

Christmas unwrapped!

A middle-aged woman posted her Christmas wish list on the refrigerator for her husband to read. She requested 'something that will make me look sexy and beautiful.' To her surprise the husband gave her an exercise bike as a gift!

All of us have received unwanted gifts at Christmas. For Joseph the gift of a child, as recorded in Matthew, was not something he really wanted. Although he was engaged to Mary, her pregnancy provided grounds for divorce. Not surprisingly, with the associated social disgrace, Joseph wanted to divorce Mary quietly.

However, God intervened in a dream reminding Joseph that the child to be born would fulfil the prophet Isaiah's promise: 'The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel - which means, God with us.' Joseph's world, like our own, is scary and uncertain and it's not always clear as to what God is doing. So what is the message of the name Immanuel for Joseph, as well as for ourselves as we approach Christmas 2011?

• **God is present with us**

God assured Joseph through his dream that he was working in all that Joseph

was experiencing. The conception of Jesus by the Holy Spirit is not unexplained; however the wonder of the incarnation is that the eternal and creator God has entered time and space as a baby. This baby is both uniquely divine but also fully human. The birth of Jesus means that we can know God personally, not just know about him. The Holy Spirit is committed to making Jesus' life and character real in us, as well as bringing meaning to our circumstances, just as he worked in the conception of Immanuel.

• **God is on our side**

Christmas touches some raw nerves in our lives, including stress, family rows, loneliness and financial pressures. However, God does not remain aloof from our experiences. By coming in Jesus he enters our world of hopes and fears, joys and disappointments. Therefore, he can understand what we are going through, as he is alongside us. By the cross and resurrection he gave his life that we might know his life, joy, peace and forgiveness.

For Joseph, as well as us, the Christmas message is one of hope in an uncertain world. It is a time to re-consider the claims of Immanuel (God with us) as we entrust ourselves to him for the coming year.



Alexis Peck married Matthew Rose at St. Mary's, Shortlands at the end of October at a Service at which Canon Paul Miller officiated.

Alexis is a teaching assistant at Pilgrims' Way Primary School, Peckham, and Matthew is a teacher at St. Joseph's Roman Catholic Primary School, Bromley.

Alexis has been part of the St. Mary's Church family for many years and a packed Church of family, friends and members of the Church gathered to celebrate their marriage.

'A Church wedding is always a special occasion when a couple come to make their vows in the presence of God and his people. St. Mary's is an excellent venue for weddings and we spend much time with every couple to plan and prepare to make it a really special day,' reported Canon Paul Miller.

(photo by Nick Rose - www.nickrosephotography.com)

Special Events and Services for Advent and Christmas

Sunday, 27 November

6.30pm - Advent Carol Service
*Including music by Redford, Goldschmidt and Joubert.
as well as popular congregational carols.*

Sunday, 4 December

10.30am - Toy Service
*You are invited to bring one new, unwrapped toy, which will become a gift
for a local child in need of support through Welcare in Bromley.*

Friday, 9 December

09.45am - Highfield Infants' School Nativity Play

Sunday, 11 December

6.30pm - The Christingle Carol Service
*Come and see the children's faces glowing in the light of the candles, and
support the work of the Children's Society.*

Monday, 12 December

10.30am - Sunnyfields and Little Stars Christmas Service

Tuesday, 13 December

9.45am - Highfield Junior School Carol Service

Thursday, 15 December

11.00am - St. Mary's Mothers and Toddlers Group Christmas Service

Friday, 16 December

11.00am - St. Mary's Pre-School Christmas Service

Sunday, 18 December

6.30pm - The Traditional Service of Nine Lessons and Carols for Christmas
with music by Rutter, Cornelius and Ledger.

Christmas Eve: Saturday, 24 December

3.30pm - 'Once upon a time: The Story of the First Christmas' - Nativity
Play and Crib Service

*led by Reverend Jane Peters. All children and adults are welcome to take
part, and if you wish, come dressed as angels, shepherds or wise men.
Please also bring a home-made star (to be left at the Church after the
service).*

11.30pm - Procession by Candlelight, Midnight Mass of the Nativity of
Our Lord and Carols for Christmas

The Choir will be singing carols from 11.15pm to welcome you.

Christmas Day: Sunday, 25 December

9.00am - Holy Communion

10.30am - Family Communion for Christmas Day

You are invited to bring a newly opened present!

A HAPPY CHRISTMAS TO ALL OUR READERS !



From the Registers

Holy Baptism

We welcome into God's family:

16 Oct Amelia Lightbody

23 Oct Eve Lalley

30 Oct Joseph Leonard

Holy Matrimony

We congratulate:

22 Oct Matthew Rose and

Alexis Peck

5 Nov Jack Campion and

Cheri Anderson

At Rest

We extend our sympathy to those who loved:

10 Oct Dorothy Stewart, aged 77



Remembering

Dorothy Stewart

Dot was born in Stone Park Hospital, Beckenham. She was educated in Beckenham too and for the past thirty years had lived in Shortlands.

She was married to Don for fifty five years and they had two children, Chris and Janet, a sister Molly, and three grandsons, Kieran, Daniel and Michael.

She had a number of jobs, amongst which was some time working for the Prudential and then British Telecom.

Amongst her interests were, as a young girl, dancing, music, she loved walking in the countryside and she loved doing puzzles.

A Service of Thanksgiving, conducted by Canon Paul Miller, was held at Beckenham Crematorium prior to cremation.



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To the editor of SPAN

May we, through SPAN, thank all those who, over the past few weeks, have given us so much support following Peter's tragic death in a random accident in Battersea. We are so grateful for all the cards, flowers, kind words and gifts from so many, both near and far. You may have read in the October edition of SPAN that there were about 650 people at his funeral giving rise to some fabulous singing and thought-provoking words from all who spoke at the service.

To die at the age of 27 is unexpected. Many of Peter's friends and work colleagues were there, and we know from speaking to them since, that the sentiments expressed had a profound effect on many of them. They had been shown that at this young age you are not after all invincible and immortal. It is clear to us that many have had their view of life thoroughly shaken. Canon Paul and Reverend Jane offered words which made them think and eased their pain.

We would especially like to thank all those who took part in the service – the church warden, sidesmen, choir, clergy and of course the congregation for being there with us.

It was because of the 7 year old Peter that we opened the Beaver Colony here. Let that be his lasting legacy for the Parish.
John, Marion and Charles Westropp



Latest baptism at St. Mary's



Peter and Sarah Leonard brought their son Joseph to St. Mary's to be baptised at the end of October.

Peter and Sarah were married at St. Mary's in 2005 and had their daughter Annabelle, pictured with Sarah, baptised in 2008.

Annabelle now attends St. Mary's Pre-School. Joseph was 10 weeks old when Canon Paul Miller officiated at the baptism.

After the service a reception was held at the family's house.

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We record our thanks for recent donations of £2.00.



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Mission of the Month

The Children's Society

The Children's Society is a leading national children's charity committed to making childhood better for all children in the UK. It provides vital help for tens of thousands of children every year:

- It provides specialist support at a local level for those forgotten children who face the greatest danger and disadvantages in their daily lives; children who are unable to find the support they need anywhere else.
- Its work in children's centres, schools and churches gives children the chance to develop the skills and confidence they need to make the most of their childhood and play a full part in their local communities.
- Its thought-provoking research influences everyone – from people like the general public to politicians and decision makers – about how to create real change.
- Its hard-hitting campaigns attract large public support and make institutions, government bodies and authorities take action to make childhood better for all children.

Its mission is to make childhood better for all children in the UK.

Its vision is to see a world where every child enjoys a good childhood.

Its values are Love, Justice and Forgiveness.

You are warmly invited to attend our Christingle service in St Mary's on Sunday, 11 December at 6.30pm, which will highlight our financial support for the Children's Society this year.

The Children's Society is St. Mary's Mission for the Month of December. There will be a display on the Missions notice board during December and further information can be found on www.childrengsociety.org.uk

New Parish Administrator Appointed



Rachel Bailey, (pictured centre) a resident of Shortlands, who lives in St. Mary's Avenue, has been appointed Parish Administrator in succession to Richard Vickers who is retiring.

Rachel, a graduate of University College in London, comes from a career in publishing and being a personal assistant to department heads at the Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine. She has also been editorial assistant and personal assistant to veterinary editors. Rachel is married and has three children, two daughters at Langley Girls School and a son at Highfield Infants'.

'We are delighted that Rachel will be joining our team at St. Mary's,' commented Canon Paul Miller. 'She comes with the kind of experience that we need and she lives less than two minutes from the Church!'

Photographed with Rachel is Emma Parker, the Assistant Parish Administrator and Canon Paul Miller.

Canon Miller said, 'I also want to pay tribute to the work of Richard Vickers. Richard has done a fantastic job and set up our administration in a way which supports such a busy church and parish. He has been a loyal colleague to me and a good friend to many and we shall miss him enormously. I shall be arranging a farewell gift to enable us to express our appreciation for all Richard has done - these may be left at the Parish Office by 16 December, marked for the attention of Emma Parker! Cheques should be made payable to St. Mary's Shortlands PCC.' A presentation to Richard will take place on Sunday, 18 December after the 10.30am service.

Christmas cards

A friend of ours waited until the last minute to send Christmas cards. She knew she had 49 people on her list. So she rushed into a store and bought a package of 50 cards without really looking at them. Still in a big hurry, she addressed the 49 and signed them without reading the message inside.

On Christmas Day when things had quieted down somewhat, she happened to come across the one leftover card and finally read the message she had sent to 49 of her friends. Much to her dismay, it read like this: 'This card is just to say a little gift is on the way.' Suddenly she realized that 49 of her friends were expecting a gift from her.

Where is the baby?

For weeks, a six-year old lad kept telling his nursery teacher about the baby brother or sister that was expected at his house. One day the mother allowed the boy to feel the movements of the unborn child. The six-year old was obviously impressed, but made no comment. Furthermore, he stopped telling his teacher about the impending event. The teacher finally sat the boy on her lap and said, "Tommy, whatever has become of that baby brother or sister you were expecting at home?" Tommy burst into tears and confessed, "I think Mummy ate it!"

MP welcomes new Shortlands Councillor



David Jefferys (pictured left) was recently elected the Ward Councillor for Shortlands after a by-election held as a result of the resignation of George Taylor.

David polled almost 60% of the votes. He now joins Councillor Ernest Noad as the Councillors representing Shortlands.

Photographed with David is MP for Beckenham, Bob Stewart.

David, who is Churchwarden at St. Mary's, was delighted with the result. "It is a great honour and a privilege to have been elected to join Ernest Noad as the second Councillor for Shortlands Ward. The by-election was a vigorous campaign, which was good for local democracy. I called on 94% of the homes during the election, but remember the ward and the parish boundaries are not the same. Why did I stand for election? The reason was I want to give something back to our local community, to serve the people and with your help make a difference."

Welcare in Bromley is looking for a volunteer to work in their office for a few hours each week.

Tasks would include updating, maintaining and producing display materials, sorting donations of food, helping with fund raising, data inputting, general office/admin tasks. If you would like to help this local charity working with disadvantaged and needy families in the Borough to make a difference, and be part of a friendly and supportive team, please contact Margaret or Jane on 020 8466 0399 or email: office@bromleywelcare.org.uk for more details and an application pack.

A Christmas Poem written by a Shortlands Resident

Turkey, plum pudding and mince pies
Cakes and sweets of every sort
Trees, decorations, lights
Many presents we have bought
We will feast and have much joy
We will party, dance and sing
We will love our fellow man
We will hear the church bells ring
Wait! Whose birthday do we celebrate
Who do we honour on this day
It is the babe of Bethlehem
Long ago born in the hay
God's son, grew into a man
Who lived on earth the Bible tells
Died, rose again to be with God
Now in Heaven he dwells
Peace, gentle peace
Be still for He is near
Peace, perfect peace
Remember. For God is here.

by Daisy Bottell, Durham House



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- 08.00 Holy Communion
- 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.

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Vicar	Canon P. Miller	8460 4989
Honorary Curate	Rev. J. Peters	07531 617302
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PARISH OFFICE Tel/Fax 8460 5682

e-mail: office@stmaryshortlands.plus.com
Open 9.00 am - 12.30 weekdays. Information regarding Baptisms and Weddings can be obtained during these hours.

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Residents' Association	8460 4060
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SPAN

Website	www.stmaryshortlands.org.uk
Editorial	Parish Office 8460 5682
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	Mrs. J. Kelsey 8466 1093

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