

March 2024

Being a Christian in a Time of War

Advent and Christmas in Jerusalem was overshadowed by the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza. The Christmas lights which normally bring joy in Bethlehem and Nazareth and across the Land, did not shine out for the birth of the Christ-child. We quietly celebrated, as in a time of mourning. Now, months later the same conditions prevail with relentless and massive killing by Israel's army of Gazan civilians which continues without restraint. We were strangely comforted by the image of baby Jesus born under the rubble in Gaza which the Lutheran pastor from Bethlehem, Revd Munther Isaac presented to the world. It spoke to us of God incarnated into the human suffering of this time and especially in Gaza.

As of the time of writing, Israeli hostages are still held in Gaza to the deep distress of their family and friends. The numbers of those killed and injured in Gaza continues to rise horrifically and starvation and disease is taking hold creating ever more distressing

scenes. So, we have entered into the season Lent still with very heavy hearts. In this season, we traditionally focus on Christ's temptations and his journey to the cross and we identify with that by means of types of fasting, by study and by self-examination. This year the atmosphere of our lives in the Holy Land is infused with deep introspection as we reflect on human suffering and evil and all its consequences. It is more than a penitential season; it is hard to hold back the tide of grief and anger which we feel when the cries of the victims of war call out for mercy and ceasefire. The leap of the imagination which we might normally have to make to shake us out of the relative ease and comfort of normal life is no longer necessary because we live day by day with the awful realities of the war and its impact.

It is just as well as that our Christian tradition can bear the weight of the toughest questions of human existence because to live in the shadow of a terrifying war is to ask searching

questions every day: How can people inflict such horrific suffering on other people? Is there anything in our common humanity which can reach across differences of ethnicity and religion to nurture empathy? How can the world seemingly only observe while this disaster unfolds as if it were volcano lava flow which no human effort can hinder? Where is God in all of this hideous pain?

At the core of the church's own framework for understanding human sin and suffering is Christ's passion and crucifixion at the hands of a brutal occupying force and vengeful religious scapegoaters. This year the events of Holy Week and especially Good Friday will take place under the gloom of war and the terrible suffering of the people of Gaza, not only bombed but also increasingly, starved to death. We say and we will sing 'Is it nothing to you all who pass by?' As we imagined Christ born under Gaza's rubble, we will also consider, Jesus crucified in Gaza. Please do not speak to me about hope as if it were just a cheap optimism for a better day. Christian hope is that for Jesus, resurrection followed crucifixion but it does not remove the reality of the suffering of the cross. It helps us to look through the cross to the enduring love of God in the present life and in the life to come.



The Judean wilderness

Very Rev'd Canon Richard Sewell
Dean of St George's College, Jerusalem

Services & Contacts

Sunday Services

St Mary's 10am Parish Eucharist
6pm Caritas
All Saints' 8.30am Eucharist (Order Two)
10.30am Parish Eucharist

Upcoming Events

All Saints'

April

Monday 8th

7.30pm Sung Eucharist

Sunday 21st

10.30am Parish Eucharist 'All Together' followed by the Annual Church Meeting

Sunday 28th

10.30am Parish Eucharist with Preacher: Bishop Rowan Williams

6pm Choral Evensong

May

Thursday 9th – Ascension Day

7.30pm Sung Eucharist

Sunday 19th – Pentecost

10.30am Parish Eucharist 'All Together'

Sunday 26th

6pm Choral Evensong

Other Services

St Mary's Tue – Fri, 9.15am Morning Prayer
Tuesday, 10m Toddler Group (term-time)
Wednesday, 12.30pm Eucharist
All Saints' Mon– Fri, 9.15am Morning Prayer
Wednesday, 4.30pm Evening Prayer
Thursday, 10am Toddlers Eucharist

St Mary's

April

Sunday 21st

10am Sunday School *during* Parish Eucharist

11am Annual Church Meeting *after* Parish Eucharist

Sunday 28th

10am Sunday School *during* Parish Eucharist

May

Sunday 5th

10am All Age Service

Sunday 12th

10am Sunday School *during* Parish Eucharist

12th – 18th

Christian Aid Week

Sunday 19th

10am Sunday School *during* Parish Eucharist

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The Church Mouse

The Church Mouse is here to make sure you never miss an important service, concert or picnic again!

Simply sign up to our parish email list and the Church Mouse will drop you a line telling you all the things we have going on that week.

Sign up at either stmarys.parishofputney.com or allsaints.parishofputney.com

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Come and follow!

All Saints' Turns 150

All Saints' Church was consecrated on 25th April 1874, and so this year is our 150th birthday! All Saints' is known for being a beautiful, Listed Grade II, building, with exquisite stained glass, and for being a place where music is performed to a high standard by both amateurs and professionals. It is primarily a Christian community and a place of worship. Our celebrations this year will encompass all of these aspects, as we give thanks for what we have received and looking forward to the future.

Appropriately, our anniversary programme begins with music, and by the time this magazine is published we will, for the first time, have hosted a concert in the Barnes Music Festival. Our own **anniversary concert** follows on Saturday 20th April, with dozens of local singers joining a professional orchestra and soloists to sing Handel's Messiah. See below for a QR code to access tickets.



Celebrating the beauty of our building, from Easter Day (31st March) until our Dedication Festival (28th April), we will display an **exhibition of photographs and paintings** by local artist Dan Waring that were inspired by All Saints'.

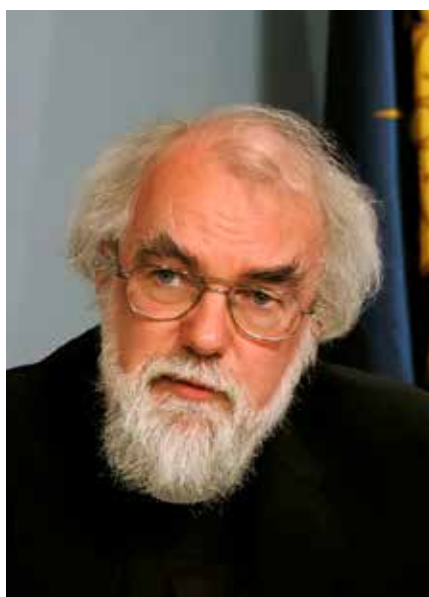
Congregation member Elizabeth Holt has been organizing a **local history project**, matching people from different parts of the community at All Saints' to interview each other and

record memories and experiences. We hope to build new connections within the congregation, and to discover parts of our church's history that we didn't know about.

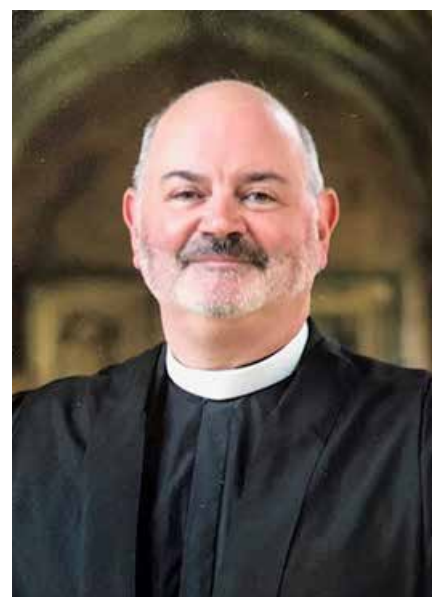
Two events in the summer will build on this community theme: on the Day of Pentecost (19th May) we will hold an informal **birthday party** after the Parish Eucharist, giving children an opportunity to celebrate, and on Saturday 22nd June there will be a **'words and music'** event celebrating the All Saints' building and community in poetry and song.

Last but not least, at two of the liturgical milestones of the year, we will be visited by prestigious **guest preachers** at the Parish Eucharist. On our Dedication Festival (28th April), we will hear from former Archbishop of Canterbury Rowan Williams; and from the Dean of Southwark, Mark Oakley, on All Saints' Sunday (3rd November).

We are very grateful to those who built All Saints' and filled it with beauty; and to those, many of whom are still with us, who worked so hard to keep it from closure in the early 1990s. We hope that this year's celebrations of



The Rt Revd Dr Rowan Williams, Archbishop of Canterbury; 2002 until 2012



The Very Reverend Dr Mark Oakley, Dean of Southwark

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Parish Notes

building, music, and community will be a fitting tribute to those who have helped All Saints' to reach this significant anniversary, and an inspiration to us who are looking to the next 150 years!

Interview: Graham Shaw OBE



Graham is a bike-riding, car-driving, marmalade-making 90-year-old who runs his sheltered community like he ran his battleships, with humanity and a flair for delegating. What an extraordinary man; wiry, jovial, a Duracell bunny.

What's your secret?!

I've been very blessed with a healthy body and active mind. *He squeezed our meeting into a lull in his business schedule; he was waiting for a visa to clear Unexploded Ordnance (UXO) in one Middle East country, while placing his company's bid to clear UXO in another, both underwater and on land, across a space half the size of Wales.*

What's your background?

My Naval training as a UXO clearance diver led to commercial UXO Survey work around old battle sites and shipwrecks, and this has continued despite my retirement.

Parish Notes

Ian Yearsley, who was a Lay Reader in the Parish for forty years, celebrated his 90th birthday in February over lunch at The Lighthouse in Battersea with his son, Alan, and a small group of friends. Most of Ian's main interests were

Was there ever conflict between your faith and your career?

I went to sea at 15, still very young in my Christian Faith, and have continued to seek a deeper Faith over the years. I have not felt a conflict because, as a fighting force, I see the Navy's primary role as that of peacekeeping, with the capability to give 'a bloody nose' to a transgressor, not to mention scooping up countless stray yachtsmen and rescuing islanders after typhoons.

What is your greatest achievement in the Parish?

We came to Putney in 1975, when St Mary's was a burnt-out shell, and I trained early on as a Reader. I am particularly pleased to have contributed to the regeneration of All Saints, at a time when there was active discussion of turning it into a scent factory. We simply wouldn't let the Church die.

What are you involved in currently?

The Lord has given me the opportunity to help others, so I Chair our Residents' Association, occasionally assist at All Saints Church and actively work as a volunteer to ensure Naval input to the Armed Forces Christian Union.

I also participate in two other prayer groups in the Community and am on the Diocesan and Deanery Synods, the PCC and the All Saints DCC. Being a Master Mariner, I still have an office onboard HQS Wellington, the Livery Hall of the Honorable Company of

Master Mariners which is moored on the Thames at Temple. She is special because I sailed her when she was a seagoing ship.

What's good about Putney?

We are fortunate to have a very active MP and Councillors who take their duties seriously.

What are your best bits of Bible?

2 Timothy 4:17 and Proverbs 3 v:5-6

Do you have an MBE or something?

(He goes all twinkly and self-effacing, assessing whether he can get away with not telling me...)

I can't have Richard telling me off because I didn't mention your awards. (I say, equally twinkly but with a touch of steel).

He doesn't know. (Deep breath) I was invested with an OBE, in fact, awarded in 1968, for my role as the "Boss" of the Navy's Fleet Clearance Diving Team of some 90 men, working from Singapore covering hostilities in Indonesia, Hong Kong, Malaysia and Aden. We were involved in ordnance and mine clearance (sometimes under fire) - with no fatalities or accidents! I was then in my early 30s and somewhat junior for such an award (he adds humbly).

Graham Shaw OBE

interviewed by Madeleine Neave

represented – including journalism, tramways, the Southwark Lay Reader community and the Parish of Putney. Ian now lives at Meadbank care home in Battersea, where he will be very happy to welcome visitors from Putney.

The funeral of **Cherry Steward**, who died recently at the age of 88, was held at St Mary's on 5th March. Cherry was a stalwart of St Mary's for many years, as

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The Scrubbery in 2023

In early 2023, a volunteer's simple ask, for crutches in a pub, triggered a remarkable series of events, that resulted in a van full of aid being driven to Ukraine in April by Rosie, Margaret and Olga. The journey was triggered by the generosity of an Irish company named eNet, that donated the van to the Scrubbery, upon learning of our activities.

The decision was made to redirect the van to Ukraine to be used for humanitarian purposes and medical evacuation. The logistics were carefully coordinated, with the team picking up the van in Warsaw and delivering essential items collected, in Ireland, to various locations in Ukraine. During this visit, the Scrubbery team was exposed to the courage and determination of people facing extreme adversity and thus contacted the organisations they had been helping to better understand their needs.

Upon our return, the focus shifted to supporting those specific organisations we visited in Ukraine. Our main accomplishment was securing 10 lorry loads of unwanted scrubs, surgical gowns and other items from an NHS

Trust. It was a significant logistical challenge to get these items to Ukraine, and after considerable effort, Rosie secured free transport delivery to several hospitals.

We engaged in many other aid initiatives for Ukraine, from repurposing London Marathon foil blankets for first aid kits, to sending camouflage nets, tents, and other equipment to the front line. Ambulances were filled with sports equipment, toys, and medical supplies for rehabilitation wards and children's hospitals. The team also embarked on a significant project to make scrubs for St. Nicholas Children's Hospital, purchasing fabric and mobilising volunteers for sewing scrubs.

Throughout the summer, the Scrubbery was involved in various activities, including a charity gala, hosting corporate team building days making camouflage nets, repurposing of unwanted medical goods, and collaborations to send more ambulances and aid to Ukraine.

Local highlights included The Scrubbery's contributions to community projects in Putney and Roehampton, such as setting up the

Oasis Academy Putney School Library, securing a grant for an eco-reading challenge and a grant for making story sacks for early readers. We collected food from Gail's bakery, at the end of each day, and distributed to various community groups in the area, helping to reduce food waste. Additionally, Rosie's recognition at a Regenerate Rise gala lunch emphasised the impact of The Scrubbery on community life.

As autumn progressed, we continued our efforts, making scrubs and sending urgent aid to Ukraine, including winter clothing, bedding, and medical supplies. Collaborations with individuals like Djamilia and Alexsey facilitated the safe delivery of aid, with a focus on mental health support for traumatised children in hospitals. Ongoing initiatives include shipments of operating room scrubs, warm winter clothing and essential supplies to St. Nicholas Children's Hospital.

Thank you to everyone who has, so kindly, donated time, energy and aid to support this effort.

Rosie Taylor Davies

The Rev'd Hayley Argles-Grant, a former warden of St Mary's and now the Rector of the Falkland Islands, led prayers at the Liberation Monument during the recent visit to the Falkland Islands by the Foreign Secretary, Lord Cameron.



Stairway to Heaven

If you look at an old picture (18th or early 19th century) of St Mary's Church, you will notice something strange. A flight of stairs runs up the exterior of the north wall of the church. It would have led to the balcony that once occupied the area over where the altar is now. Why was the mysterious flight of stairs there? And who used it?

One explanation is that the Duchess of Devonshire, recently widowed, moved to a large house near Putney in the late 18th century. The Duchess wanted to attend church on Sundays and St Mary's was the natural choice. However, for reasons unknown, Her Grace did not want to enter the church through the main door, in the tower, like everyone else. She asked for stairs to be built against the north wall. This would facilitate her entry and exit to and from



her personal pew on the then balcony. As far as we know, the Duchess was very happy with the arrangement. The Duchess's stairs probably lasted until the church's major rebuilding in 1836

when only the tower and Bishop West's Chapel survived from earlier times.

Paul Donnelly

Parish Notes *continued*

Continued from page 4...

a sidesperson and also supporting many events and activities. The tributes at the service reminded us of other aspects of her life, as a dedicated primary school teacher, a keen traveller, particularly to Africa, and a very committed tennis player, even in her later years.

Pat Shipley, who was a regular deacon, reader and intercessor at St Mary's, has moved to The Pines nursing home on West Hill, following an illness. She is settling in well and she is conveniently placed for regular visits by her daughter, Sarah Tyler, a member of St Mary's choir.

Issa Cissokho, who runs the Pantry at St Mary's, will be opening a new branch

at Putney Library soon after Easter. Do support the new venture if you're using the Library.

The Parish was delighted to host an event in February for **Youth Ministry in Communion** (YMIC), a network of churches collaborating to share the love of God with young people in West London, of which we are the sole south-of-the-river member. An afternoon of activities was followed by a contemplative service based on the pattern of worship of the Taizé community.

More and more **young people** are becoming involved in the life of the church. On 5th February, in both

St Mary's and All Saints', 33 young people, having completed their preparation course, were **admitted to Communion**.

We also currently have 36 children signed up for the **Youth Group** (Y6 & Y7). We hold a Youth Group twice a month at St Mary's – run by Luke Carson and Nikki Cornfield.

We held a party for the St Mary's **acolytes** on 24th February to thank them for their valuable service. It's wonderful to have 19 acolytes trained and ready to go and another 2 waiting to be trained, and also to see some of our acolytes "promoted" to crucifer and assistant deacon.

**Enjoy Friday
Fish & Chips,
Saturday Brunch
and Sunday Roast
at our place.
Or yours.**



Enjoy our delicious Friday, Saturday and Sunday dishes here or as 'Take me Home' meals. They can also be delivered by Just Eat.

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