, who worked for the civil service in the Ministry of War, was posted to Egypt. They remained there for three years, travelling to and from England in banana boats.

Jean had to sit exams during the Blitz and was evacuated to Bournemouth from Berridge House, her teacher training college, during the war. She taught domestic science at Southgate County Grammar school.

Jean married John in 1964: she made her own dress and those of her bridesmaids, the wedding cake and much of the wedding breakfast. Jean was a fabulous cook, needlewoman and homemaker: all of the family wedding and christening cakes were willingly baked and exquisitely decorated by her.

Having moved to Shortlands, David and Elizabeth were born soon after and they had many happy years at the house in Highfield Drive.

Jean was deeply committed to her Christian faith. She began attending St Mary's, initially joining the 'young wives' group, before ploughing wholeheartedly into church affairs. She performed every role from churchwarden to pastoral assistant, sacristan, PCC, Deanery and Diocesan Synod member, and helping regularly with the church flowers almost until she went away.

Her beloved John passed away suddenly in 1993; a huge shock and loss for her, which she never really got over. Her faith gave her the strength to go on and her grandchildren gave her a new focus and purpose: she last visited them in Australia at the age of 88.

Jean was often asked if she knew she looked just like the Queen; she would smile regally as if it was the first time the observation had been made.

Leaving St Mary's in 2018 was a wrench, as she had spent more than half her life within the community of dear friends, many of whom she travelled with on several pilgrimages to the Holy Land. She moved to Godalming to be near her younger sister who she referred to as her best friend.

She faced the end of her life with a deep understanding of where she would be going: 'I am ready to go home to the Lord'.

Jean was an exceptional woman: a devoted wife, mother, grandmother, sister, aunt and friend who will be sadly missed.

Annual Parochial Church Meeting

St Mary's APCM (Annual Parochial Church Meeting) was held on Sunday 8 May.

Sarah Leonard stood down as Churchwarden having served for four years, and Kate Buchanan and Marion Westropp were appointed as Churchwardens. Stephanie Maurel has stepped down as PCC Secretary: Stephanie and Sarah were thanked for their service.

David Jefferys, Robin Hogg and Pauline Lambourne were elected to the PCC.

The accounts for 2021 were presented and showed a positive balance for the year, which had only been made possible by returns on investments.

Kay Coleman, St Mary's Safeguarding Officer, presented a report and reminded all members of the Parochial Church Council that they must keep their safeguarding training up to date.

The meeting heard that Revd Gary Best has now taken on a new role in Suffolk. St Mary's is now in an interregnum (the period before a new parish priest is appointed to fill the vacancy). The process to start recruiting a new vicar is beginning, although this could take 18 months. In the meantime the church is looking to appoint an interim Priest-in-Charge.



Jumelage

After a two year delay due to Covid, we finally managed to get together with our French friends in Douai at the beginning of May to celebrate the silver anniversary of the Jumelage/Twinning between our two parishes: St Mary's Shortlands and St Francis of Assisi.

A group of 15 people travelled from St Mary's in a small coach and spent a great weekend enjoying French hospitality. On Saturday afternoon we visited the Fête de la Batellerie and saw the brightly decorated barges on the canal, then in Douai town centre watched a variety of street entertainers celebrating the opening of a new pedestrianised area. On Sunday morning Mass was celebrated by a young charismatic priest who spoke fluent English!



We exchanged gifts at the celebration lunch and were amazed at the wonderful cake celebrating our 27 years of shared friendship and faith. We hope to welcome them here in Shortlands next year.

Gill Dawson



MISSION OF THE MONTH

Welcare

Welcare is a charity working with families and children up to the age of 13 in South London and East Surrey. The charity states: 'we are proud of our Christian heritage and identify and derive our values from our Anglican origins'.

Welcare provides services which are tailored to the real needs of the communities in which it works. It provides practical help and support to families, empowering them to rebuild their lives and access opportunities to ensure their children have a happy, confident childhood and future.

For example Mary, an asylum seeker, was referred to Welcare as she was isolated with a young child and had limited funds. Welcare helped practically, linking her into the services required, but also gave her the support and confidence she needed to become part of the local community.

Welcare has recently received funding from the City Bridge Trust to expand the Families and Schools Together (FAST) programme in Greenwich and Bromley. The project helps children to develop coping strategies, express their emotions in a healthy way and improve their confidence, resilience and self-esteem.

St Mary's church fundraises specifically for Welcare's work in Bromley. For more information, see the display at the back of church or visit <https://welcare.org>

Shortlands Youth Club

On 8 May the new Shortlands Youth Club held its first session. Open to anyone in Year 6 and up this is a completely free social club for young people in our local community.

We were delighted to have 16 young people join us and they enjoyed a variety of activities from table tennis to video games to playing outside with footballs and swingball. This club is unstructured and is a safe space for young people in our community to come and chill out and hopefully make new friends too.

The club will run on the second Sunday of each month (excluding August). There is no need to book a place: just turn up, fill in a short form and then have fun! Our next meeting will be on 12 June.

Velvet Harmony, a Ladies' Acapella chorus, presents

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As for so many people, the pandemic that has just swept across the globe left us reconsidering all kinds of things. Also, like many others, we had a close family member (my father-in-law) in care during the pandemic. Perhaps through luck or God's greater plan, my husband, Craig, saw St Mary's Open Day being advertised while he was waiting for his lateral flow test results.

It was at a time when we were thinking that our home church, St Barnabas in Dulwich where we'd got married and where both the children were christened, was still a perfect fit for our family. All except the distance we lived from Dulwich. "Isn't it a shame," we thought, "that we don't easily see people we know and love from church from Monday to Saturday?" We were also thinking it would be great to be more linked into the community where we've spent all of our time recently.

While our kids were enjoying the lifting of lockdown by being blasted up and down the river on the Thames Rib with their rather-more-intrepid-than-us Uncles, Craig and I discussed local churches and giving St Mary's a go, online at first then maybe in person.

Full disclosure: we're not only people who've already been part of a church community, but I actually work for the Church of England and specifically in a section of the national church that encourages welcome. So, the bar was set pretty high. But I have to say that St Mary's passed with flying colours!

On our first Sunday, several people came over to welcome us. There was no awkwardness, just a simple, friendly 'hello' and afterwards the Vicar broke off from what he was doing to come and chat to us. By week two, we were met with smiles and "Oh good! You've come back!" It was then that our musicians discovered that all four of us sing. On our third week, we were dressed in red and white and singing with the choir, who are now good friends. Thursday night choir practices really lift my spirits.

Just a few months in, we really feel at home at St Mary's and would definitely encourage others to give it a go. Whether or not the pandemic has made you rethink things – or if you are just curious. Please do come, you'll be among friends.

Cathy Myers



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Wednesday 10.00am - Holy Communion
8.30pm - Compline

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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LOCAL CONTACTS

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Residents Association		8460 0395
Shortlands Safer Neighbourhood		8721 2614

SPAN INFORMATION

Website www.stmarysshortlands.org.uk

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