

St Mary's Church, Bromley

Parish Magazine

February 2022

61 College Road Bromley BR1 3QG



www.stmarys-bromley.org.uk

Minimum donation 75p



have you seen

OUR STUNNING DECORATION?

I expect for the readers of our Parish Magazine the answer is most probably 'yes'. But for the parish at large all too few have seen the delights of our church for themselves.

Where are a surprisingly large number of people who ask for services such as a baptism or a wedding in Saint Marys church who have never been in the building before. So it is my practise as often as possible to hold meetings in the church building so its wonders can be appreciated. As people gaze and express a sense of awe, I ask "do you think this will be suitable". Obviously they know I am pulling their leg and the answer is "yes".

It will be wonderful to be able to ask the people of our parish to come and see our lovely church. I've got an idea to take May this year as an opportunity to do this. We could build a programme of activities such as organ recitals, singing concerts, a description of the decorations, dancing, a flower festival, Christian Aid week, all with refreshments and end with a celebration on the Queens platinum celebration weekend. And we could also just be open for people to drop in.

We could produce a simple brochure which would make available to people in the parish. This will be a means of invitation. I see this as being able to offer something as we come out of the restrictions of COVID with a way for people to meet each other and enjoy one another's company along with some delightful activities.

There is an old motto for Saint Marys "at the heart of the community". Would you like to be involved in some way and facilitate our communal life in May? I would love to hear from you.

Alan Keeler

Welcome to the February edition of the Parish Magazine.

We hope that you enjoy this addition of the Parish Magazine.

We have regular features about the life of St Mary's. And some items about our plans for the future. These include a Lent Course about Gods Grace. And also how we might share our lives with our Parish in May.

We are excited to continue to publish our Magazine and look forward to hearing comments about its content and receive articles for future editions.

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This month's editor: Alan Keeler

Editor for March: Jo Clark

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



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In Memoriam

Heather MacFarlane (wife of former Vicar of St Mary's Angus MacFarlane) has died peacefully at home in Somerset having reached the grand old age of 99 and within a month of her 100th birthday

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.

...and it was good



When I was a child I remember finding the box of needles that my mother used for making and repairing clothes. These were the needles with heads on rather than having holes to enable sewing. I took two of them and put them together. They were side by side with one head above the other as in the first figure. But I was intrigued so I put another needle next to it side by side with one head slightly above the other as in the second figure. There was a certain attractiveness about the straight lines and the curves of the heads and the feet of the needles. So I carried on going and in the end I produced an arc which really surprised and delighted me, see the third figure.

fig 1



fig 2.

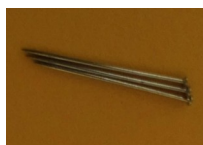


fig 3



It is part of my character that I have a great sense of curiosity. My mother told me on one visit to the doctor she asked 'when will Alan stop asking "why"'. Whatever the answer was, I didn't stop. I think I continued to be interested in possibilities because I found such delightful things; such as straight needles producing a circular pattern. There is an old saying that two men look through prison bars one saw mud and one saw stars. I know there's going to be the mud but I really want to find the stars.

I like the first chapter of Genesis as God creates and after each day's activity he looks at what he has made and says 'it is good'. There is so much to discover and celebrate in the world in which we live and the people we share it with. But it can be a challenge and we frequently have to have a sense of inquiry and expectation. I find this to be true about the faith that we share. There are times of the year where we particularly seek. With the month of March we begin our season of Lent.

I can remember in my early years of being a Christian having a pancake party on Shrove Tuesday. The company of people, who were not practising Christians, began to discuss what they would give up for Lent. After a few

suggestions they asked me what I was going to do. As I say I was a young Christian and had not got a background doing things like Lent but felt duty bound to join in. So I said I would give up alcohol.

Now the first thing about this is it's negativity. Lent is equated with giving something up. It could be just having a hard time which doesn't help with Christianity being Good News, or does it? As I went through that Lent I discovered the gentle but persistent persuasion to drink alcohol. Something about my abstinence could be resented and I would be tested to join in with the crowd. So in a rather backhanded way I discovered something new about how coercive our society could be.

I also discovered something about myself. I never drank that much alcohol and so giving it up was not a real sacrifice. But I did start to think 'I'm doing very well with this'. It was as if part of the result of Lent was going to be me being very proud! Towards the end of Lent I took a girlfriend out for a very lovely meal. We had both been that that Shrove Tuesday pancake party. She said she would really like some wine with the meal. I was sort of torn about continuing to be abstinent and not wanting to fail. In the end we decided to have wine with the meal which got me out of being able to brag about my success and also enjoying a drink.

There's something about Islamic art where the artist deliberately adds a mistake. The idea is that only God should be perfect. Personally, in my life I don't have to put in mistakes. I'm quite able to do get it wrong without trying. I don't mean trivial faults I mean having to apologise and make amends. In fact it is the hallmark of Christianity that wrong can be made right and it is called grace.

So what shall we do with Lent this year? There is a book by a writer called Philip Yancey called 'What's so amazing about grace'. It left a huge impression upon me and I have often given it as a gift for others to enjoy. I discovered that last year it has been made into a six part course with DVD support. Lent will have useful disciplines to follow. However to explore and grow in grace is a wonderful prospect. You will be most welcome to join St Mary's Lent course and there are details later in the magazine.

God looks at the world he has made and says it is good this is joined with him in finding that goodness as we grow in the grace that he offers to us.

Best wishes

Alan Keeler

Making Choices a lifelong activity



Life doesn't just happen; our lives are defined by choices made, either by us or by significant others. Neither is this life a rehearsal; we only have this one opportunity for an earthly life at this time in the twenty first century – so how we live is important. I live expectantly because for so long, Sunday by Sunday, the Church notice sheet ended with the words 'Expect Good things' so mostly I do. But there are always changes and new things to explore.

I am sure that in church recently I said that one of my new year's resolutions was to read more poetry, because it makes me think in new or unexpected ways. So may I introduce the American poet Mary Oliver to any of you who have not encountered her, by way of a quotation from her work which led me to thinking about making choices.

'Tell me, what is it you plan to do with your one wild and precious life?'
from 'The Summer day' by Mary Oliver.

I never thought of my life as 'wild and precious' until I read that line and realised how much I have enjoyed, am still enjoying, and hope to continue to enjoy my life for as long as it carries on. It is very precious, this unlooked for gift, and becomes more so over time, as my gratitude for God's great gift of life increases. Our life is the gift that keeps on giving as we unwrap more and more of it and explore further. Someone once said to me 'Our life is God's gift to us, what we do with it is our gift to God' but this is only strictly true, I think, in the active choices we make for ourselves in our lives.

Life is, though, also wild because so much of it is not planned but is fortuitous, and luckily in my case neither too dangerous nor fatal. It seems strange that luck, good or bad, or felicitous opportunities can have a real impact on our lives, and yet we have no control over some things at all.

I realised that I have never made a detailed plan for my life, but as a young woman I made some choices with long term implications, without understanding at all until much, much later that those choices had shaped most of the rest of my life so far. The major ways our lives work out are the usually the results of either our own decisions and choices, or those of

influential people in our lives. A good example of the latter is that my parents chose to marry each other, and then to have a child; they chose my schools, where I lived and initially everything I did, ate, wore, or read. So many significant decisions over which I had no control at all had already shaped my life and the kind of person I would be. Only with age and increased experience do any of us make more and more choices of our own over minor issues like food, clothes, books and so forth but most significantly over values, our goals and our principles, friends, and careers.

It was a friend of mine who took me to Church with her family when I was 12; this was my first significant choice for myself. so I became a practising Christian (my second), another friend influenced my choice of University and thus ensured my friendship group both there and later, and someone else introduced me to the person I subsequently married.

The reason I am telling you about my own life experience is because, when I started to look into making choices in a search for some kind of wisdom about choice, all the information on the web or in recent books seems to be overwhelmingly selfish, and mostly about life choices that we make for ourselves. They don't consider the impacts of decisions made for us by others, or the effect of chance, or the ability and desire to make choices that are for the common good or useful for others, and how these might affect our choices.

The range of choice we have now would be incomprehensible to those of earlier generations, so we should - when we can - use the gift wisely. I was struck early on in life by *Deut.30:19* "*I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing: therefore, choose life.*"

Making wise choices about the things we do is very important because it can have such a dramatic impact, giving life meaning either for us and/or for those around us, or creating chaos and disaster. My friend who took me to Church when I was 12 had *without knowing it provided the opportunity for the Holy Spirit to have an impact on my life; my parents who had me baptised as an infant had without knowing it made me an Anglican, and the church welcomed me as a member - and the rest you already know.....*

I still always expect good things and usually try hard to choose life and blessing for everyone, but still as yet have no detailed plan, just a long term goal to learn to follow better in Jesus's footsteps and to make choices that match it, and make it more likely.

Here is Mary Oliver's poem in full

Who made the world?
Who made the swan, and the black bear?
Who made the grasshopper?
This grasshopper, I mean—
the one who has flung herself out of the grass,
the one who is eating sugar out of my hand,
who is moving her jaws back and forth instead of up and down—
who is gazing around with her enormous and complicated eyes.
Now she lifts her pale forearms and thoroughly washes her face.
Now she snaps her wings open, and floats away.
I don't know exactly what a prayer is.
I do know how to pay attention, how to fall down
into the grass, how to kneel down in the grass,
how to be idle and blessed, how to stroll through the fields,
which is what I have been doing all day.
Tell me, what else should I have done?
Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?
***Tell me, what is it you plan to do
with your one wild and precious life?***

Alison Tyler

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What's So Amazing About Grace?

*Amazing grace! how sweet the sound
that saved a wretch like me..*

The reality of grace is at the heart of our faith. It is about God's great goodness to everyone and his generous welcome whoever we are.

Grace is always the foundation of being a Christian and something we will be forever finding new depths to.

Our Lent Course this year will take a work by Philip Yancey that with DVD video and discussion will explore this key aspect of our faith.

The meetings will be in the Buchan Hall in the mornings 10.30am - 11.30am and evening 8.00pm – 9.00pm. The scheme will be as follows:

3 March No Strings Attached

God's love for the undeserving

10 March An Unnatural Act

Extending grace when we've been wronged

17 March The Art of Forgiving

Responding with grace when it seems impossible

24 March Grace Put to the Test

Grace in the face of disagreement

31 March Grace Abuse

Cheapening grace and robbing its power

7 April Dispensing Grace

How can we do it?

*The last evening will coincide with the Maundy Meal
People will be asked to sign up to get the catering right*

*...I once was lost, but now I'm found
was blind, but now I see*

opening and closing quotes John Newton (1725 – 1807)

Floral Escapades

Firstly, I would like to say a big thank you to those who helped to decorate the church so beautifully for Christmas 2021. On Christmas Eve a small team flower team assembled; Jean Read, Julie Simon, Vicki Andrews and myself. We worked socially distanced, wore face masks, in various areas of the church. Even when the boiler did not come on as programmed, everyone carried on regardless, without complaining! Can I also just say thank you to all who have kindly donated various flower associated items throughout the year. Thank you one and all for your continued support on the flower front, it is very much appreciated.

Last Autumn I was privileged to be invited to assist with flowers at Southwark Cathedral. It was fun carrying a bag of tall pampas grasses on the train and trying to keep them intact. In fact, I had been instructed to spray them beforehand with hairspray to prevent the fronds from dropping. This was a first for me! The journey on the train with two other ladies from the flower club brightened up the day of many other passengers, who spoke to us and clearly enjoyed seeing the bags of the colourful flowers we were transporting. I was also in charge of some large headed chrysanthemums, which decided to shed some of their petals on the train, but we won't dwell on this as it could have been a lot worse, thankfully no heads were lost in the process! We then had to navigate our way through the chicane of stalls in Borough Market.

On arrival at the Cathedral, the resident cat 'Hodge' decided to come over to investigate what we were doing and checked out the flowers and foliage. After all this activity, he was seen taking a cat nap and curled up in one of the vestries! Prayers are said at the cathedral every hour, so it is good to take time out and stop what we are doing to be part of this. I was also pleased to be the recipient of a lovely Christmas card from the Dean of Southwark Cathedral, personally addressed to me. I think this means that I am now officially on the flower rota!



The flowers at St. Mary's are obviously on a much smaller scale than at Southwark Cathedral, but are nevertheless just as important to the life of our church. If anyone is interested in helping with the flowers, either arranging, maintenance or watering, please let me know. Other floral opportunities for those who prefer a less hands-on approach are available at Bromley Flower Club, URC Church, Widmore Road, on the first Tuesday of every month (not August) at 2 pm. Graham Harmer will be demonstrating on 1st February. A friendly club where visitors are most welcome. The Guild of Church Flower Arrangers meets 4 times a year at various church denominations. Please speak to me for further information on any of the above.

Anne Yolland



Mothers' Union

Our first meeting of 2022 was held on 13th January when Eve Johnson gave us a flower arranging demonstration. The meeting was well attended and enjoyed by all who were present. A photo of the creations are shown below.



GOLD



The feast of the Three Kings has just passed, so my thoughts turned to their traditional gifts - Myrrh, Frankincense and GOLD.

Gold, the object of desire, the metal of kings and measure of wealth is my first subject. I had intended to combine all three gifts into one article, but there is so much to say about gold that here it is, solo.

Gold has been treasured for thousands of years. Shiny, durable and a lovely colour, it is strong but still flexible enough to be bent, beaten and stretched. It has always been treasured for its appearance, but now it is also valued for its other physical properties, such as conductivity and its resistance to almost everything.

The first sign of gold is right back in the Palaeolithic, the old stone age, in Spain forty thousand years ago. Nuggets of pure gold were found in a cave which seem to have been used for ornamentation by the people who lived there all those years ago.

After the cave men in Spain, there is quite a gap until gold jewellery pops up again in southeast Europe about seven thousand years ago, when it was being mined in Transylvania and made into jewellery all over the Balkans and Black Sea area.

It was also in use in Ancient Egypt about 3,500 years ago, where they first standardised gold as currency and introduced that well known monetary unit, the shekel. This use of gold as currency finally collapsed at the beginning of the Great Depression in 1929. The golden sovereign is still legal tender in the UK, but you would be mad to take it into the bank as cash, as one sovereign (face value £1) is worth about £340 as gold.

Trine Hevzi

Poster found in a Church in
France... (translated):

"When you enter this church
it may be possible that you
hear "the call of God".

However, it is unlikely that He
will call you on your mobile.

Thank you for turning off
your phones. If you want to
talk to God, enter, choose a
quiet place and talk to Him.
If you want to see Him, send
Him a text while driving."

Mothers' Union Matters

In the past year, despite the pandemic, St Mary's Mothers' Union has raised more than £780 for special projects. As with all MU work, the aims of such projects are to maintain a worldwide Christian fellowship, promote favourable conditions in society for stable family life, and to help those families who have met with adversity. This includes female literacy (Literacy and Financial Education



Programme) and short-break relief for carers (Away From It All). We plan to have another Plant Sale this year on 14th May.

A recent example of these aims in practice came in Norfolk. Syrian refugees were coming to the UK and local authorities were being asked to support their resettlement. Norwich MU members were unanimous in their support of the cause. They did a march in the city of Norwich and lobbied the local authority to support refugees. Local MU branches raised money to put funds into a resettlement programme, which now provides bedding, teddy bears, welcome messages and basic necessities for a new home.

This illustrates how Mothers' Union lifts up and supports refugees, helping them to find solace and security in a new society.

An earlier refugee from Rwanda had been supported by MU, and she is now part of the programme providing help in Norfolk. She says "I view Mothers' Union members as my friends and sisters ... we all pray together and work together to make Norfolk a welcoming and special place for new people who arrive to settle here."

Mothers' Union provides a welcoming support network for people in their time of need. Yet also important is an awareness of the encouragement the movement gives to individuals on a spiritual level.

Gracious God, we put our trust in you.

*Give us open hearts and minds to discern your perfect direction
for our Mothers' Union:*

Affirm us in your love that we may be bold to seek your face.

Strengthen us with resolve to embrace new ways with confidence.

Unite us in heart and mind that we may move forward with gladness.

Inspire us in our faith that all things are possible with God.

Transform us into a people empowered by the Spirit, overflowing with hope, to effectively serve our communities.

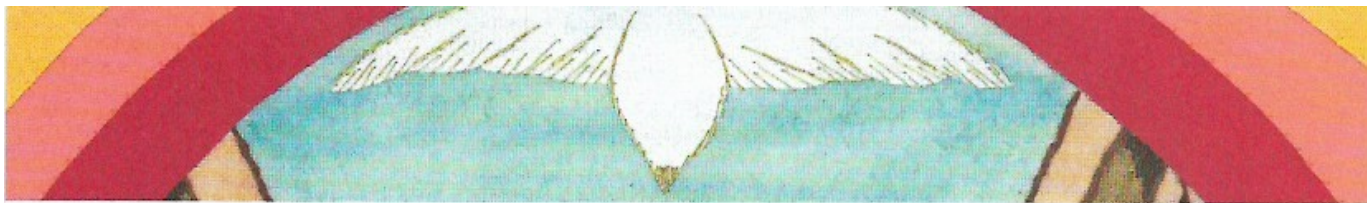
Amen.

MU Programme for February/March

Thursday 10th February	From 10.00 a.m.	Coffee and chat, bring and buy, review of the year.	In Buchan Hall, with coffee and cake.
Thursday 17th February	From 10.00 a.m.	Knit and Knatter	In Front Room; wool, needles and patterns available. Coffee is provided, as this is a social gathering, and all are welcome to knatter.
Friday 4th March	10.30 a.m.	Women's World Day of Prayer	Salvation Army, Bromley.
Thursday 10th March	10.00 a.m.	Lent Meeting led by Rev. Alison Tyler	In Front Room, coffee provided.
Thursday 17th March	From 10.00 a.m.	Knit and Knatter	In Front Room; wool, needles and patterns available. Coffee is provided, as this is a social gathering, and all are welcome to knatter.

Everyone is invited to all meetings of Mothers' Union.

Our next meeting is on Thursday 10th February at 10.00am. We will meet for a chat, with coffee and cake. There will be a Bring and Buy sale. We will also hold a brief AGM to present our reports for 2021. The meeting will be held in the Front Room of Church House - please do join us - all welcome.



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CHOIR NOTES

St Mary's Church Choir may be socially distanced. It may even be "gagged" for some of the time. But it generally has clean hands (thanks to the antiseptic hand gel) and likes to think that it is possessed of a pure heart. Members of the choir were reminded of this when they sang Choral Evensong on 30th January. It was the first choral service at St Mary's for two years, throughout which time the choir, with the organists, had maintained a live music presence in the church, crucially when the congregation had been forbidden to sing.



The Psalm selected for the service was number 24, "The earth is the Lord's". In verse 4 the Psalmist (David?) answers his own question, "who will stand in his holy place?" with the answer "he that hath clean hands and a pure heart". We certainly had clean hands! Can't answer for the hearts, but we were pretty sure that no member of the choir had "lifted up their soul unto vanity nor sworn deceitfully." – At least, not in our hearing.

Singing psalms to chants in the Parish Psalter is a skill that takes time to acquire, but fortunately seems to stay with you, even when not exercised for a couple of years. The bonus of a little descant for the sopranos in William Crotch's chant for Psalm 24 did not go un-noticed, nor un-sung!

It was a joy to prepare for, and lead, a choral service after a long interval, and regular members were noticeably energised by the challenge. It also attracted interest from singers who are unable to commit to singing every week, so keeping us in musical touch with more like-minded folk. Singing together, producing something greater than the arithmetic sum of the parts, is rewarded by a simple joy which might be described as "a pure heart".



For St Mary's Choir Members and organists, the difficulties of the past two years were there to be overcome. And they have succeeded superbly well. Music is still alive and kicking in St Mary's, with the essential help of Anne. Of course, there is always room for more singers - so "roll up, roll up" and join the fun! Choir practice is back on Thursdays at 7.30 p.m. for an hour. You would be very welcome.

Peter Fall

A view from the pew



Don't we all (sometime in our lives) try to keep a daily diary, starting in January?

And how long do we keep it up? A week? A month?

You are still scribbling it all down? In February?

You must be like Samuel Pepys, or John Evelyn, or maybe even an Anne Frank.

SAM

Samuel Pepys (life 1633 – 1703) (diary 1660 – 1669)

Wednesday 10th August 1665



But, Lord! how sad a sight it is to see the streets empty of people, and very few upon the 'Change. Jealous of every door that one sees shut up, lest it should be the plague; and about us two shops in three, if not more, generally shut up.

Pepys lived in central London, just off Fleet Street, and through hard work and a talent for administration became Secretary to the Admiralty.

His reforms began the process of professionalising the Royal Navy.

His diary tells of his detailed personal life, as well as accounts of national events such as the Plague and Great Fire of London. He married, but was childless, possibly due to an operation he underwent to remove gall stones in 1659 – without anaesthetic! Though successful, this left him with ongoing pain and other symptoms for the rest of his life.

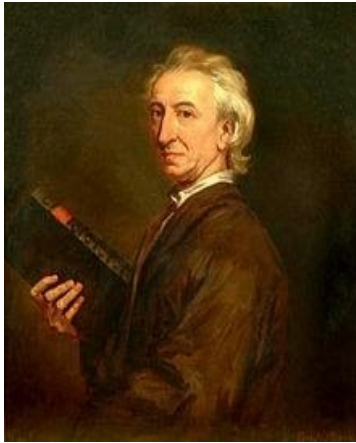
Extract from Pepys diary: ***It all sounds dreadfully familiar!***

JOHN

John Evelyn (life 1620 – 1706) (diary 1640 – 1706)

Evelyn covers art, culture and politics, including the execution of Charles I, Oliver Cromwell's rise and natural death, and the Great Fire of London. He lived in Deptford, adjacent to the naval dockyard. There he developed his love of gardening and got to know his neighbour, Grinling Gibbons, whom he introduced to Christopher Wren, and who subsequently produced the intricate wood carving in St Paul's Cathedral. Following the Great Fire, Evelyn designed several plans for the rebuilding of London, but these were never

acted upon because of the complexity of land ownership in the city. He wrote books on many subjects, including theology, politics, horticulture (one exclusively on trees), architecture, vegetarianism, and papers for the Royal Society, of which he was a founding member. He collected books, as well as writing them, and by his death had one of the finest libraries in the country with nearly 4000 volumes.



1666, 2 Sept.—This fatal night, about ten, began that deplorable fire near Fish Streete in London.

3—The fire continuing, after dinner I took coach with my wife and sonn; went to the Bank side in Southwark, where we beheld that dismal spectacle, the whole citty in dreadful flames near ye water side; all the houses from the Bridge, all Thames Street, and upwards towards Cheapeside, downe to the Three Cranes, were now consum'd.

Both these diarists lived through fire and epidemic that destroyed so much of London and its Londoners. But both made sense of it all by writing it down. Maybe that is why keeping a diary is of such value when one is under threat. And we think of Anne Frank, writing during the darkness of the holocaust:

ANNE

Anne Frank (life 1929 – 1945) (diary 1942 – 1944)

Anne and her Jewish family moved into a secret *compartement in a house in Amsterdam, having been born in Germany. She kept her diary of life in hiding, until she was eventually found by the Nazis and died in a concentration camp.*



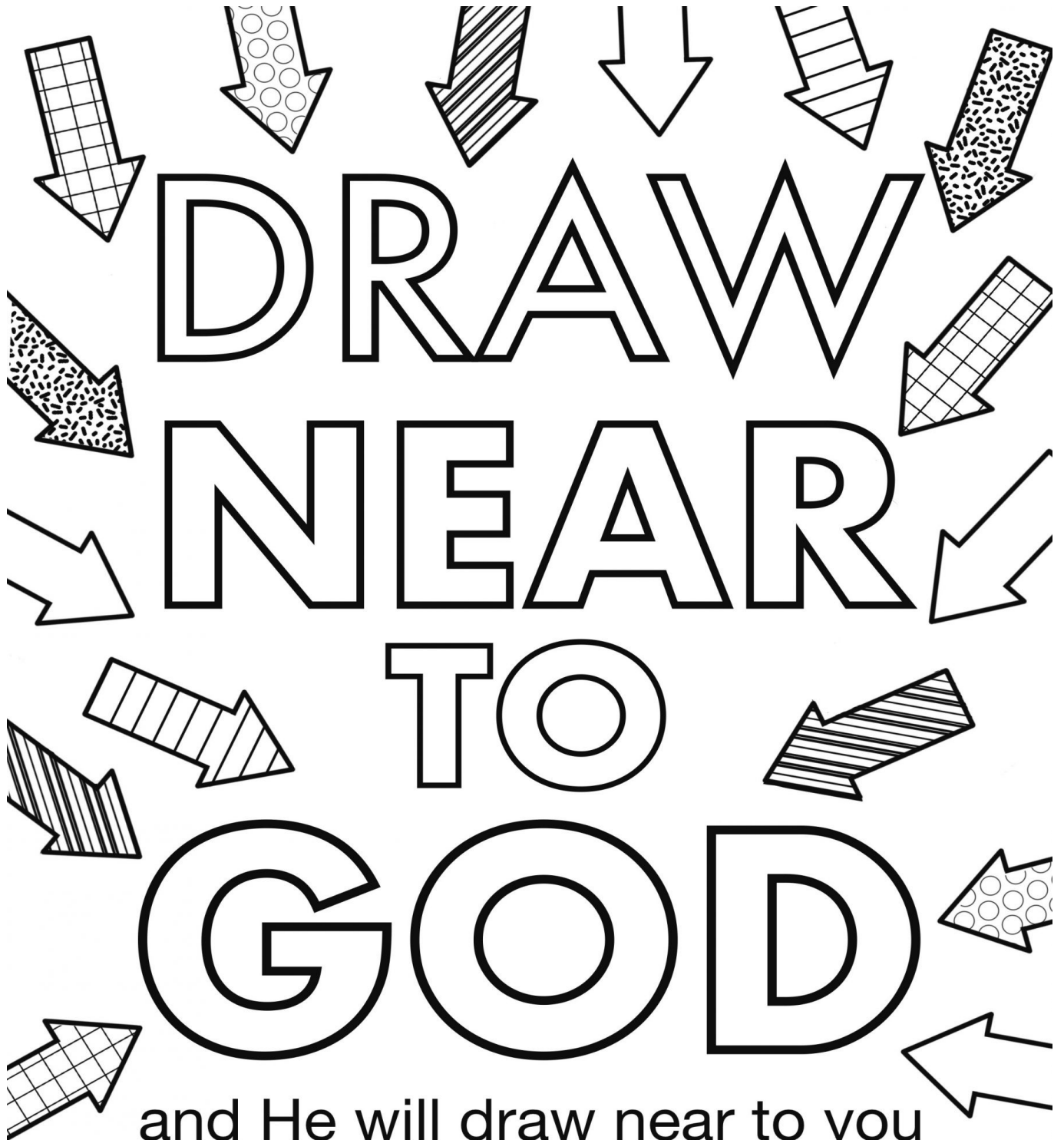
And yet, when I look up at the sky, I somehow feel that everything will change for the better, that this cruelty, too, shall end, that peace and tranquillity will return once more.

Prophetic words to hang on to during our own time of isolation.
And encouragement to keep up that diary!

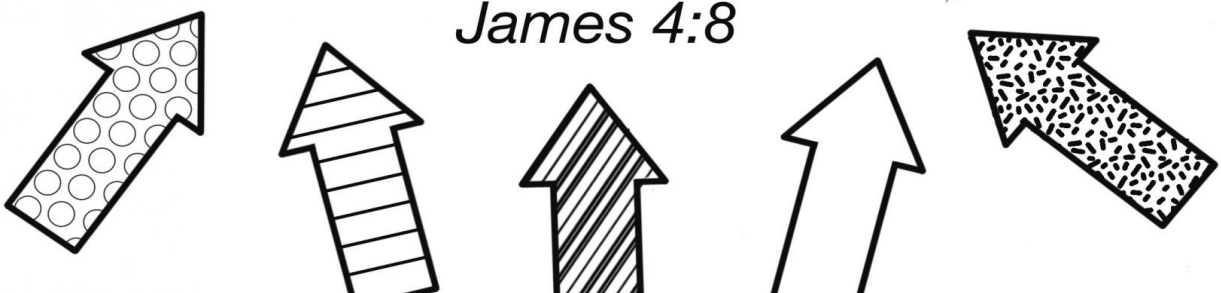
Peter Fall

Children's Page

How colourful can you make this picture



James 4:8



Worship Diary

We are still cautious with Covid in the community. We continue to have the hygiene practices these include wearing masks using gel, having a one way system and recording attendance for Track and Trace purposes. We are pleased to welcome people to our services at the stage they feel comfortable.

Our Sunday Clubs continue to meet when we do not have a Family Service or at times during school holidays.

Our services will continued to be live streamed and can be viewed on our Facebook page unless otherwise stated:

<https://www.facebook.com/stmarysbromley/>

The words of the service can be found on our website:

<https://www.stmarys-bromley.org.uk/lockdown/st-marys-worship/>

The services of worship for February will be as follows:

Sunday 6th – 4 Sunday before Lent

10.30am Family Communion with Sunday Clubs

Sunday 13th – 3 Sunday before Lent

10.30am Family Service

Sunday 20th – 2 Sunday before Lent

10.30am Family Communion with Sunday Clubs

Sunday 27th – Sunday before Lent

10.30am Family Communion with Sunday Clubs

We also have a quiet service of Compline at 8.00 p.m. on Monday, Wednesday and Friday on our Facebook page.

St Mary's (Plaistow) College Road Bromley

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