

St Mary's Church, Bromley

Parish Magazine

DECEMBER 2025 / JANUARY 2026

61 College Road Bromley BR1 3QG



www.stmarys-bromley.org.uk

Minimum donation 75p

St Mary's Church, Bromley

Advent and Christmas Services and Events 2025

Advent Course - Thursday evenings

20th November 6.15 pm – 7.15 pm

4th December 6.15 pm – 7.15 pm

11th December 6.15 pm – 7.15 pm

18th December 6.15 pm – 7.15 pm

Advent Quiet Day - Thursday 27th November - 9.30 am – 3.30 pm

Christmas Fair - Saturday 29th November - 2.00 pm – 5.00 pm

Advent Sunday

Sunday 30th November

Family Communion 10.30 am



Advent 2

Sunday 7th December

Family Communion 10.30 am

Advent 3

Sunday 14th December

Family Communion 10.30 am

Christingle with Crib Service 4 pm

Advent 4

Sunday 21st December

Nativity Service 10.30 am

9 Lessons & Carols 6.30 pm

Christmas Eve

Wednesday 24th December

Carols 11.00 pm

Midnight Communion 11.30 pm

Christmas Day

Thursday 25th December

Family Communion 10.30 am

**All are welcome to celebrate Christmas in many ways with
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"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and on earth, peace..." Luke 2:14



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Welcome to the December 2025 edition of the Parish Magazine.

Welcome to the December Parish Magazine. Thank you so much to everyone who has contributed their ideas and articles during the year—we should now be much better informed!

This month I think everyone is busy preparing for Advent / the Fair / Christmas so there is something of a “look back at the year” element. The usual articles are mostly there, but you will have to look for them....



We won't be bringing out another edition until February, so everyone has plenty of time to produce articles for Alison, our next Editor. In the meanwhile, look out for updates on events and activities via the Newsletter and the Website.

With best wishes for Christmas and the New Year,

Jill Atkinson

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This month's editor: Jill Atkinson

Editor for February Alison Tyler

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Please support the editors by giving articles and notices to them by the copy date.

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Disclaimer

The opinions, beliefs and viewpoints expressed by the various participants in this magazine do not necessarily reflect the opinions, beliefs and viewpoints of the Editors.

Vicar's Letter – December 2025



Dear Friends,

Warm greetings to you all as we enter into the final month of the year. I hope and pray that each of you is keeping well. December often brings a mixture of joy, busyness, anticipation, and reflection, and I hope that, amid it all, you are finding moments of peace and encouragement.

This season marks a full year since I moved into the parish and began this journey with you. It is hard to believe how quickly twelve months have passed. As I look back, my heart is filled with deep gratitude for your kindness, your patience, your prayers and the many ways you have welcomed me into the life of this community. Thank you for allowing me to walk alongside you, to learn the rhythms of parish life, and to witness the faith, generosity, and resilience that characterise this church family.

Reflecting on the past month, I am especially grateful for the meaningful ways we have gathered as God's people. Our All Saints', All Souls', and Remembrance services in November were powerful reminders of the great cloud of witnesses who inspire us, and of the loved ones we continue to hold in our hearts. These moments of remembrance always draw us back to the hope that anchors our faith, the promise of resurrection and the unbroken communion of God's family across time and space.

We also celebrated Grace Cafe becoming part of the Places of Welcome network: a joyful milestone for our parish. The warmth, laughter, and conversation during the event spoke beautifully of who we are: a community where all are received with Christ's embrace. My heartfelt thanks to every volunteer who made this possible, and to all who attended.

Now we step into Advent: a season of waiting, watching, and preparing. It gently calls us to slow down, to make space for God's quiet whisper, and to notice the light that breaks into the world through Christ. And very soon, we will arrive at the wonder and joy of Christmas.

Throughout December, we will gather for our Advent and Christmas events and services. The programme is published on this magazine, and in all our social media platforms. I warmly invite you to join us whether in person or online. However you participate, please know that your presence is valued

and your connection matters. And to those who journey with us through the pages of this magazine: thank you. Every prayer, every message, every quiet act of support strengthens our shared life.

Thank you to every team and every individual including those who serve visibly and those who quietly keep our parish life going; those who attend weekly, those who join occasionally, those who worship from home, and those who simply hold us in prayer. You are all an important part of this community.

As winter settles in, please take care of yourselves and one another. Look out for neighbours who may need a friendly call or a helping hand. Let us continue to pray for our parish, our community, and the world which longs for peace, justice, and hope in places where they often feel fragile.

Looking ahead, I remain hopeful and excited about the journey before us.

We have grown together this past year, and I trust that God will continue to guide us, strengthen us, and shape us as we serve Him side by side.

May I take this opportunity to wish you a joyful, peaceful and merry Christmas and a blessed and happy New Year. May the joy of Christ fill your homes and hearts, and may God's light guide your steps into the new year: 2026 with faith, courage, and hope.

With every blessing and my warmest regards,
Rev Eucharis



Newsletter

If you would like something to be included in the St Mary's Newsletter, please send it to Newsletter.StMarys@outlook.com. Also, if you would like to receive the Newsletter by email each week, please, please send your requests to Newsletter.StMarys@outlook.com, or complete the request form found on the table, at the back of the church. Lisa looks forward to hearing from you!

The Year in pictures: Repairs & Restorations

Eucharistia has been with us for a year now, and what a year it has been!

I wonder what have been your highlights? Think about it—you may well be asked.

Remember the Murals finally being restored? It seems impossible that we still had the scaffolding up last Christmas.

The clergy & choir vestries have also both been renovated, and now look very smart—as does the Front Room of Church House.



Advent: Making Space for Jesus



Advent is the time of promise; we are living through Advent waiting in hope for the time of fulfilment, for the coming of the Christ child.

Advent is also a time of making room in crowded lives, for ourselves to stretch and grow, for the service of others, and for the love of God, so that we will be ready when He comes again. To make space is to let go of clutter and distraction in our lives, so that something new can be born in us. It is a time to invite, or at least to allow God to enter our lives in new or unexpected ways, and it's an act of possible hospitality. Are we ready to welcome Christ as he comes to us again, unexpectedly in the lost, the stranger, the vulnerable and the forgotten.

In Isaiah God said : 'Behold, I am doing a new thing; now it springs forth, do you not perceive it?'

Not yet perhaps, though we might just sense the coming of a new thing, as Advent is also a time of growth, of anticipation and preparation, as Mary, the mother of Jesus, carries her unborn child to Bethlehem to be born. In her body the child Jesus began his life with us, he developed and grew, because she had said 'yes' to Gabriel and made space for him, offering him a lift into life.

I am long past the age of having another child so I went in a different direction and have been thinking about making space for Jesus by decluttering my life.

We moved to Bromley, some 7 years ago now, to downsize and have done a lot of decluttering both before and since. I have always longed to be a person who could be seen as a minimalist, seeking to live simply, sustainably, and generously and sharing my possessions and my time and money, in an open handed way.

This remains an aspiration, but I still have too much stuff, too many books, fabric, buttons, beads, thread and wool, seeds and cuttings that overwhelm my space, and a wide range of interests. Despite any attempts at generosity and sharing, and frequent attempts at self-discipline, coupled with trips to the charity shop and gifts to school and church fetes and fairs, I still have too much stuff. So I give away most of my successful

seeds and cuttings, and I love making and mending things so much so that its second nature to have something on 'the go'. Realistically, I am glad that I still can, make or create and grow and have come to the conclusion that giving and sharing - and not holding on to or possessing too many things, just has to be enough for now.

So how can I declutter my inner life, and make space for Jesus so that when he comes again, there is room in my life to receive Him? Advent is always a good time for focus on only a few things, rather than many. It's a time to pray more regularly and during this time of waiting, to read again expectantly and eagerly my favourite Advent books one of which is called 'The meaning is in the Waiting' by Paula Gooder and it helps with slowing down ready for Christmas on the one hand, and for Christ coming again whenever it might be on the other. The second book is, a book of poetry, one for each day of Advent called 'haphazard by starlight' chosen and interpreted by Janet Morley. It was described by one reviewer as a 'pilgrimage of the heart', which as a poetry lover is definitely how I receive it.

This year we are having an Advent study course based on some of the themes in Matthew's Gospel, as it will lead us in his Gospel account of the life of Jesus, for the Year A lectionary readings. We will have the chance to discover insights into Jesus's life that only Matthew shares with us.

In the middle of the worry and the busyness of preparing for Christmas I invite us to slow down, to reflect and consider not just how ready we are for Christmas, but also how we might even begin to think about how to prepare for Jesus to come again, when no one knows 'the day or the hour' that it will happen.

I suspect that if we learn to live expecting the unexpected we might find ourselves automatically living simpler less cluttered lives and making more space for Jesus and so come to know him better every day. So that when he comes again he might find us ready and not weighed down by too much stuff, able instead to celebrate that we have just enough and a little to share. We continue to prepare to welcome him, to get to know him so long desired, but still unknown, but like Mary, like all mothers and fathers we are full of excitement and hope as we wait for this new life to come and join us in our lives.

So as we move forward may we grow in grace, simplicity and understanding and know all of God's blessings and much joy through Advent and Christmas this year.

Alison Tyler



Decorating the Church for Christmas 2025



As we get nearer to the joy of Christmas, we will be preparing to decorate the church with flowers and festive decorations on Tuesday 23rd December between 10 am – 12 noon. We currently have some 'spare' window -sills that need to be suitably dressed. This could simply be using fir cones, holly or other foliage and twigs. If you would like to be involved with this enjoyable activity, please have a word. Coffee and cake will be on offer!

At this festive time of year, the cost of fresh flowers is particularly high and any donations towards the Christmas Flower Fund will be much appreciated. Thank you.

Anne Yolland

Lucky Number Two

When I was 8 and in what would now be called year 4, I remember being very concerned about the wellbeing of my teacher. The problem? I was away from school for at least a week with chicken pox, and I was vice form captain that term. I can't remember what my duties were in the role – probably lining up at the end of the line and taking the register to the office in the absence of the form captain (who, incidentally, had succumbed to the same chicken pox epidemic). You will be very relieved to hear that my teacher not only survived the trauma, but she then lived to a ripe old age.

Being vice-captain was a prelude to other similar roles – Guide patrol second; assistant Guide leader; Deputy head. Some of these, to be honest, were probably something of a “consolation prize” for not getting the “top” job; or more charitably, a means of encouraging more people to be involved. Churches, too, have assistant roles such as curate or assistant priest, & I know how much our wardens appreciate having a whole team of “deputies” prepared to step in for them, particularly on a Sunday. There are biblical figures who were in supportive roles too – think St Joseph; or St Paul's companions on his travels.

The church, or more accurately, the PCC, is a registered charity, & is therefore bound by charity rules. One of these is that our accounts are “independently examined” (or checked) every year, & I am always grateful to those who carry out this role for me, most recently Edwina, but also including three Johns! Then, every online payment has to be “dual-authorised” – i.e. two different people have to log into the online bank account and approve the transaction, hopefully having checked it first. And every time a collection is taken, two people are involved in counting and recording the income. It is all too easy to make a mistake on the slip at the end of a time of volunteering, so I am grateful to the “second person” who helps to ensure that the sums add up, and that each slip is completed with the (correct!) date and reason for the donations.

I am always pleased when it falls to others to make the decisions, so I am always very happy to be “number two”, and willingly fill in at school as a teaching assistant. “Number two” is every bit as important as the “number one” – and I should know, I am used to being introduced by my mother as “number two daughter”!

Jill Atkinson

The Year in pictures: Working parties

Volunteers, have spent hours this year making sure that the church and the grounds look well cared for. This has often, but not exclusively, been on the first Saturday morning of each month.



The Story of the Christingle

The word 'Christingle' actually means 'Christ Light', and celebrates the light of Jesus coming into the world. Stories of how the Christingle began look back to the Moravian Church, which is found in the Czech Republic. The Moravians have held Christingle services for more than 200 years, and according to them, this is how the first Christingle might have been made:

Many years ago the children in a village were asked to bring a Christmas gift to put beside the crib in the church. One family was very poor, and had no money for gifts, but the three children were still determined to take something. The only nice thing they had was an orange, so they decided to give the Christ-child that.

But then they discovered the top was going green, so the eldest cut it out, and put a candle in the hole. To add some colour, one of the girls took a red ribbon from her hair and tied it around the middle of the orange. It was hard to make the ribbon stay still, so they fastened it in place with toothpicks. The toothpicks looked a bit bare, so the youngest child added some raisins to them.

The children took their decorated orange lantern to the church for the Christmas Mass. The other children sneered at their meagre gift, but the priest seized upon it with joy. He held it up as an example of the true understanding of the meaning of Christmas, for the following reasons: the orange is round, like the world; the candle gives us light in the dark, like the love of God; the red ribbon goes round the 'world', as a symbol of Christ's blood, given for everyone; the four sticks point in all directions, and symbolise that God is over all: North, South, East and West; and the fruit and nuts remind us of God's blessings.

The Children's Society first introduced the Christingle Service to The Church of England in 1968, and it has since become a popular event in the church calendar. This candlelit celebration is an ideal way to share the key messages of the Christian faith, while helping to raise vital funds to help vulnerable children across the country.

A view from the pew



A View from the Pew

Why do people choose to join a church-based social group, rather than a non-church organisation? Psychological theory suggests that any, or all, of the following may provide an explanation:

- Motivation to complete personal goals
- Drive to increase self-esteem
- Reduction in anxiety surrounding death
- To reduce uncertainty
- To seek protection within a group

So, is there anything that the church can draw from this research that might benefit St Mary's?

Firstly, the way we treat newcomers is vital. Welcoming visitors to join our congregation – even if it is only for one week – remains at the heart of our offer.

Recognising them on subsequent visits is part of the process of integration, and makes them feel good.

Use of names is valuable, to convince newcomers of our sincerity.

Finding a church group that is appropriate for the visitor – from Sunday Club, through Mothers' Union, to church choir or flower arranger – is a means of easier assimilation to the church family. This also provides a social reason for regular church attendance, and a smaller group of people to get to know.

Asking them to help – whether this be to man a stall at a fete, hand out service books at church, or serve coffee after service – provides a solid reason for "being there". And makes folk feel wanted.

Finding, and using, their talents is a big compliment to newcomers, who will quickly become regulars if their talent is used regularly.

Reading this through again makes me realise that the above applies to regular church goers as much as newcomers. We all need to feel wanted.

Not on a poster with a price on our heads, of course, but you probably know what I mean.

Peter Fall

The Year in pictures: Sales

We have held plant sales, a Fair, a pop-up clothing sale, a cream tea.... all enjoyed by the local community as well as a means of making money for ourselves and for others. And we had special collections for charities such as Friends of Kent Churches (Ride & Stride), Poverty & Hope and the Children's Society.



Choir and Music

What is there to say about church choirs and music in December that hasn't already been said? And better expressed!

And yet....

Whatever the congregation may be feeling, the church choir loves Advent and Christmas. Some choristers will hesitate to agree with this, because it is a most busy time, and there are many calls on folk with multiple interests – including music. There are additional services at which to sing. There are half-forgotten, half-remembered and new songs to prepare and perform. There are care homes and streets to be graced with our carol-singing presence, not to mention The Glades Shopping Centre!

However, despite (or perhaps, because of) these extras, the music is always a joy to sing. Mostly familiar (though we do try and introduce a new item every so often), it is comfortable, tuneful and meaningful. In various ways it expresses our joy at the upcoming recollection of the birth of our Saviour. What could be more joyous!

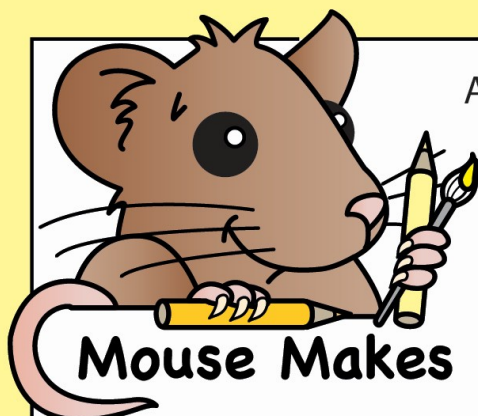
Of course, it is sometimes a little hard to remind ourselves of this when we are cold and wet outside in the dark, trying to be cheerful, upbeat and “on the beat”. But carol singing is only for a brief time each year, and it always manages to catch the mood of the season. It cheers up those who take part – not sure what it does for the listeners! It brings home the great Christmas story. It allows us to dust off the Santa hats, get out the carol books and sing our hearts out. And sometimes we manage to collect a few pennies for a good cause!

Although we could never claim that this is the main reason for the church to have a choir, it is a way to bring singers together in harmony (mostly half-remembered from last year!), or at least on the same carol sheet! And encourage other congregation members, friends and relatives to take part. There are so many great carols, so many good tunes, such a wealth of Christmas music that it is a shame to restrict it to a couple of church services each year. We are all invited to join with WELCARE IN BROMLEY for Carol singing in The Glades: meeting outside Zara, near Boots, on:

Thursday 18th December 11.00 a.m. – 12.30 p.m. (Join at any time.)

The traditional Nine Lessons and Carols service is in church on Sunday 21st December at 6.30 p.m., followed by seasonal refreshments.

Peter Fall



At Christmas we celebrate the birth of Jesus,
God's Son and our Saviour
coming into the world as a baby,
and we look forward to the time
when Jesus will come again,
not as a baby but as the
King of kings and Lord of lords!

read

John 14:3

A baby needs clothes
to keep warm like
a snuggly sleep suit
or a vest and nappy.

What were you dressed in?

Jesus was wrapped in

read Luke 2:7

A baby needs somewhere
to be born like at home
or in a hospital.

Where were you born?

Jesus was born
in a stable in

read Luke 2:1-6

A baby needs
somewhere
to sleep like
a crib or a cot.
*What did you
sleep in?*

Jesus slept in a

read Luke 2:7

A baby needs
a name.

*What name were
you called?*

Jesus was given
a special name
that had a
special meaning.

read

Matthew 1:21-23

HAPPY CHRISTMAS!

NADOLIG LLAWEN ★ NOLLAIG CHRÌDHEIL ★ NOLLAG SHONA
JOYEUX NOËL • FELIZ NAVIDAD • BUON NATALE • GOD JUL • FROHE WEIHNACHTEN

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The Year in pictures: Celebrations

Through the year we have celebrated with individuals - marking Birthdays and anniversaries; and with the wider community.—such as on VE day. As well as a church wedding,



Sadly, we have also lost some of our church family but were able to celebrated their lives at their funerals.

Church Attendance:

Attendance at Church of England churches grew for the fourth year in a row last year, statistics have confirmed.

The overall number of regular worshippers across the Church of England's congregations rose to 1.009 million in 2024, a rise of 0.6 per cent, according to the annual Statistics for Mission findings.

It was the second year in a row in which the Church of England's "worshipping community" – the combined number of regular members of local congregations – has stood above a million since the Covid-19 pandemic.

All age average attendance on a Sunday also rose 1.5 per cent to 581,000 in 2024, extending rises over recent years.

And overall attendance across the week edged upwards by 1.6 cent in a year, and stood at just over 702,000 last year, according to the figures.

The increase was driven by a recovery in attendance by adults (over 16), among whom average Sunday attendance was up by 1.8 per cent and weekly attendance rose by 1.8 per cent.

The 2024 figures showed that adult baptisms rose to 8,700 in 2024 compared to 7,800 the previous year. There was also a rise in the number of young people, aged between 11 and 17 years old who were baptised, from 2,100 in 2023 to 2,400 last year. Confirmations also rose by 5.3 per cent from 10,700 to 11,300.

While the overall figures show that in-person attendance has not fully reached pre-pandemic levels, the figures suggest it is moving closer to the projected pre-pandemic trend and in some cases has risen above the levels that might have been expected had there been no pandemic.





Members of the Mothers' Union recently held a quiz

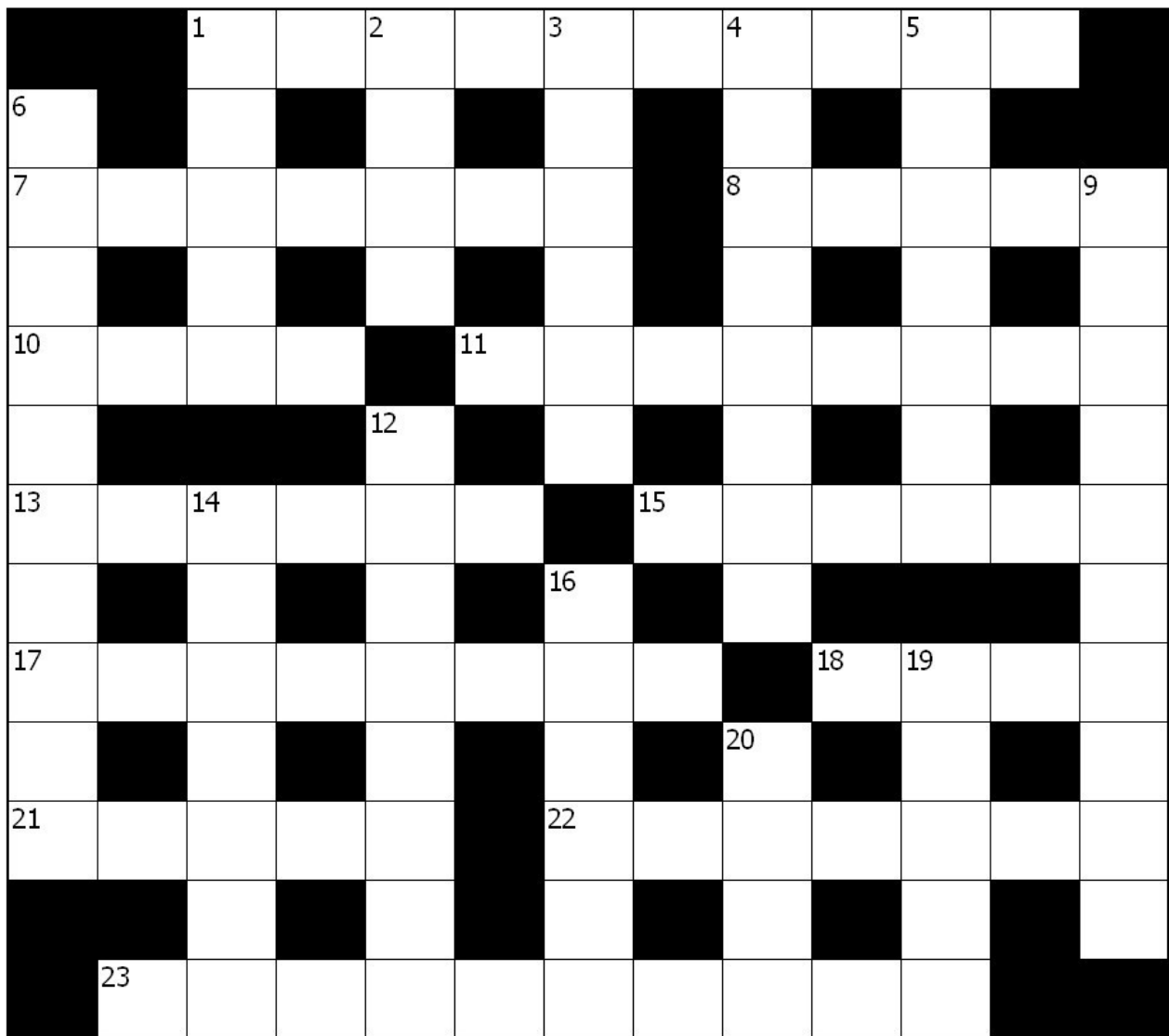


We've got online carol-singers again!

The Year in pictures: Outreach

St Mary's has a tradition of involvement with the community, and many and varied groups meet in the House and Hall complex. In November, the Grace Café was officially recognised as a Place of Welcome for all, with return visits by Bishop Simon and Rev Ruth Peet, amongst other special guests—and food, naturally.





Know what?

As we were putting out cookies for Father Christmas one Christmas Eve, I accidentally dropped one. I picked it up and dusted it off before placing it back on the plate. “You can’t do that,” argued my four-year-old. But I assured him that Father Christmas would never know.

He shot me a dubious look. “So, he knows if I’ve been bad or good all year, but he doesn’t know if you dropped his cookie on the floor?”

Across

- 1 Provisional meeting place of God and the Jews (Exodus 25:9) (10)
- 7 David's third son, killed when his head got caught in a tree during a battle with his father (2 Samuel 18:14,15) (7)
- 8 They ruled much of the west coast of South America in the 15th and early 16th centuries (5)
- 10 Small deer of European and Asian extraction (4)
- 11 Seized control of (Numbers 21:25) (8)
- 13 Terror (Luke 24:5) (6)
- 15 First World War heroine shot by the Germans in Brussels, Nurse Edith (6)
- 17 Stormy (8)
- 18 A bitter variety of this, together with lamb and unleavened bread, was the Passover menu for anyone unclean (Numbers 9:11) (4)
- 21 Arson (anag.) (5)
- 22 How John Newton described God's grace in his well-known hymn (7)
- 23 Habitation (Isaiah 27:10) (10)

Down

- 1 and see that the Lord is good (Psalm 34:8) (5)
- 2 The wicked man flees though no one pursues, but the righteous are as ... as a lion (Proverbs 28:1) (4)
- 3 One of the exiles, a descendant of Parosh, who married a foreign woman (Ezra 10:25) (6)
- 4 He escaped from Nob when Saul killed the rest of his family and joined David (1 Samuel 22:19,20) (8)
- 5 City and lake in Central Switzerland (7)
- 6 Offer your bodies as living , holy and pleasing to God (Romans 12:1) (10)
- 9 Pouches carried by horses (Genesis 49:14) (10)
- 12 One who accepts government by God (8)
- 14 Aromatic substance commonly used in Jewish ritual (Exodus 30:1) (7)
- 16 He asked Jesus, 'What is truth?' (John 18:38) (6)
- 19 Are (Romans 13:1) (5)
- 20 You are to give him the name Jesus, because he will ... his people from their sins (Matthew 1:21) (4)

‘All Souls Homily preached 2nd November 2025

This time of year is always a mixed experience of both joy and sorrow. Joy for lives loved and memories shared and sorrow for those same lives ended here on earth. Many of us, especially since the time of Covid left still even now struggling with the grief of losing our loved ones, in great numbers and in sometimes dreadful situations, also a great shock, often with an additional sense of anger or regret.

Today we remember, both the Saints in their joy and glory as we did this morning with joy and confidence, and now we celebrate more quietly the gift of all who have gone before, friends and family, brothers and sisters in our faith, those we have known and loved all those who have loved us, shaped us and have gone before us. We remember, mourn, reflect and give thanks, and if our grief is still new and raw, if we are still bewildered and struggling, we grit our teeth and ask for God’s grace and strength to endure.

It is a time for thinking about our lives and our deaths- the good times and the bad.

On the one hand our life is an unlooked for gift that we unwrap daily, like a parcel, in the game pass the parcel, and we go through it making fresh discoveries with each layer or each day, but on the other hand - we know, that we are those, unlike God or the angels, we are those who live a relatively short time on the earth, our lives here are brief, many are very brief, but we are all also made with care for loving relationships with God through eternity, and with each other here on earth in family and friendship, and that is where we find ourselves in times of both great joy and deep sorrow.

No one living escapes the pain of loss, which is the counterpart of the loving and joyful relationships we have with each other. Much of our energy can at times be engaged on being angry or sorrowful about our lost loved ones and then later, on learning to live well again with our loss, and perhaps our loneliness and our grief.

For grief does not go away or grow smaller, we just get used to it, we

integrate it into our lives, learn to live with the emotional spaces left by our departed loved ones, we may fill the time, but not the empty spaces they leave in our hearts. The rawness of grief may soften – the fact of loss remains, because learning to let our loved ones go, is part of our lifelong learning.

Grief, strangely, may make us better people, more compassionate and gentle, with each other, knowing that we all share similar sorrows. We can be there as companions, for each other even if there nothing we can do or say, just sitting with each other, allowing and accepting the pain, offering an arm or a shoulder and a handkerchief.

Grief may also ultimately leave us with a greater appreciation of the life we shared with our loved ones, and the life of our own that we still have to live.

Sadly, grief is almost always present in our adult lives, like unfinished business, sometimes obvious, other times not, but liable to catch us up when we least expect it, and there is no real end or final solution to it. Now I find that in adulthood it helps me to fully appreciate the good times rather better than I did when I was younger.

I am the last member of my family of origin, and have been for some years, so although I have integrated the losses of my parents and my brother into my life, I still miss them, not least because everyone I know now, expects to meet me as a fully functioning adult and no one alive now has memories from those lost joyful times, that I spent as a child and a young woman with my family, that we could still enjoy sharing together.

We live in a world of much suffering and death, both brought home to us particularly in times of war and disease. Even when death is expected it can be a great shock, as when the late Queen died. The unimaginable numbers of the dead in Russia's war with Ukraine, Israel's war with the Palestinians of Gaza, and the most recent deaths in Sudan, all people killed deliberately and thoughtlessly in such a short time by other people, and for no good reason. It is an enormous tragedy, an outrage and a great shock. God's generous and great gift of life wasted, disregarded and disrespected.

In times like this it's hard sometimes to keep faith and trust in Emanuel 'God with us', the same God who loves us, and came to join us, the God who knows our suffering and loss from within and joins us in engaging with that same mystery of relationships - of love, given, received and shared – and then ended in death. It's hard to keep the faith, but wherever we are in our suffering, God can be found there with us as a loving companion.

We are not alone, if God is with us, nor if we travel together as companions in the community of faith in our joys and our sorrows.

Our mourning is blessed and sanctified by our hope in the Resurrection of our brother Jesus. We began our service with the reassuring words of Jesus "I am the resurrection and the life," says the Lord. 'Those who believe in me, even though they die, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die' we are members of that company of those who believe in his promise of Resurrection – even when it is difficult.

We are those who also take reassurance from the promise in Lamentations "The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases, his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning: great is his faithfulness."

This is the faith into which we have been baptised, into the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and it is never more challenging to believe and to hold onto our faith than when we are mourning the death of our own loved ones. So as we reflect and give thanks, we remember those words and stand to affirm our faith both together as a Church family and for each other as sisters and brothers.

The Apostles Creed comes here as the Service continues, ending I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic Church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body, and the life everlasting. Amen.

Alison Tyler

The Year in pictures: Worship

Naturally, the church has marked seasons of the year at its Sunday Family Communion services - with special celebrations for Easter, Harvest, Christmas, to name but a few, not forgetting the Mothering Sunday, Creation Season, Trinity Sunday, Bible Sunday,, All Souls' and so on. There have been Baptisms and Confirmations, Lent and Advent courses and Quiet days. On important occasions the choir prepared music, and the flower arrangers made special arrangements—but they all enhance the services most weeks of the year. And, not surprisingly, there are often refreshments after the services, too!





*Sara preferred to let people work
out the hymns for themselves*

Answers to Crossword on page 24

ACROSS: 1, Tabernacle. 7, Absalom. 8, Incas. 10, Roes. 11, Captured. 13, Fright. 15, Cavell. 17, Cyclonic. 18, Herb. 21, Sonar. 22, Amazing. 23, Settlement.

DOWN: 1, Taste. 2, Bold. 3, Ramiah. 4, Abiathar. 5, Lucerne. 6, Sacrifices. 9, Saddlebags. 12, Theocrat. 14, Incense. 16, Pilate. 19, Exist. 20, Save.

Worship Diary

We offer a variety of services through the year. They are mostly on a Sunday at 10.30am and are mostly Family Communion. Most months we also have an All Age Communion. We hope you will find us a warm and friendly congregation. If you have questions about what we do, why we do it or how you might like to be more involved please do speak with the vicar, a church warden, a sidesman... or anyone really!

Our Sunday Club is a valued provision for our youngest members. They do not meet during school holidays.

Our services are often live streamed and can be viewed on our Facebook page.

Services December

(Sunday 30th November – Advent Sunday
10.30am Family Communion)

Sunday 7th – Advent 2
10.30am Family Communion

Sunday 14th – Advent 3
10.30am Family Communion
4pm Christingle with Crib Building Service

Sunday 21st – Advent 4
10.30am Nativity Family Service (no Eucharist) + refreshments
6.30pm 9 Lessons and Carols + refreshments

Wednesday 24th – Christmas Eve
11.00pm Carol singing, followed by
11.30pm Midnight Communion

Thursday 25th – Christmas Day
10.30am Family Communion

Sunday 28th – The First Sunday of Christmas
10.30am Family Communion

St Mary's (Plaistow) College Road Bromley

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