

Moving forward with faith

Ascension Day is celebrated in churches 40 days after Easter, this year on Thursday 10th May. In those 40 days we have been celebrating Jesus' resurrection, his many appearances to his disciples and his telling them about the kingdom of God.

Ascension Day is the time when Jesus' physical presence on earth comes to an end; it includes the words of Jesus' commission to his disciples; and it also prepares the way for the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. At the end of our service of Holy Communion at 8pm it is a tradition for those attending to gather outside and release a rocket as a reminder.

Trying to explain the Ascension means attempting to put into words what is beyond belief. It is an experience that is real (the disciples saw it for themselves). Yet to those same disciples, and to us in the 21st century, it is as much an act of faith as it is a real experience.

William Barclay, the theologian, said 'there is a time to wait on God and a time to work for God'. We need to find out what this time is for us, because action without preparation most often fails. Before we act for God we need to be patient; in prayer, seeking wisdom, listening and preparing our hearts and mind for action. It is then that we are prepared to move forth with the praise and joy that comes in knowing Jesus Christ as Saviour and the ascending Redeemer!

Half way through one of my interviews for ordination training, the selector said to me 'Morag, how would you describe the Ascension to someone you'd met in a pub?' This happened almost 21 years ago: I've been in quite a few pubs in that time and I have never been asked to explain the Ascension. If you walk past the pub and see me sitting there you know I'm just waiting for someone to ask me that elusive question 'what is the Ascension about?'

This will be the last time I write an article for SPAN as Richard and I are leaving the parish of Shortlands next month, although I have already taken my last Sunday service. We will probably be living in the vicarage until the end of the summer so if you see me around do say hello.

Rev Morag Finch

Parish Picnic & Barbecue

Sunday, 10 June

in the church grounds
following the

10.30am Family and Parade Service

A great day for all the family!

Bring your own picnic,

or buy barbecue food and support the Guides
fundraising for international trips

They will also be selling soft drinks and ice creams

Donation bar run by Friends of St Mary's
Bouncy castle, games, crafts and competitions

In the church hall if wet

Special Events and Services

Sunday 6 May

10.30am Family Eucharist

join with us to welcome our friends from Douai

Thursday 10 May - Ascension Day

8.00pm Holy Communion

*followed by the lighting of the Ascension Day
rocket*

Sunday 20 May - Pentecost

10.30am Family Eucharist

**6.30pm Friends of St Mary's annual service of Choral
Evensong**

Responses: Sanders

Canticles: Walmsley

Anthem: Cantique de Jean Racine - Faure

Following Reverend Morag's decision to move on from St Mary's, we wish both her and Reverend Richard well as they prepare to enter a new phase of life.

Reverend Morag led her last Sunday service in April so, until a new vicar is appointed, all services are being led by a combination of visiting clergy and lay ministers from within St Mary's.

Baptisms, weddings and funerals will continue during this time. For enquiries regarding any of these, please contact the church office who will put you in touch with the right people.

St Mary's entertains

The choir will be giving a concert on Sunday 3 June at 4pm to raise money for their forthcoming trip to Exeter Cathedral. The concert will include solo instrumental pieces and well known choral works.

Tickets will be on sale after the morning services at church from May. Tickets are £10 for adults (includes a glass of wine) and £5 for children.



From the Registers

At Rest

We extend our sympathy to those who loved:

Lesley Nagandran 19 Mar aged 55

Meet the new warden!

Sarah Leonard was elected as a new churchwarden for St Mary's in April – and has been a member of St Mary's congregation for almost all her life.

When Sarah was 4 her family moved to St Mary's Avenue, and her parents decided to give St Mary's a go.... they have never looked back!

Sarah works as a Financial Controller in the City.

In 2005 she married Peter at St Mary's. Annabelle was born in 2008 and Joseph in 2011: they were both baptised by Canon Paul Miller and they are proud to be part of St Mary's Choir and the Junior Church.

Sarah is part of the Junior Church leadership team and is additionally a 7th Bromley Beaver Scout leader.



Sarah said: 'There are 3 generations of my family worshipping at St Mary's, and we very much consider it to be our spiritual home. I am honoured to have been elected as churchwarden. I hope to bring unity and peace into the lives of everyone at St Mary's and move forward in a positive and energetic way. I aim to serve my church family, visiting clergy and any future vicar of St Mary's to the very best of my ability'.

Planning for the future

Last year we commissioned an architect to help us consider what we want from buildings on our site, including improved halls. The halls provide an important service to the church and to the community, including St Mary's Pre-school, uniformed organisations and other clubs and classes. We see this as a core part of St Mary's mission, 'to bring the love of God into the everyday lives of the people of Shortlands'.

We are doing this because we know that we face heavy repair costs for the hall and other buildings over the coming years, and it is responsible to look fully at all the options. We have a duty as a church to make the most of our assets.

The architect spent a lot of time listening to the views of members of the congregation, the Parochial Church Council (PCC), hall users and our neighbours.

The PCC has now had a presentation from the architect: he had developed a range of very interesting options. We have looked at the implications of these in relation to cost and fundraising, and with particularly close attention to the hopes and concerns of hall users and residents. The architect's report also sets out clear and extensive professional advice on the implications of different ways forward, which will be invaluable as we consider the next steps. The proposals included some ideas we had not considered, including ways to make the church warmer with more efficient heating.

Having considered the architect's report, the PCC does not regard the current options he has suggested as financially viable, so more work is required. We are asking him to look again at a revised brief which will be more affordable and achievable, while still meeting the needs of the church and community for renewed facilities.

We will hold a consultation when the PCC believes that there are attractive options to consider, and we will keep you updated. In the meantime, if you have any questions, please contact the Parish Office and a member of the steering group will come back to you with a response.

SPAN

St Mary's Parish Newsletter aims to reflect news and topics of interest from St Mary's church, and the parish of Shortlands. If you have any ideas for articles, please let the Parish Office know.

Learning about other faiths Vesak - 29 May - Buddhism

Vesak, or Buddha Day, is the most important Buddhist festival and is celebrated annually on the full moon of the ancient lunar month of Vesakha, which usually falls in May, or in early June.

At Vesak Buddhists commemorate the birth of the Buddha-to-be, Siddhattha Gotama, in 623 BC; his Enlightenment at the age of 35 when he became the Buddha; and his final 'passing' into Nirvana at the age of 80, no more to be reborn.

In Buddhism, death is not the end of life. The faith teaches rebirth, which is different from reincarnation: Buddhism does not recognise a self or soul that is continually reappearing in a new form. Death for the unenlightened, whose minds are still infected with desire, is followed by yet another life. For the Enlightened who have extinguished all desire, including the desire to be born again, there is no more rebirth. So, Buddhists don't usually refer to the Buddha's death but to his passing into Nirvana. Only by passing into Nirvana can a person end the cycle of death and rebirth.

'The Buddha' is not a personal name but a title and can be translated as 'the Enlightened One'. He became the Buddha through his realisation of full and perfect Enlightenment. This state occurs when a person sees and understands the true nature of all things and consequently all their greed, hatred and delusion is extinguished, which in turn means that there will be no more rebirth.

There are some cultural and local differences in how the various Buddhist groups and nations celebrate Vesak, but broadly speaking devout Buddhists will try to attend their local temple for at least part of the day, while some remain there throughout the day and night of the full moon.

The celebration includes the practices of Giving, Virtue and Cultivation and the doing of good deeds. Giving usually involves bringing food to offer and share, as well as supplies for the temple and symbolic offerings for the shrine. Virtue is observed by reaffirming commitment to the moral precepts. Cultivation can include chanting, meditation and listening to sermons.

Learning together

This year during Lent, groups of people from St Mary's met in 'home groups' to follow a study course called 'All Things are Possible'. The course was developed by the United Society Partners in the Gospel and helped us explore how faith in God can change the world.

Through a series of themes – Prosperity, People, Planet, Peace and Partnership – the course considered connections between our faith and global development.

Each week the groups considered an example of a programme supported by USPG. We heard of a community development programme which helps people in Africa to use their own gifts and skills to boost their income, and another in Brazil which trains community educators to see what resources already exist in a community and then to use these resources to help themselves.

Another project teaches students in India about the importance of safeguarding the environment; others develop good relations and partnership working between Christians and Muslims in Africa, and in India where Christians are minority communities.

We considered what we can learn from this development work around the world, here in Shortlands. Which things do we value, and which do we take for granted? What hidden talents might people we know have and how can we encourage them to make the most of their potential? What does it mean to care for the environment? What can we gain as we spend time with people who are very different from us? What does it mean to love our neighbour? How can we work successfully as part of teams? What does it mean to live in partnership with God?

Home groups meet throughout the year and are a great way to meet in fellowship with other Christians in the area of St Mary's. You don't have to be an expert on the Bible or the Christian faith – we are all learning together. To find out more about home groups and details of when/where they meet, please contact the Parish Office.

Judy's Maundy honour

Judy Rambridge, a longstanding member of St Mary's congregation and until recently the Parochial Church Council Secretary, was honoured to be nominated by the Diocese of Rochester to be one of the recipients of Maundy money from the Queen this year on Maundy Thursday.

Judy was one of 184 recipients: 92 women and 92 men. The number is determined by the Queen's age – she's 92 this year. Each recipient had a companion with them: Judy's companion was her sister-in-law, Elisabeth.

The Royal Maundy ceremony was inspired by the actions of Jesus: on the day before Good Friday, He washed the feet of his disciples and commanded them to 'Love one another'. By the thirteenth century, the Royal Family was taking part in similar ceremonies. By washing the feet of the poor and giving money and gifts, they were showing humility and compassion. The tradition of the king or queen washing the feet of the poor faded out in the eighteenth century, but the monarch still gave people food and clothing: by the nineteenth century the monarch simply gave people the Maundy money.

Today's recipients of Royal Maundy are men and women chosen because of the Christian service they have given to the Church and the community. At the ceremony, the Queen gave each recipient two small leather string purses: the red purse contained a £5 coin with the initials of the four generations of the Royal Family, Elizabeth, Charles, William and George, and a 50 pence coin marking the 100th anniversary of the Representation of the People Act in 1918. The breakdown was £3 for provisions, £1.50 for clothing and £1 for the redemption of the Sovereign's gown which, before Tudor times, used to be divided between the recipients. The white purse contained silver Maundy coins, amounting to the same number of pence as the years of the Sovereign's age. All of the coins had been specially minted this year.

After the ceremony in the Chapel, there was a reception in the State Apartments for the recipients and their companions.

Looking back, looking forwards

In March, St Mary's held the 99th annual parochial church meeting. The meeting was chaired by Rev Rob Hinton, Area Dean. The meeting began with Rev Morag Finch announcing her plans to leave St Mary's. Sally Aldred, Licensed Lay Minister, thanked Rev Finch for her statement and wished her, and Rev Richard Finch, well for the future.

Adolph Williams and Sarah Leonard were elected as churchwardens, and Tim Dawson, Julie and Mark Fox, Marian Parr and Judy Rambridge were elected to the Parochial Church Council. Catherine Bingham, Licensed Lay Minister, thanked Coreen Corbin, who had stepped down as churchwarden, for all that she had done for St Mary's.

The meeting received a report summarising the church's work over the last year and received the accounts for 2017. Tim Dawson, the Treasurer, explained that the church had received approximately the same amount of income (£189,000) as in 2016, but expenditure (£181,000) had been slightly higher than budgeted due to costs of repairs and maintenance.



Mission of the month

Christian Aid

For more than 70 years Christian Aid has been working to change the lives of people, of all faiths and none, living in poverty around the world. This year the Christian Aid Week appeal focuses on providing secure homes for families displaced through natural disasters in Haiti.

Marcelin and his three teenage daughters still haven't recovered from the devastation of Hurricane Matthew. They lost their home, livestock and possessions in the storm and more than a year later are still living in a disused shower block, a 2x2m windowless concrete building. Marcelin doesn't expect them to survive if another hurricane hits.

Vilia Odino lost her home in the earthquake that hit Haiti in 2010, but Christian Aid's partner KORAL built her a new disaster-resistant home. Vilia sheltered 54 people in her home when Hurricane Matthew hit because her house was the strongest in the area.

Please support Christian Aid as they help to build homes that will withstand the storms and provide security for families. Just £210 can pay for a local builder in Haiti to be trained to build safe homes for people like Marcelin.

A red Christian Aid envelope will be posted though your letter-box and collected by an authorised collector during Christian Aid Week which begins on 13th May. There will be collectors at Shortlands Station during the week, and the local Scout and Guide groups are also collecting money to support the appeal. You can also donate online at www.christianaid.org.uk.

The start of Christian Aid Week will be marked at the 10.30am service at St Mary's on Sunday 13th May when the preacher will be Martin Birch, a Director of Christian Aid. All are very welcome. More information will be on the board at the back of church.

Thy Kingdom Come

A Wave of Prayer at Pentecost 10 - 20 May

During the period between Ascension Day and Pentecost Sunday, the Archbishop of Canterbury, Justin Welby, has invited all Church of England churches to join the global wave of prayer for more people to come to know Jesus Christ.

The aims of this period are threefold; to join in prayer with the whole family of God the Father; that we as Christians may be an effective witness to God the Son, Jesus Christ; and to pray to be empowered by God the Holy Spirit.

Prayer is a good way of contemplating the direction of our lives, the purposes of God's mission through His teachings and the work of His healing power. Through prayer we are also spreading God's message of love and peace to our communities.

At St Mary's we are setting up a Prayer Labyrinth in the garden to walk round for prayer and meditation. The theme is the Lord's prayer and there will be leaflet guides in the porch to help on the journey.

All are welcome to participate, and a few leaflets will be left outside when the church is closed.



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WORSHIP

Every Sunday

- 08.00 Holy Communion
- 10.30 Family Communion, except when notified. During term time there are separate groups in the Church Hall for children aged 0-18.
- 18.30 Choral Evensong (3rd Sunday in the month)

Every Monday

- 17.30 Evening Prayers

Every Wednesday

- 10.00 Holy Communion

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

PARISH DIRECTORY

Vicar	Rev. M. Finch	8460 5682
	office@stmaryshortlands.church	
Licensed Lay Ministers		
	Mrs S. Aldred	8460 3978
	Mrs C. Bingham	8460 0324
Readers	Mr. P. Stotesbury	8650 3259
	Mr. S. Buchanan	8777 8008
Pastoral Assistants	Mrs. S. Harrison	8464 0284
	Mrs. M. Westropp	8650 5178
Parish Administrator	Ms. N. Blake	8460 5682
Assistant	Mrs. E. Parker	8460 5682
Churchwardens	Mr. A. Williams	07914343495
	Mrs S. Leonard	07725313432
Deputies	Mrs. P. Chase	8464 6188
	Mr. S. Clark	8464 0696
	Mr. D. Cooper	8460 0682
	Prof. M. Fox	8650 3365
	Dr. D. Jefferys	8460 6030
PCC Secretary	Miss J. Rambridge	8650 0947
Treasurer	Mr. T. Dawson	8460 5884
Assistant Treasurer	Mr. R. Hogg	8290 0613
Organist and Director of Music		
	Canon C. Tillotson	8460 7368
Assistant Organist	Mr Daniel Beach	8289 6510
Safeguarding Officer	Mrs Kay Coleman	07879337567
Electoral Roll	Mrs. M. Shaw	8460 9681
Junior Church	Mrs. S. Aldred	8460 3978
Stewardship	Mr. J. Westropp	8650 5178

PARISH OFFICE Tel: 8460 5682
e-mail: office@stmaryshortlands.church
Open 9.30am - 12.30pm weekdays.
Information regarding Baptisms and Weddings can be obtained during these hours.

ST. MARY'S ORGANISATIONS
Mothers & Toddlers Mrs. J. Runicles 8650 4553
Mothers' Union Fellowship Group Mrs. P. White 8460 9357
Friends of St. Mary's Miss J. Rambridge 8650 0947

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

Scouts (Fri)	Mr. R. Howe	8462 7132
Cubs (Mon)	Mrs. P. Braithwaite	8460 4152
Cubs (Tues)	Mr. J. Griffiths	07954 437658
Beavers	Ms E. Hay	07932758801

For admissions to Rainbows, Brownies & Guides please tel: 08001695901 or go to www.girlguiding.org.uk/interested

Guides (Tues.)	Ms. M. Bowman	07885604457
Guides (Fri)	Mrs. G. Dawson	8460 5884
Brownies (Mon.)	Miss. K. Higgs	8462 3285
Brownies (Wed.)	Mrs. R. Katheswaran	

		8249 0984
Brownies (Thurs.)	Mrs. S. Tight	8460 8122
Rainbows	Ms. H. Last	8460 1705
Pre-School	Mrs. P. Chase	8290 6704

		or 07960 988552
The 2WW's	Mrs. A. Swatton	8650 1114
Church Flowers	Mrs. M. Parr	8249 7127
Mission Chairman	Mrs. S. Shelton	8402 3299
Douai Link	Mrs. G. Dawson	8460 5884
Fair Trade	Mrs. C. Willatt	8313 0246
Mobility Class	Mrs. Jan Boam	8460 7101

LOCAL CONTACTS

Cllr. M. Cooke	020 3665 0357
(Email: Mary.Cooke@bromley.gov.uk)	
Cllr D. Jefferys	020 8460 6030
(Email: david.jefferys@bromley.gov.uk)	
Residents' Association	8460 4060
Shortlands Safer Neighbourhood	8721 2614

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