

WE THREE KINGS...?

Epiphany: *it's one of those curious religious words, which comes into use for a few days after Christmas, and then disappears again. Can you put your finger on what it means?*

The date of Epiphany in the Christian calendar is 6th January. It now marks the end of the traditional Christmas period of 12 days, but it wasn't invented by the early Church for the purpose of taking their decorations down!

As a festival, Epiphany (which literally means "the sudden appearance of God") has been around a long time, since AD 350 or thereabouts.

We don't know precisely when Christians started holding a festival to commemorate Jesus' birth, but in those early times, some people preferred to treat Epiphany as

Jesus' birthday, rather than December 25th. Later, though, Christmas became fixed on the day now familiar to us, and Epiphany became associated with the visit of the "Magi" or wise men to Bethlehem instead, at least in the Western part of the Church. Which brings us on to the next question: who were the Magi, and why did they bring gifts to the infant Jesus? Of the 4 Gospel writers, only Matthew makes reference to them. Here are a few facts which may surprise you:

- Despite familiar hymns like "We three Kings of Orient are..." the Magi are not referred to as kings in the Bible. Matthew describes them as wise men or astrologers.

- Matthew does not state that there were 3 Magi. Tradition suggests there were 3 because 3 gifts were offered to Jesus: gold, frankincense

and myrrh.

- Matthew refers to the Magi visiting Jesus in Bethlehem, but they go to see him in a house, not a stable. Perhaps by this time Mary and Joseph had found better accommodation, or lost patience with the innkeeper!

- The star which the Magi are said to have followed from the East was probably not a star, but two planets: the main astrological event around the believed time of Jesus' birth was when Jupiter and Saturn were close together in the sky for a time.

- The decision of Herod to slaughter all the Hebrew children in Bethlehem under two years old in an attempt to get rid of Jesus, after interviewing the Magi about him, could suggest that Jesus was no longer a baby by the time they visited him.

So, other than a source of inspiration for hymn writers and Christmas card illustrators, what is the significance of the visit of the Magi to Jesus? In essence, there are perhaps two key points to remember. The first is what the gifts would later symbolise: the gold was for Jesus as King; the frankincense was for Jesus as priest, and the myrrh, as an embalming ointment, was for Jesus as victim on the Cross. The second is that the Magi were not from the Jewish community: they came from lands far away from Palestine, and therefore in the Gospel represent the wider world to whom Jesus eventually became known. That is why the Church still celebrates the festival of Epiphany today.

Adrian Bingham

Special Services & Events

Sunday 6 January - Epiphany

10.30am Family Communion

- Reverend Jane Peters

Sunday 13 January - Stewardship Sunday

10.30am Family Communion

Sunday 27 January

6.30pm Choral Evensong for Candlemas

- Father Leon Carberry, Area Dean of Beckenham
Vicar of St. James', Elmers End

Sunday 3 February - Bible Sunday

10.30am All Age Eucharist and Parade

(with help from the Beavers)

Sunday 10 February

10.30am Family Communion

- The Venerable Dr. Paul Wright, Archdeacon
of Bromley & Bexley

4.30pm Celebration of Gifts

An exhibition, entertainment and get-together,
thanking God for the gifts he has given us

Toys for Welcare in Bromley



As is traditional at St. Mary's, children from the Parish brought presents to the Toy Service, which took place last year on Sunday, 2 December. The Christmas presents were then passed to Welcare in Bromley, a Christian charity that provides support to needy families in the Borough.



A HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL OUR READERS !



From the Registers

Holy Baptism

We welcome into God's family:
18 Nov Poppy Rose Cheetham



The 2WWs

Did you know the 2WWs (Widows and Widowers) group was originally started when the Reverend Doug Redman was Vicar at St. Mary's, and 6 widowed members of the church were brought together for tea and a chat?

Over the years, the group, run by Annie Heyberd, has developed and extended to the present number of about 35 members, who go on trips together sharing the driving and companionship. They also enjoy having lunch in a variety of venues.

Members support each other in a variety of ways, such as offering lifts to appointments or shopping trips, hospital visiting and generally keeping in touch so no-one feels isolated.

Every Christmas a special lunch is held which most of the members attend and it is always a festive and enjoyable event. The 2012 Christmas lunch was held at Langley Park Tennis Club and as usual a good time was had by all!

So who is the new Archbishop?

The role of Archbishop of Canterbury is a challenging one - Dr. Rowan Williams, said his successor would need "the constitution of an ox and the skin of a rhinoceros". So who is the man recently announced as the 105th Archbishop of Canterbury and the nominal leader of 77 million Anglicans across the world?

The Right Reverend Justin Welby, Bishop of Durham, became a priest only in his mid-30s, having previously had a career in the oil industry. Many feel this experience of life in the 'real world' will be a great advantage for the most senior leader in the Church of England, as he seeks to communicate the work of the church in the world's media.

From his experience, he has been able to write about business ethics. He is also at home with modern forms of communication - follow him on Twitter at @Bishopofdurham.

ALL THE FUN OF THE FAIR!



Photograph: Tony Chase

St Mary's held its annual Christmas Fair at the end of November to raise money for Welcare in Bromley and St Mary's Church. Once again we had a packed hall with lots of different stalls and plenty of visitors. £1,856 was raised and all involved had fun. Thank you to everyone who helped with this event.

Write for SPAN

Do you have an idea for an article that will interest SPAN's many readers? Then the small team producing SPAN wants to hear from you! Drop a note into the Parish Office with your contact details, or you can email us at office@stmaryshortlands.plus.com

A Message from Douai



St. Mary's has for many years now enjoyed a link with St. Francis of Assisi, Douai. We were pleased to receive the following message from Jocelyne Hamez, St. Francis' Twinning Co-ordinator (pictured above, left, with Hortense de Mereuil):

'At the start of 2013, on behalf of the priests, the team responsible for organising activities within the Parish, and all your friends involved in the twinning, we send you our very best wishes for a happy and peaceful New Year. We look forward to welcoming you to Douai at the beginning of May.'

Gill Dawson, St. Mary's Twinning Co-ordinator, writes:

'Jocelyne's message follows the retirement of Abbé Michel Rimoux,

Parish Priest, and the reorganisation of their parish and its neighbour to come under the care of the Dean, Abbé André Merville.

Our annual exchange visit will take place on the weekend of Saturday 4th/Sunday 5th May. This year it is our turn to visit them. We will travel by coach, via the Shuttle, and parishioners will enjoy a warm welcome with home hospitality. Guides from our two St. Mary's units will also participate, meet up with French Guides and enjoy a joint sleep-over in their church hall.'

A sign-up list for those interested in participating in this trip will shortly go up in church, but if you would like more information please contact Gill Dawson on 8460-5884 or email gill@gill.dawson.name

Heather Wills

BY ROYAL APPOINTMENT!

By Gill Dawson

Tuesday 4th December was an unforgettable day for the Dawson family as we travelled to Buckingham Palace so I could receive my MBE from the Queen.

The palace looked spectacular decked out with all the Christmas decorations. Everything went like clockwork, with the staff making everyone feel welcome and at ease despite the awesome surroundings.

The investiture took place in the magnificent ballroom, where the Queen was accompanied by Gurkhas and members of the Yeomen of the Guard, with an orchestra playing in the background.

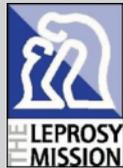
As my award was "for services to young people", I chose to wear my Guide uniform, but had to upgrade it to make it suitable for the occasion! It was a brilliant day, all the more enjoyable for having all the family there to share it with me.



Pictured above from left to right are the Dawson family: Gemma, Andy, Gill, Tim and Jo.

Mission of the Month The Leprosy Mission

Founded in 1874, The Leprosy Mission (TLM) is a leading Christian organisation working in around 30 countries across Africa, South Asia, and East Asia, transforming and empowering the lives of people affected by leprosy, a disease that attacks the nervous system.



Whilst research to produce a vaccine to prevent the spread of leprosy continues, an effective and complete cure for the disease - multidrug therapy (MDT) - has been freely available since 1982 but early diagnosis and treatment with MDT is vital to prevent sufferers from consequential injury and disability.

Leprosy is the least contagious communicable disease, is not hereditary and cannot be caught by touch, but fear and stigma can lead to social exclusion which can be more damaging than leprosy's physical symptoms.

TLM continues to work hard in reversing this injustice and its work includes treatment, health care, surgery, physiotherapy, health awareness training and education, and provision of small business loans to enable those affected by leprosy to escape poverty and become independent.

St. Mary's has a long record of supporting this charity and further information is available from the display at the back of the church throughout January. You can find out more at www.leprosymission.org.uk

St. Mary's Goes to the Races

Join the Friends of St. Mary's
on

Saturday 2nd March

for a fantastic evening of fun
for all the family.

You can pick a horse from the runners – a name you like or your favourite number – and if you are lucky you may even win some prize money! Be careful what you bid for though – you could end up with a donkey in the horse auction!

If you don't want to miss out on the fun – put the date in your diary now and watch out for more information.

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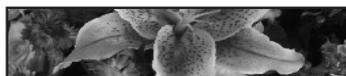
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- 10.30 Family Communion, except the first Sunday in the month in term time. During term time there are separate groups in the Church Hall for children aged 0-18.
- 10.30 All Age Eucharist or Parade Service (1st Sunday in the month, term time).
- 18.30 Choral Evensong (3rd Sunday in the month)

Every Monday

- 17.00 Evening Prayers

Every Wednesday

- 10.00 Holy Communion

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

PARISH DIRECTORY

STAFF

Associate Vicar	Rev. J. Peters	07531 617302/ 8460 5682
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	Mrs. D. Speller	8466 1184
	Mrs. M. Westropp	8650 5178
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Junior Church	Mrs. S. Aldred	8460 3978

PARISH OFFICE Tel/Fax 8460 5682

e-mail: office@stmaryshortlands.plus.com
Open 9.15 am - 12.30 weekdays. Information regarding Baptisms and Weddings can be obtained during these hours.

ST. MARY'S ORGANISATIONS

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Cubs (Mon.)	Mrs. J. Garvey	8249 8785
Cubs (Tues.)	Mr. J. Griffiths	07954 437658
Beavers/admissions	Mr. J. Westropp	8650 5178

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Guides (Fri.)	Mrs. G. Dawson	8460 5884
Brownies (Mon.)	Miss K. Higgs	8462 3285
Brownies (Wed.)	Mrs. A. Watson	8650 0184
Brownies (Thurs.)	Ms. D. Allen	8650 1720
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Residents' Association	8460 4060
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SPAN INFORMATION

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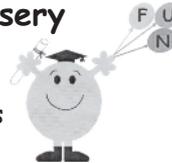
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