

St George the Martyr Shirley



Christ in the Community



A Member of Churches Together in Shirley

January 2026

50p

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What can I do?

- Learn the facts YES
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- Work with others YES
- Reduce my own carbon foot-
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- Resign myself to the worst
NO

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*There are at least 5 indicators in the cover picture that this was
taken some time ago. Can you spot them?*

Services at St. George's Church

Sundays 10 a.m. Sung Eucharist. Most Wednesdays 11 30 a.m. Said Eucharist. The Sunday Eucharist will also be available via live-streaming. See website or newsletter for access to the on-line option. There are shared worship opportunities throughout the week. Please see centre pages. for details. We aim to avoid any changes, but illness, etc, may change things..

Priest in Charge: The Reverend Jennifer Walpole 2 The Grove,
West Wickham BR4 9JS 07947 585 326
020 8654 8747 rev.jennywalpole@gmail.com (Her main day off is Friday.)

Hon. Curate: The Reverend Hilary Fife 19 Greenview Avenue, Shirley, Croydon
CR0 7QW 07931 761320

Reader: Mr Ray Wheeler 88 Palace View, Shirley, Croydon CR0 8QN
020 8777 5271

Reader: Mrs Liz Bebington 79 Shirley Way, Shirley, Croydon CR0 8PL
020 8777 4840

Website: www.stgeorgeschurch.co.uk

Parish Office: parish.office@hotmail.co.uk

Presentation of Christ



A View from the Green...Hilary Fife

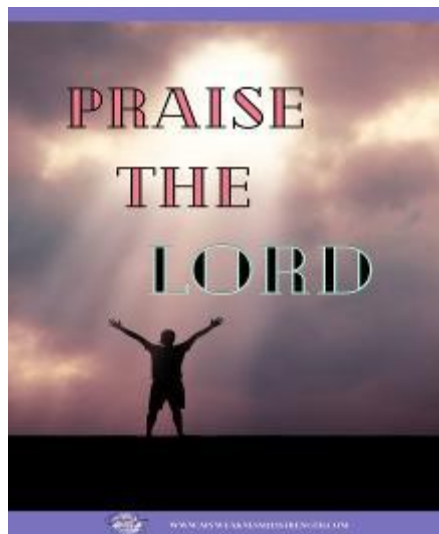
As this latest copy of the magazine arrives on your doorstep Christmas Day will have come and gone, the January sales may well have started but we will still be in the middle of the 12 Days of Christmas which run from 25th December until Epiphany – 6th January. These 12 days are a time of celebration and carols will still be being sung. I don't know if you have a favourite but 'In the Bleak Midwinter' is one of mine (along with 'Silent Night'). It was written as a poem by Christina Rossetti originally entitled "A Christmas Carol" and published first in 1872. It has been set to music several times and it is two of those settings, by Gustav Holst and Harold Darke, that we are familiar with singing at Christmas. The words are evocative, beautiful, thought-provoking but it is the last verse that moves me most.



What can I give Him,
Poor as I am? —
If I were a Shepherd
I would bring a lamb;
If I were a Wise Man
I would do my part, —
Yet what I can I give Him, —
Give my heart.



The 12 Days of Christmas begin with Jesus' birth and the visit of the shepherds and end with the Kings arrival and their expensive and deeply symbolic gifts. In Tudor times people exchanged gifts on 6th January, we do so now on the first day of Christmas when we focus on God's gift of himself in Jesus – Emmanuel, God with us. That gift is one that is beyond words, speaking of a love that we can barely comprehend. If we have opened our hearts to receive God's gift what can we give in return? The poem gets it right – the only possible response is to give our heart – to allow God, dwelling within us, to guide, challenge and shape us into the people he knows we can be – people who, not just at Christmas but 365 days a year, live in a way that honours God and shares God's love, light and grace with all his children.



Praise the Lord.....Why

15 years ago, our Mother Church St John's produced a CD "Carols of Praise", Christians, like their Jewish predecessors, are quite good at praising the Lord.... Though if you read through the Psalms (which Christians use a lot in their services), you will find a number of complaints that what is going on in people's lives really doesn't seem to justify the happy praising!

When I first read the message on the St John's CD, I wished I had read it before I faced (about 40 years earlier) the question

from a youth group member on the lines of "Does God's ego need all this praise stuff?" She, like many youth group members then, did not have a church-going family. She put the question more tactfully than I put it; but she was genuinely puzzled.

The St John's CD carried the message: *"God doesn't need praise and encouragement, as most of us do. We praise God, not for his sake, but for our own. We're simply more human, when we sing out our praises, more thankful, more joyful and more our own true selves."*

And, of course, just to get things in proportion: We are created beings, 5-6 feet tall, living maybe 8 decades, on what is a speck of dust in a universe measured in billions of years and billions of miles. Even if not every day of our earthly lives is a bundle of joy, we might well celebrate that the Creator of the Universe not only notices us. He LOVES us. (Think Crucifixion) If we know human beings who are praise-worthy for one reason or another (and keep their/our bad points in proportion), praising God maybe isn't so daft - despite the toothache, the small bank balance, the disappointments, and all the irritating others.

If the woman gathering scraps from the rubbish pile to feed her family can praise the Lord, maybe we can praise God...and do something for Him.



Chernobyl/ Chornobyl

The Monument of the Third Angel commemorates the 1986 Chornobyl nuclear disaster, in Ukraine, from which many died horrific deaths—including fire fighters and local residents. The presidents of both Ukraine and Russia attended the opening. Haidamaka's monument refers to a local folk belief rooted in Revelation 8:10-11: relating to a third angel and a burning star turning waters into bitter wormwood which killed many. In local Ukrainian and Russian Bibles the name of the star is *polyn*—plants in the larger mugwort or *Artemisia* family. Chornobyl (the plant from which the town takes its name) is one such polyn. As a result of this connection, many local Christians believed that the disaster had been foretold by their Bibles.

The Sarcophagus Memorial—part of the same site—is specifically dedicated to those who sacrificed their lives fighting the fire; and who thus saved lives at the cost of their own lives. It has human hands holding the power station.

I wonder which monument is most powerful for you? Or is it the reminder that Russian and Ukrainian Presidents stood side by side in 2006 to commemorate the heroes and victims of a nuclear disaster; and now in 2026.....

Thanks to Oliver Clayton for drawing attention to this

A Christmas Music Quiz: Who wrote?-

1. I'm dreaming of a white Christmas: Irving Berlin; 2. Christmas Oratorio: J S Bach; 3. Baby, it's cold outside: Frank Loesser; 4. All I want for Christmas is you: Mariah Carey; 5. It's the most wonderful time of the year: Eddie Pole; 6. Let it snow: Sammy Cahn, Jule Styne; 7. Rudolph the red-nosed reindeer: J Marks; 8. Wonderful Christmastide: Paul McCartney; 9. Have yourself a merry little Christmas: Ralph Brace, Hugh Martin; 10 Little Drummer Boy: Harry Simeone; 11. O Holy Night: Placide Cappeau; 12. O Christmas Tree: Melchior Frank; 13. Twelve Days of Christmas: Traditional; 14. Silent Night: Mohr, Gruber; 15 When a child is born: Zacher; 16. Mistletoe and wine: Cliff Richard; 17. Saviour's Day: Cliff Richard; 18 The Nutcracker: Tchaikovsky; 19. Carol Symphony: Victor Hely-Hutchinson; 20. L'Enfance du Christ: Berlioz 21. A Ceremony of Carols: Benjamin Britten.

**Great Faith Dates (c = Circa/About) (AD = Year of the Lord)
(BCE/BC = Before the Common Era/Before Christ)**

c100,000 BCE first known human burials
 c4,000 BCE Egyptian myth records
 c3,500 BCE Sumeria tablets show religious activity
 c2,100 BCE Sumerian Ziggurats
 c1950 BCE Abraham
 c1,500 BCE Rigveda (Hindu)
 c1400 BCE maybe first Bible writings (Earliest surviving 600 BCE)
 c1300 BCE Exodus
 c1100 BCE Sumerian creation story (from older text)
 c1000 BCE Kingdom of Israel
 c586 BCE Babylonian exile
 c516 BCE Return from exile
 c500 BCE Upanishads (Hindu)
 c480-400 BCE Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha)
 c6BCE—30AD JESUS
 c 65AD-100AD Gospels written
 c132AD Greek Old Testament (Septuagint)
 c350AD first OT+NT published
 c640AD Koran published
 c1517AD Protestant Reformation
 c1534AD Church of England started
 1611AD Authorised (King James) Bible published

Churches Together in Shirley

St John's with All Saints

St George's

West Wickham and Shirley Baptist Church



Our Lady's

Church of God Apostolic

Shrublands Christian Fellowship

Shirley Methodist

Churches Together in Shirley

CTIS Prayers (hopefully with a Zoom option) at 7 30 p.m.
 at Shirley Methodist Church on Wednesday January 7th 2026
 at West Wickham And Shirley Baptist Church on Thursday March 12th
 followed by CTIS AGM

A CTIS prayer leaflet will be circulated for those months when we do not meet physically. If you would like to meet on Zoom to use the prayer leaflet together, let Brian McGinnis know before the end of the previous month.

dunaigh2@btinternet.com

Unity Week Service Sunday 18th January 5 p.m.**At St George's**

For further CTIS information, see the Churches Together in Shirley website

Bereavement Counselling (see page 12)

If you want to help others, have a listening ear and some spare time, have you thought of becoming a bereavement counsellor? Woodside Bereavement Service offer a 50 hour long Bereavement Counselling training course starting January 19 2026. More information at www.the-listening-gear.org.uk or email wbs@the-listening-gear.org.uk

**A happy and blessed New Year
 and
 Thank you for everything
 Carol Jones**

Archbishop Sarah Mullally



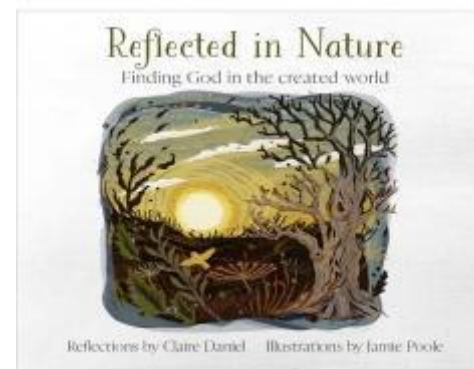
Bishop of London since 2018, the Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally, is due to become the 106th Archbishop of Canterbury in January: the first woman to hold the office. Before London, she was Bishop of Crediton in the Diocese of Exeter. Prior to her ordination in 2001, she was the Government's Chief Nursing Officer for England – the youngest person ever to be appointed to that role at the age of 37 – having previously specialised as a cancer nurse. Bishop Sarah has described nursing as "an opportunity to reflect the love of God".

Bishop Sarah was nominated following a process of public consultation and prayer that began in February 2025. The most senior bishop in the Church of England, the Archbishop of Canterbury is the Diocesan Bishop of the Diocese of Canterbury, Primate of All England and Metropolitan, as well as primus inter pares – or first among equals – of the Primates of the global Anglican Communion, which consists of around 85 million people, across 165 countries. The Archbishop is one of 26 bishops who sit in the House of Lords.

Bishop Sarah said: "As I respond to the call of Christ to this new ministry, I do so in the same spirit of service to God and to others that has motivated me since I first came to faith as a teenager. At every stage of that journey, I have learned to listen deeply – to people and to God's gentle prompting – to seek to bring people together to find hope and healing. I want the Church to continue to grow in confidence in the Gospel, to speak of the love that we find in Jesus Christ and for it to shape our actions."

Some notes for you to note

- ♥ **Deadline for the February magazine, Sunday January 24th**
- ♥ **The Bible Reading Group: Monday evenings 7 30 p.m. to 8 10 p.m. On Zoom.** See notes on the parish website. We are reading the Book of Revelation. Followed from January 19th by the Book of Ruth. Commentaries available for everyone who would like to join us. Regular and occasional new members both welcome.
- **Book Reading Group:** The current reading list is: Divine Windows by David Gregory, Reflected in Nature by Claire Gregory, Donkey Roads and Camel Treks by Gemma Simmonds, Attentive to God by Tony Horsfall, and Dreaming of a Green Christmas by Olivia Warburton. Why not join us in exploring this rich variety of books?








Reflections and illustrations inspired by encountering God in nature.

In *Reflected by Nature*, Claire Daniel offers 40 Bible-themed reflections inspired by the natural world, ten for each season, alongside original artwork by Jamie Poole. This gentle companion to contemplation will help you reflect on God every day, in every season of the year.

RHS 2025 State of Gardening Report

Good News: British gardens cover over 3 times more land than our national nature reserves. They host about 19 million trees. Public and private gardens can store about 158 million tonnes of carbon. **Bad News:** 55% of front garden space and 36% of back garden space is paved over or artificial grass. Only 0.1% of gardens have a pond.

Times and Seasons

LITURGICAL COLORS AND WHAT THEY MEAN				
PURPLE	RED	ROSE/PINK	GREEN	WHITE/GOLD
				
Penance Preparation Used during Advent and Lent	Sacrifice Used during Passion Sunday, Good Friday, Pentecost and the feast of the Apostles and martyrs	Anticipation Used on the third Sunday in Advent and the fourth Sunday during Lent	Hope, Life & Growth Used throughout Ordinary Time	Joy & Purity Used during Easter & Christmas seasons and feasts of the Blessed Mother, angels and saints who weren't martyred

This chart makes more sense in colour: see magazine on St George's website

In this country, we are used to a year starting on January 1st, in the Winter part of four seasons: Spring, Summer, Autumn, Winter. The new year does not start a new season. The church calendar is out of step with both the seasons and the calendar: it starts on Advent Sunday (Sunday 30th November 2025).

The church seasons are: **Advent** (4 weeks preparing for Christmas); **Christmas** (2 weeks celebrating the Birth of Jesus); **Epiphany** (3 weeks recognising the divinity of Jesus); **Ordinary Time** (getting on quietly with living the Jesus life); **Lent** (6 weeks preparing for Passiontide and Easter); **Holy Week/Passiontide**: commemorating the Passion of Jesus; **Easter** (7 weeks celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus); **Ascensiontide** (2 weeks celebrating the Ascension of Jesus—as part of Easter); **Pentecost/Whitsun** (celebrating the gift of the Holy Spirit); **Trinity** (13+ weeks celebrating God as Father+Mother, Son and Holy Spirit); **Creationtide** (September 1st to October 4th remembering that we are an accountable part of God's wider creation: *partners with God—a scary and a joyous responsibility*. Part of the long Trinity season.) Liturgy = order of worship.

Woodside Bereavement Service – an introduction: Andy Bebington

Bereavement takes many forms. The depth and duration will depend on so many factors – how close you were to the deceased, how they died (long, drawn-out painful illness, or shockingly in an instant under a driver's wheels), so forth. It is known that there are various stages, such as denial, anger, bitterness, emptiness ... and the order of these, depth and duration will depend on you, too. Grief is highly individual: no rights and wrongs. Introverted? Or are you an extrovert? Have you had other, perhaps recent, bereavements? Is there someone with whom you can or could talk about the bereavement? (See page 8.)

This is where a bereavement counsellor can help. If you don't have anyone who could help you live with the news of the death of a friend, colleague or loved one, a counsellor can help you to look at matters from a different perspective, can help you see what you see and not what "the world" expects you to see (or feel). A local service offering this is local charity Woodside Bereavement Service. Based next to South Norwood Lake, in The Waterside Centre, Avenue Road, they have professionally-trained volunteer counsellors who will welcome you to the Centre, listen to your story and help you come to terms with, and cope with, the change which a death has imposed on your life.

The Service's website says that

Clients are initially offered six sessions but, if necessary, these can be extended to a maximum of 12. The timing and frequency of sessions is agreed between the client and the counsellor.

All counselling is confidential within the service and nothing is shared with outside professionals without the client's consent. Full confidentiality is also observed within the internal supervision process, which counsellors attend on a regular basis. Essential records are maintained for monitoring and review purposes.

There is no charge for the support and counselling we provide. As a small, local charity we fundraise to cover our running costs. Donations from clients and the community are much appreciated. If you would like to make a donation to the service, however small, please visit our [My Donate](#) page.

The Bereavement Service can be contacted on 020 3256 2009 or by email at wbs@thelisteningear.org.uk See page 8 re volunteering.

Poetry Page: : January by John Updike (1932-2009)

*The days are short,
The sun a spark,
Hung thin between
The dark and dark,*

*Fat snowy footsteps
Track the floor.
Milk bottles burst
Outside the door.*

*The river is
A frozen place
Held still beneath
The trees of lace.*

*The sky is low.
The wind is gray.
The radiator
Purrs all day.*

**That odd business of praying: Number 172:
Prayers for older people**

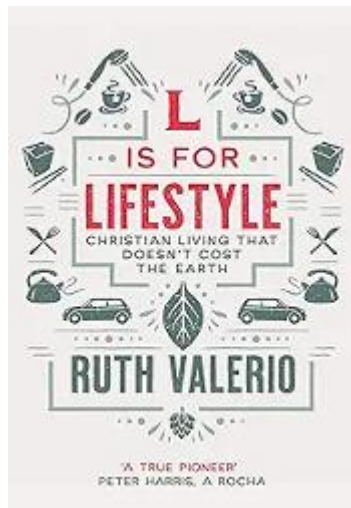
There are many good books on older people's prayers and older people praying. See the Bible Reading Fellowship website for the BRF Anna Chaplaincy. But let's start with the obvious: Being old is not the same for everyone. Some older people are frail. Others are not. Some older people are fairly isolated. Others are not. Some older people are, for a variety of reasons, thinking much

about the next life. Other are very much focussed on the present life.

Prayer is a ministry that can continue where frailty impedes an active physical ministry. All credit to churches that make it clear to their older members that the prayer ministry is still open to them...and NOT on the basis that *"this is all that the ex-activist can now do"* - as if prayer were the last resort when all else has failed. As Paul kept saying: prayer and action go hand in hand, sometimes different hands doing the acting and the praying, sometimes the same hands.

And if sight and/or memory have become a bit problematic too, It is fine to sit with a list of people and things you can't see or can't remember. God's sight and memory are just fine. Sitting in silence, focused on "Your Will Be Done" is also good. I recall Tony Healy's (Irish) "All dem other folk" when, in this case, his Hebrew pronunciation fell short of requirements..

Oh, and if you feel for someone younger but struggle to get the hang of the mess they are in, or the way out of that mess, it is absolutely fine not to tell God the solution you want God to adopt: trusting in Him to see things a great deal more clearly than you do. ***Lord, we know you value us; help us to be valuable in what we can do, not focussing on what we can't do.***



An ECO A-Z Book

If you do environmental protection, but don't do Christianity, you may still be interested. (And Christians certainly don't have a monopoly on climate change concern.) The book is £9 75 and the kindle version £7 99, though you can get cheaper second hand copies. I am never sure whether book tokens represent modesty/enlightenment (letting someone choose their own book), or laziness (I can't be bothered choosing); but let's assume you have a book token to spend OR want to treat someone else to a new year book. Think about this book as a possible.

OK, an A-Z of environmental action (or restraint) does, like all A-Z's, test the alphabet a bit. R for Recycling and O for Organic come easily. And V for Volunteering and H for Habitats trip off the tongue. X for Xenophobia and Z for Zeitgeist are more imaginative. But the structure of the book does amuse as well as enlighten, and there is much common sense advice to attract both the already enthusiastic and the potentially interested; inspiring rather than nagging. The reviews include *"Ruth moves us from despair into becoming drivers of change"*, and *"A challenge that none of us can ignore"*. [Absences from COP 30 suggest that ignoring is easier than we might hope.]

I was particularly taken by Q is for Questions—not least because it informed me that the Girl Guides now have a Media Critic badge, which encourages them to question/challenge what they see and hear. Whether the message is that we simply must use up all our oil and gas, or that 50% of swifts have disappeared, I want to ask questions—not just register what is presented to me as a fact. If news is fake (and not just what I want or don't want to hear), let's get the FACTS. If the news proves to be real news, is there anything or nothing that little me can do about it?

N is for Needs also caught my eye. That chapter underlines the reality that I do tend to confuse my wants and my needs: indulgent, but also dangerous.

CHURCH DIARY FOR JANUARY 2026

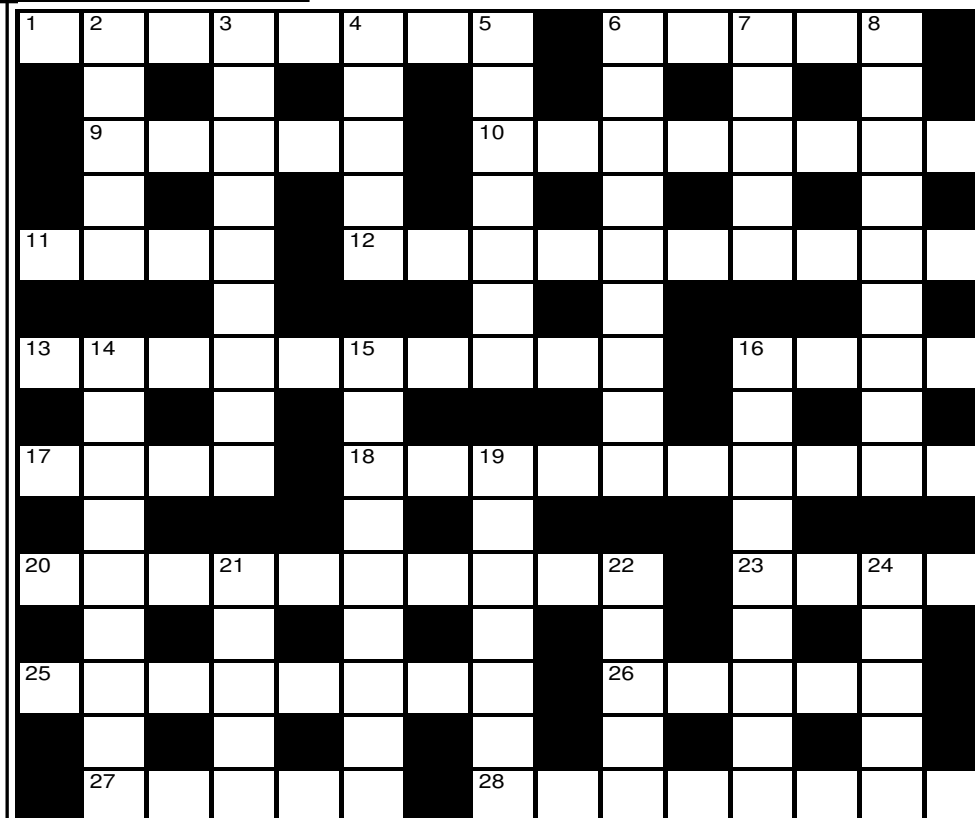
▼ Morning Prayer:

Mon/Tues/Wed/Thurs/Fri 9.00am Zoom only

Sun 4 Jan EPIPHANY	▼ Mon 5 Jan	▼ Tue 6 Jan	▼
10.00 Sung Eucharist	10.30am-12.00 Pop-In 7.30pm Bible Reading Group		10.00am 11.30am Chapel
Sun 11 Jan EPIPHANY 2	▼ Mon 12 Jan	▼ Tue 13 Jan	▼
10.00 All-Age Sung Eucharist	10.30am-12.00 Pop-In 9.30-11.30am Little Dragons 7.30pm Bible Reading Group		10.00am 11.30am Chapel
Sun 18 Jan EPIPHANY 3	▼ Mon 19 Jan	▼ Tue 20 Jan	▼
10.00 Sung Eucharist 5.00pm CTIS Unity Week Service at St. George's	10.30am-12.00 Pop-In 9.30-11.30am Little Dragons 7.30pm Bible Reading Group		10.00am 11.30am Chapel
Sun 25 Jan CANDLEMAS	▼ Mon 26 Jan	▼ Tue 27 Jan	▼
10.00 Sung Eucharist	10.30am-12.00 Pop-In 9.30-11.30am Little Dragons 7.30pm Bible Reading Group		10.00am 11.30am Chapel

BIG GARDEN BIRDWATCH 23-25 JANUARY SIGN UP WITH THE RSPB

	▼ Thurs 1 Jan	▼ Fri 2 Jan	Sat 3 Jan
Wed 7 Jan	▼ Thurs 8 Jan	▼ Fri 9 Jan	Sat 10 Jan
Church Cleaning Eucharist - Lady	12.00 Margaret Ziolek's Funeral		
Wed 14 Jan	▼ Thurs 15 Jan	▼ Fri 16 Jan	Sat 17 Jan
Church Cleaning Eucharist - Lady			
Wed 21 Jan	▼ Thurs 22 Jan	▼ Fri 23 Jan	Sat 24 Jan
Church Cleaning Eucharist - Lady			
Wed 28 Jan	▼ Thurs 29 Jan	▼ Fri 30 Jan	Sat 31 Jan
Church Cleaning Eucharist - Lady	7.30pm PCC		



Solon 192

Across

- 1** Monitor Albert Jack Russell? (8)
6 Rested up dressmaker occasionally (5)
9 Stone found amongst mountaintop azaleas (5)
10 Old roses don't smell when crushed in America (8)
11 Waterfall - no end of strangeness (4)
12 Log out of shaken tonic for book of words (10)
13 Plan with Victoria, say, not opening nursery (10)
16 Vessel led by Napoleon could annoy (4)
17 Beer maker, not British, produces

18 Life saver at sea with flair on the radio (4,6)

- 20** Heard old tie Tom is a pet? (7,3)
23 To initially copy record (4)
25 A girl born with the French winning ways (8)
26 Dive headfirst into large vessel and express gratitude (5)
27 Search inside for red elvers (5)
28 Balance of mystery plays with maiden's participation (8)

Down

- 2** Old cave found right inside Etna eruption (5)
3 Associate corner tap disturbance (9)
4 Groggy old soap journalist (5)

- 5 Hot and cold cooking not OK for Italian food (7)
 6 Moving strange ailment of wingless coot (9)
 7 Beauty parlour shapes a lot of nails at first (5)
 8 Leave backward sailor for old soldier (6,3)
 14 Do wild men become base? (3-6)
 15 Irregular valid base can be recommended (9)
 16 Arrange to get into hospital department (9)
 19 Headless insects producing illness (7)
 21 Oddly I'm no great Lothario (5)
 22 Symbol found in Porto temple (5)
 24 Swine, no raw beginner, could end up in the fire (5)

					6		5	1
		9		5				7
2	5							
3			7			4	6	
				3				
	1	6			5			2
							7	8
6				2		3		
1	4		5					

Neighbours

It is easier to love humanity than to love your neighbour.

Empathy makes for good neighbours

Thanks to Solon for puzzles
 For questions or help, contact Solon at
 Solon1across@gmail.com

Answers to December puzzles:-

Crossword: **Across:** 1 Precis, 4 Satrap, 9 Spat, 10 Abandoning, 11 Priorities, 12 Tong, 13 Extra, 14 Gadabout, 16 Air fryer, 19 Samoa, 21 Abel, 22 Eliminated, 24 Troopships, 25 Ugly, 26 Hassle, 27 Advent. **Down:** 1 Paper, 2 Eats out, 3 Imaginary, 5 Aides, 6 Ring tab, 7 Peninsula, 8 Baking, 13 Edinburgh, 15 Dismissed, 17 Fellows, 18 Raisin, 20 Measure, 22 Easel, 23 Éclat.

Sudoku: 549623187/
 713958624// 852417593/
 271835469/ 634791258/
 958246371/ 427169835/
 185372946/ 396584712

Neighbours

Being a good neighbour is about helping out, not about keeping up.

*Judgement needs to begin at home before it moves next door.
 Maybe it should stay at home?*

Do you know your neighbour's name, or just his faults?

Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in
 1 Samuel chapter 1

In the time before there were kings in Israel, there lived a rich man, Elkanah, and his two wives, Hannah and Peninnah.

Peninnah had children, but Hannah had none.



Each year they travelled to Shiloh to worship God.



After the worship, they feasted.



Elkanah always gave Hannah a special portion of food to show he loved her.



But Hannah was too sad to eat. She left the meal and went to pray.



She prayed silently.



Eli the priest saw Hannah's silent weeping and praying and thought she was drunk.



I'm not drunk! I was just pouring out how I feel to God.

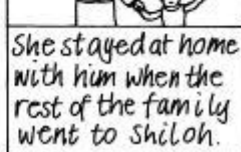


I'm sure God will answer your prayer.

Back home, Hannah had a son, and she named him Samuel.



She stayed at home with him when the rest of the family went to Shiloh.



When Samuel was old enough, Hannah and Elkanah took him to Shiloh to live there and serve God.



Bible Bites Comments:

I hope you will have your own reflections on this Bible story. The Old Testament - New Testament link, not obvious from the cartoon version, is that when Hannah had her child she sang a song that invites parallels with Mary of Nazareth's Magnificat song. Mary, or, if not Mary, Luke who recorded the Magnificat, knew Hannah's song.

Elkanah seems not to have judged Hannah for her failure to become pregnant; but it was the common assumption of both men and women at that time (and at many other times) that wives were there to produce children.... And there was something wrong if they didn't. Note the casual use of the term "wives": monogamy was not the norm for quite a large chunk of Bible history—though more than one husband was never on the agenda. This was part of the "for breeding" view of marriage....and of male/female relationships more generally. Some Jews continued to practice polygamy until relatively recent times, although it was frowned on by others—especially from the 11th Century onwards. To be fair, Jewish polygamy, like most polygamous traditions, advocated equal treatment of all the wives and their children (Though that seems always to have been very hard to achieve.)

You may have picked up two other bad practice issues. The High Priest Eli was really not living up to the expectations of his job title when he saw a woman in distress, and accused her of being drunk. Always think the best until things are proved otherwise!!!

Second: Whatever the customs of the time, commonsense good child practice is heavily against both handing over a young child to a complete stranger without any discussion or detailed arrangements being sorted out; and determining that child's future without giving the child an opportunity to comment. You might want your child to be a monk or nun or soldier, but you should not assume and enforce your decision as the child's decision.

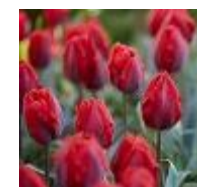
I'm not sure about Hannah's bargaining with God approach to God: if you do this then I'll do that; but that requires a separate article. She is not the only Bible bargainer. It is not easy to reconcile the "contract" with God's Love (and our love?) being "unconditional".

Attributed to Winston Churchill: Diplomacy means being able to tell someone to go to hell in such a way that they look forward to the journey.

Memorial Bed in front of church: an update

Sitting on the Frank Sussex memorial bench in front of the church, overlooking the memorial bed and the rest of the front garden...and watching the world go by is popular with a huge variety of mourners, rejoicers, workers, reflectors, waiters, and resters. People talk to God, talk to themselves, talk to each other, as circumstances and mood require. The memorial bed has, for many years, been the favoured place for burying ashes—normally without an individual name plate, sometimes with a memorial planting. Apart from limited space to put relative with relative, that bed is effectively "full". This gives the opportunity to plant for the longer term what will remain for ever a memorial bed.

The tall standard roses have served their turn, and were getting hard to keep in place and in shape, even with multiple posts. They have been replaced with 15 smaller hybrid tea roses, all attractive and sweetly scented. 8 are "Back Baccara" - dark red and sweetly scented. Rockery-type plants have been planted round the perimeter of the bed. The rest of the space is now occupied by some 365 (each day of the year!) bulbs, offering colour Spring to Autumn. The bulbs are: mixed early-flowering narcissus, narcissus canaliculatus, triumph tulips, allium molly, mixed ipheion, mixed crocus vernus, muscari armeniacum, and allium sphaerocephalon. (Beat that last for a trip-off-the-tongue name!) These bulbs should produce more bulbs as the years pass.





.Margaret Ziolek R.I.P

Margaret died in Coloma Court Care Home on December 3rd, with her family supporting her as they had during her time there and at home in Beckenham before that. Margaret was a teacher - not only in the sense that teaching was how she earned her living during her (paid) working life, but in the sense that she taught us all by word and by example. She always had the quiet dignity and authority of the good teacher: who doesn't need to dominate or shout but commands respect - not least by respect-

ing and valuing others. She died when we were gearing up for the Advent Carol Service that she shaped: by introducing poems alongside the traditional Bible readings and carols. As the Bible and Book Groups knew (and benefited from), she knew her poetry and her Bible.

She also knew where things were : remarking once that it was not the least important duty of a church servant, to know where the toilet rolls are kept. In the early days of St George's, Church Wardens tended to be quite tall men. She served very effectively as a (physically) small lady, She also ran Bazaars/Fayres and Fetes: a job demanding a high level of inter-personal skills AND remembering and being able to access what others have forgotten Margaret meant so much to so many; she nurtured, inspired and encouraged others to lay aside self- doubt and achieve what they had thought was impossible. If there was anything Margaret thought she could do to help someone, she would do it with energy, kindness and without a thought for herself.

You can get effective leaders who always seem to be saying "Look at me!". Margaret got us to look to God and look where we are going... And, not least, to look at (and look out for) each other. Rest in peace...though, of course, now you are up and about again, you will do nothing of the sort. You will be back to being purposefully active.

Maybe a Smile

Are you taking a mid-winter break?

If you are preparing to take off for foreign climes, do keep an eye out for signs that have English words... but perhaps not an English meaning! In hotels and train stations and airports all over the world there are polite little signs that will bring a smile to the lips of even an exhausted traveller. For instance, how about these*:

Romania: The lift is being fixed for the next day. During that time we regret you will be unbearable.

Russia: If this is your first visit to the USSR, you are welcome to it.

Spain: Our wine list leaves you with nothing to hope for.

Denmark: In the event of fire, open a window and announce your presence in a seemly manner.

Canary Islands: If you telephone for room service you will get the answer you deserve.

Political leaders

"Don't worry about your son, he is set to become a great politician," the teacher said. The parents were delighted and asked how she could tell. "Well, he can say more things that sound well and mean nothing at all than anyone else in the class."

Up and down

A psychiatrist was training some young clergy who were interested in doing counselling. Deciding to test them, she asked: "How would you diagnose someone who visits your church, walks back and forth, screaming at the top of his lungs one minute, and then collapsing in a pew to weep uncontrollably the next?" A young man at the back of the room raised his hand and ventured: "A football coach?"

The puppy A clergyman was walking down the street when he came upon a group of about a dozen boys, surrounding a small puppy. Concerned lest the boys were hurting it, he went to investigate. One boy explained, "We just found this puppy, and we all want him. So, we've decided that whichever one of us can tell the biggest lie will get to take him home." The minister was taken aback. "Don't you boys know it's a sin to lie? Why, when I was your age, I never told a lie." There was dead silence for a moment. The minister thought he had got through to them. Then the smallest boy gave a deep sigh and said, "All right, give him the dog."



This sculpture is one you may have seen, and have almost certainly been near. Challenge to readers to identify the sculpture, say where it is, and explain why it is in the January magazine. (and the January lectionary). There is a clue, if you look closely at the face. I have doubts about whether this man would have been wearing these clothes.

As someone who has fallen off a horse, I can sympathise with the rider portrayed here. Unlike this man in this story, my foot got caught in the stirrup... And I was dragged round the field. That left particular memories. May-

be I need to offer the health and safety warning not to try to get a horse to mount a pile of slabs: it won't have a happy outcome. Slabs are a sculptor choice, not a choice actually made by the subject of the sculpture.

There are more than 20 Bible references to horses - which have long been symbols of strength, majesty, and grace, both in the physical world and in the spiritual lessons we can learn from them. The Bible illustrates these beautiful creatures in various stories and teachings, emphasizing their importance in our lives and their symbolic meaning. From serving as powerful beasts of burden to representing God's strength, we can find relatable insights. I have doubts about horse racing; but there is much to be said for horse riding if you can cope with being off the ground and not entirely in control.

As some readers will know, horses are often very good (and patient) with people with learning disabilities. Diamond Centre for Disabled Riders, Woodmansterne.

Please remember by name in your prayers the following people for whom prayers have been requested...

Jay & Louise Tuggey	Paul Oates	Debbie Bell
Mike & Chris Wareham	David Lawn	Sonia
Jean	Sue Moore	Pam Purkiss
Chris Reynolds	Poppy	Yvette Oburu
Gloria & Livingston Dallas	Pat Barrett	Steve Barrett
Sheila Dennis	Brian	Alison Stiff
Andy Hamilton	Christine Lutman	Stephen Dhonau
Ann Hobbs	Pauline Russell	Jean Wells
Dave & Shirley Ashdown	Verity Johnson	Joyce & Arthur Edgar
Arthur	Shirley	Louise Maurer
Jill Hollamby	Mike Wilkins	Eric Webb
Lindsey Morgan	Ellen Maden	Brian Jacobs
Bill Gibson	Heather Orton	Doreen Offergelt
Paul & Mark	Garth Smith	Elizabeth Lovell

As we remember all that divides us - politics, language, religion, nationality, race, class, resources (or lack of them), history, culture, education (or lack of it), experience + prejudice - we remember what unites us. We remember that in the Bondi Beach massacre (Moslem versus Jew), the hero who risked his life to save Jews was also Moslem.: Ahmed al-Ahmed (himself immigrant refugee- "outsider"). Love unites us.



Mark Hare sends his best wishes for 2026 to all his friends at St George's

Birds in a Shirley Garden

It might be of interest to share the detail of the 30 species seen in 2025

The St George's grounds sightings would be much the same

Seen from the garden, but not in it - though herons have landed in past years: *Red Kite, Swift, Canada Goose, Heron, Buzzard, Tawny Owl*. Church grounds more likely to include *Mallard*.

Seen in the garden: *Parakeet, Carrion Crow, Domestic Pigeon, House Sparrow, Great Tit, Blue Tit, Coal Tit, Herring Gull, Woodpigeon, Magpie, Hedge Accentor, Black-headed Gull, Robin, Starling, Blackbird, Wren, Long-tailed Tit, Goldfinch, Jackdaw, Greater Spotted Woodpecker, Jay, Green Woodpecker, Blackcap, Chaffinch*.

Compared with previous years, the expected but not seen birds are:- year round: , *Song Thrush, Mistle Thrush, Pied Wagtail*; Summer visitors: *Garden Warbler, Swallow, House Martin, Chiffchaff*; Winter visitors: *Fieldfare, Redwing*.



Left to Right: Blue Tit (*Cyanistes Caeruleus*), Coal Tit (*Periparus Ater*), Great Tit (*Parus Major*), Long-tailed Tit (*Aegithalus Caudatus*), Goldfinch (*Carduelis Carduelis*), Chaffinch (*Fringilla Coelebs*).

Organisations

St George's Table Tennis Club (in the Church Hall)

Tuesdays 8—10 p.m. Doubles Table Tennis. £3 per evening, including refreshments. New members welcome. Contact Ron 020 8656 9176, Ken 020 8654 3233.

Whist Drive (in the Church Hall)

Wednesdays 7 45p.m. Inquire in Hall Wednesday 7 - 7 45 p.m.

Medau (in the Church Hall)

Tuesdays 1.30-3.00p.m Mrs Gammon 01689 815646

Shirley Neighbourhood Care Scheme

020 8662 9599

info@shirleyneighbourhoodcare.co.uk

Your Local Councillors and Safer Neighbourhood Police Teams The dividing line between Shirley North and South Wards is roughly the Wickham Road, but some roads at the Croydon end on the south side of Wickham Road (St John's parish) are in Shirley North Ward

Shirley South Ward - Councillors: Jason Cummings (020 8651 2575) and Scott Roche (07783 152370) **Police Contact:** Phone 0208 721 2469 Email SNMailbox.ShirleySouthSNT@met.police.

Shirley North Ward - Councillors: Sue Bennett (0208 768 0561), Richard Chatterjee (07710 183564) and Mark Johnson (07716 092484). Surgeries 3rd Saturday of every month except December 10-11 a.m. 49A Longheath Gardens

Police Contact: Email SNMailbox.ShirleyNorthSNT@met.police.uk Phone: 0208 721 2474. **URGENT 999** (Other crime reports 101)

Intentions

People will judge you by your actions, not your intentions. (You may have a heart of gold, but so does a hard-boiled egg.)

Many good intentions die young - but not because they were executed.

No one can build a reputation on what (s)he's going to do tomorrow.

Organisations

St George's Church Hall Bookings -

Mrs Jan Payne 020 8776 0185

Overseas Missions Committee

Mr Brian McGinnis, Ms Pauline Russell 020 8654 6190

Georgettes

Contact Mrs Jan Payne 020 8776 0185

Beavers Boys and Girls age 6 to 8 approx. Mr Darren Hawken 07903 399185

Wednesdays 5-6.15 p.m. 31stcroydonscoutgroup@gmail.com

Cubs Boys and Girls age 8 to 10.5 approx. Mr Darren Hawken 07903 399185

Wednesdays 6.30-8.00 p.m. 31stcroydonscoutgroup@gmail.com

Scouts Boys and Girls age 10.5 to 14.5 approx. Mr Darren Hawken 07903 399185

Thursdays 6.30 - 8 p.m. 31stcroydonscoutgroup@gmail.com

Beavers, Cubs and Scouts are currently meeting at Pinewood Scout Activity Centre

Rainbows (Church Hall) Girls age 5 to 7

Tuesdays 5 - 6p.m. Mrs Ruth Clery 020 8651 4116

07702 870030

Brownies (Church Hall) Girls age 7 to 10

Tuesdays 6.15-7.30p.m. Miss Sheila Fenner 020 8655 0023

fenner240@btinternet.com

Guides (in the Church Hall) Girls age 10 to 16

Fridays 6.00 -7 30p.m. Mrs Ruth Clery 020 651 4116

07702 870030

Pop In (in the Church Hall)

Mondays 10.30-12noon Mr Ron Bright 07972 607823

Little Dragons (in the Church) Toddlers 0-5

marylbrown250@gmail.com

Mondays 9 30a.m. -11 30a.m. Mrs Mary Brown 07704311523

Intentions

If you think intentions are what matter, try a few weeks in the Intensive Care Unit rather than the Intensive Care Unit.

The smallest good deed has the edge on the grandest intention.

St. George's Church Directory

Churchwarden: Mrs Jan Turner 020 8654 6552

Members of the PCC

Mr Alexander Baldwin-Smith, Mrs Jan Payne, Mrs Susan Wheeler, Mrs Katie Francis, Mr Steve Westray, Mrs Elizabeth Birchenough, Mr Owen Whalley, and those office holders who are PCC members.

Hon. Secretary PCC.

Mr Eric Baldwin-Smith

Treasurer

Deanery Synod Representatives (also on PCC): Mr Ray Wheeler Mrs Helen Aylward, Mrs Fay Westray

Electoral Roll Officer

Mr. Owen Whalley 020 8655 1349

Organist and Choir Mistress

Mrs Sophie Clayton-Wareham 07703554159

Safeguarding Representatives

Mrs. Susan Wheeler. 020 8777 5271

Dr Toyin Magbagbeola

Church Flowers

Mrs. Marion Sheehan 020 8777 7308

Environment (ECO) Group

Mrs Jan Turner 020 8654 6552

Magazine Editors

Mr. Brian McGinnis 31 Woodmere Avenue, Shirley CR0 7PG 020 8654 6190

Mrs A L Clayton

Accounts

Mrs. Janet Fitt 020 8777 7823

Adverts

Janet Fitt or Brian McGinnis

ADVERTISING DIRECTORY

Making friends with your Bible

The Monday Evening Bible Reading Group offers you Zoom joining in, or notes to support your own personal Bible reading. See Bible Reading Group section of church website and page 10.

Shirley Neighbourhood Care

St George's Church

Elstan Way

The Glade

CR0 7PR

020 8662 9599

info@shirleyneighbourhoodcare.co.uk

Weekday mornings 10 a.m.—12 30

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Have you ever thought of writing a piece for the magazine? If not, why not? Choose your topic - within reason!

Gifts to share?

if you feel that St George's is not doing something it should be doing, or that you have a gift to offer/ share that is not being used by St George's, please do not keep your mouth shut!

Prayers on weekdays

Tuning into God doesn't require a minimum number of people: one to One is fine.! But if you want prayer company, there are Zoom prayers at 9 a.m. Monday to Friday. All are welcome.

TV Repairs

Need a Repair, Installation or User Training, Then phone Peter your local TV Engineer on Telephone: 078855 09319

Look

Do you want to know a secret? Join Croydon All Year Bowls For FREE Taster call 020 8688 0659

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+ Welcoming All +*



St George the Martyr

Elstan Way, Shirley, Croydon. (off the Glade)

parish.office@hotmail.co.uk

www.stgeorgeschurch.co.uk

(Charity Number: 1134140)