

News & Views

May 2025



Elmers End Free Church

Goddard Road, Elmers End,

Beckenham, Kent BR3 4AE

Website : www.elmersendchurch.org.uk

Minister

We are without a Minister for the time being.

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Services

The Sunday service is at 11.00 a.m.

Holy Communion is usually held in the morning of the 3rd Sunday of the month.

Elmers End Free Church is a member of Churches Together in Beckenham

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Weekly Activities

Brownie Guides

Monday 6.30 p.m.

Leader : Miss Katherine Bayley

Email : 16thbeckenhambrownies@live.co.uk

Langley Pre-School

Tuesday-Friday

Please contact Mrs Jenny Jupp

Tel : 020 8402 8320

Email : langleypreschool@hotmail.com

Flamenco

Tuesday 7.30 p.m. Saturday 2.30 p.m.

Leader Mrs Juani Garcia

Email : flamenco@talktalk.net

Weddings, Funerals and Baptisms

Please contact the Secretary on 07979 958753

COVER PHOTO

The cover photo this month is of the inside of the magnificent Basilica of Sacre Coeur in Montmartre, Paris, which was finally consecrated in 1919 having been delayed by the First World War.

SERVICES IN MAY

- 4th 11.00 Morning Service led by June Mackenzie*
Organist : Peter Dowling
- 11th 11.00 Morning Service led by Janet Godden*
Organist : Stephen Davies
The Service will be followed by our A.G.M./Church Meeting
- 18th 11.00 Morning Service led by Rev. Bryn Thomas
including Holy Communion
Organist : Peter Dowling
The Service will be followed by light refreshments
- 25th. 11.00 Morning Service led by Sue Thomas
Organist : Stephen Davies

SERVICES IN EARLY JUNE

- 1st 11.00 Morning Service led by Martin Fosten*
Organist : Peter Dowling
- 8th 11.00 Morning Service led by Stephen Fellingham*
Organist : Stephen Davies

*June Mackenzie is from St. George's Beckenham

*Janet Godden is from St. John's URC Orpington

*Martin Fosten is from Christ Church Petts Wood

*Stephen Fellingham is from Bromley URC

The next Church Meeting & AGM will be held on Sunday May 11 following the service. Items for the agenda to go to Sylvia please either by email or by giving it to an Elder. Preferably no later than May 8

JUNE

NEWS AND VIEWS

Any articles or news for the next edition should be with me by Sunday May 18. They can be handed to me or my daughter Katherine or sent to me Anthony



PASTORAL LETTER

By the time you read this, Easter will be a fading (and hopefully happy) memory, and we will be looking ahead to the Ascension and to Pentecost. It is one of the joys of the Christian calendar that, apart from the momentary heartbreak of the crucifixion, every stage of our year is one of rebirth and renewal. That is why, as Paul so memorably wrote to the Corinthians, our faith is based on hope as well as love. In this troubled world of the 21st century there is certainly plenty for us to hope for, but Paul had in mind particularly our hope in Christ for a kingdom whose glory we cannot even begin to contemplate.

What are we, in our corner of Elmers End, hoping for? We all have our personal concerns, and ambitions for which we hesitate to pray. But what are we hoping for, as a church? This is the question the Elders have been getting to grips with over the past few months – a discussion started by David Pickering before his retirement as our minister - which has gained added urgency in a vacancy during which we as a congregation have to plot our own way forward.

As Synod has rightly pointed out to us, we have had to start by questioning whether we have a future as a church. The answer to this has been a resounding “Yes”, but we have to demonstrate that we have the commitment, energy and imagination to take things forward, not just as an inward-looking group of friends but as an active contributor to the wider local community. From the soundings we have taken, overwhelmingly we think we do, but that is not enough.

For that reason we have been working with the Rev Jo Patterson, Synod's mission and discipleship officer, on ways of freshening and focusing what we do. It's early days yet, but ideas for brighter worship and for fresh outreach - at a manageable level for a small church - are starting to emerge. Nothing that would frighten the horses, but things bringing a modest degree of challenge that we should all be able to enjoy.

We also, of course, have a very special building, and we are keen to make the most of it. Synod's architects drafted some proposals for updating the Sanctuary over the winter, and after a further meeting with the Elders they are incorporating further changes. We want to adapt our building to the present-day and future needs of our congregation, making it accessible and welcoming for wider uses without compromising our own needs in any way. We hope to have final plans by the end of June, for discussion by a Church Meeting. Please note, though, that Synod will only give its approval and work with us on funding if we can convince them we do have a future.

Two recent ministerial retirements – one of them David's - have forced the previously insular URCs across Bromley borough to work more closely together, and this is proving a blessing. We are learning from each other – sharing our church magazines, setting up a church secretaries' WhatsApp group to recommend good plumbers etc. – and we are also building a new fellowship. A wonderful example of this was the Maundy Thursday Holy Communion at Hayes Free Church, attended by Anthony and myself. Celebrated by Bromley URC's minister the Rev. Elaine Colechin, it attracted precisely the number of worshippers for which seats and orders of service had been provided! We sat in a circle to relive the events of that traumatic night for the disciples when Jesus washed their feet and talked unnervingly of what lay ahead for him. And we came away not only with our faith refreshed, but realising that we are starting to make new friends, as well as seeing more of our counterparts at Emmanuel. What could be better than that?

One concrete sign of this new engagement is the Desert Island Discs scheduled for our Elmer Room at 6pm on Saturday 10 May, at which Elaine Colechin will be interviewed by Bryn about her life and interests. Elaine has a degree of oversight over EEFC as long as our ministerial vacancy continues, and this is an ideal opportunity to get to know her better. Fish and chips will be provided, too! Anthony is selling the tickets.

Nick Comfort

WORDS OF WISDOM

How Luke's Gospel deals with Resurrection

We have seen how Luke writes about the Birth of Christ and then about his last hours. Now we look at the way he presents Resurrection. So far, we have noted his emphasis on the importance of poor people in Jesus' ministry, and the way he changes Mark's account, e.g. to be kind to the disciples and to underline Jesus' compassion (healing the slave's ear, reassuring the repentant thief) and his last words on the cross.

Now that we come to Resurrection he makes us think hard about Jesus' Resurrection body by including aspects that seem incompatible to us.

Reading between the lines, we can see he is sympathetic to the women who came with embalming spices, devotedly wanting to carry out their duty later than they wished (because of the intervening sabbath) and finding an empty tomb, thus preventing them from expressing their respect and love for Jesus ('...it was the least we could do...'). And then they were disrespected by the male disciples, who did not believe their report that the tomb was empty ('We can't believe women'). Peter (give him his due?) goes alone to confirm this as a fact, whereas in John's gospel he and John had a boys-will-be-boys race to get there first.

Then we read a major part of the story, which, like the shepherds, the manger, the Good Samaritan and the Prodigal Son, is found only in Luke: the walk to Emmaus. It has rightly become a favourite in the devotional life of many Christians: two people set off on a journey; a stranger joins them; they do not recognise him as Jesus, who explains scriptures for them; they arrive and invite the stranger to join them (as in the hymn 'Abide with me, fast falls the eventide'); they sit down at table, the stranger says grace, blessing the bread just as in the Last Supper; finally they recognise Jesus; at that moment he vanishes.

Our reflection is that we can always rely on God, even if we do not recognise his presence, and even if he suddenly seems to leave us. Our Good Friday moment of sorrow can become an unexpected Easter time of joy. Somehow he takes charge, blessing us and actions we take in his name. The non-recognition and the sudden vanishing become, not puzzling weaknesses, but the strengths of the story. If, however, we try to use this story to explain what Jesus' body was like, we get nowhere: Jesus can walk and talk, yet is not recognisable? He prepares to eat, yet vanishes into thin air? We can't work it out.

The next part of the story is also puzzling: Jesus appears among them and they think they are seeing a ghost. 'I'm no ghost,' says Jesus, and he eats some fish that they offer him (a detail that suits Galilee better than Jerusalem). So, a real body just as before the Crucifixion?

Mark's gospel says he will meet his followers in Galilee; Matthew ends his book with Jesus giving the Great Commission in Galilee; John sets the scene in Jerusalem in ch20, then takes them off to Galilee in ch21. Why does Luke insist that they stay in Jerusalem? Because in seven weeks' time he needs them to be there to receive the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. The scholars have not conclusively worked out why Mark and Matthew want him back in Galilee: the gospels do not say...

Luke, meticulous historian, diligent researcher and organised editor, gives us stories he thinks are significant. His deep faith in Jesus may make him unaware of the contradictory aspects of some of his account; or, of course,

2000 years ago, humanity had not yet developed the scientific, factual, approach we now take for granted. What IS clear is that Jesus appeared to many people – Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 says 50. Maybe it does not matter what *exactly* his body, or ‘body’, or vision of body, was like. Our Scriptures provide testimony, not explanation. We intuitively know that Jesus appears to us also in ways appropriate to us.

Asking us to see Christ in others, and to try to be Christ to others?
Everywhere, every day, involving everyone? *Bryn*

NEWS OF THE CHURCH FAMILY & PRAYER POINTERS

Our Church Prayer List

Please pray for healing and hope for those experiencing joys or heartaches in life’s rich journey, including those who are feeling housebound, in hospital or receiving care, remembering particularly

- Marion
- Jack & Pat and their family
- Jeanette
- Anne
- Nick’s cousin Angela whose husband Alan has recently died.
- Andy and his mother & stepfather

Internationally

Continue to remember nations and people afflicted by war and violence, including the people of Ukraine, Israel, Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and Lebanon, praying that the current on/off peace negotiations may bring peace and vital justice for each nation or community.

Remember too, the peoples of Myanmar (previously Burma) and neighbouring countries who are trying to recover from a major earthquake.

We remember with sadness the unexpected (in some ways) death of Pope Francis. The URC has issued a prayer which it seems appropriate to provide here

Eternal Majesty,
we commend to You our brother Francis,
give him the rest he so sorely needs.

Faithful Shepherd,
help us to model in our lives and ministry,
the mercy, radicalness, and missionary zeal of Your servant Francis,
that Your kingdom will come.

Abiding Spirit,
guide the College of Cardinals as they pray, discern, and elect a new pope,
that that the ministry of oversight and leadership embodied in Pope
Francis may bear good fruit. Amen

See also P.16

THIS MONTH'S QUESTION

Which Medieval travel writer believed that he had seen unicorns and where?

Answer on Page 14

WHERE IS THIS?

Last month we were in the wonderful city of York, one of its many beautiful narrow medieval streets. but where are we this month? Possibly not too difficult if you watched a lot of TV detectives many years ago!!
Even if not, look closely at the car! Anthony

MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERES

(The church's charity for 2025)

UKRAINE

Today, Ukraine's healthcare system faces immense pressure, balancing emergency responses with the ongoing needs of patients affected by the war. For three years, drone and missile attacks have been a daily occurrence, in some cases striking cities more than 620 miles from the frontline.

Medical facilities and systems have been forced to adapt to treat people in bunkers or basements, and deal with frequent power cuts from attacks on energy infrastructure.

In 2024, MSF mobile clinic and ambulance teams working near the frontlines saw a significant increase in referrals for patients with chronic diseases such as cardiovascular issues, diabetes, and cancer. In 2023, these cases accounted for 24 percent of all referrals, rising to 33 percent in 2024. However, regular shelling and strikes mean that the access of MSF's teams is not guaranteed. Many of those living with chronic conditions are older, and less mobile. In some areas, people have begun living in their basements or in bunkers, due to the intense shelling.

"For some of the most vulnerable people, relocating isn't an option," says Thomas Marchese, head of MSF in Ukraine.

"Not everyone is able to leave their homes and start their life again, but the continued fighting means that these people are frequently cut off from medical care, just as MSF medical teams are sometimes unable to travel to certain areas due to ongoing shelling."

As the war in Ukraine enters its fourth year, MSF's teams are witnessing the medical humanitarian crisis deepen every day.

The strength of the Ukrainian health system in the face of extreme violence is clear, but the need for sustained medical care and mental health support is greater than ever. The country's infrastructure has sustained staggering damage, with hospitals coming under direct attack.

Even if the war were to end tomorrow, the long-term effects on people – physical and psychological – will linger for years to come. Hundreds of thousands of people will require ongoing care, rehabilitation, and therapy for trauma long after the last bomb falls.

MSF continues to work in Ukraine, close to the frontlines and further afield, but more support is required.

Grief is hard.
Death can impact
all of life.

The Bereavement
Journey
a place to talk

7 Sessions of films
and discussion
for *anyone bereaved anytime*

The Bereavement Journey
Christ Church Beckenham, Main Hall,
Fairfield Road, Beckenham BR3 3LE

Mondays 2pm - 4pm:
2nd 9th 16th 23rd 30th June, 7th 14th July.

Please contact Helen on:
020 8650 3847 / office@ccb.org.uk
or scan the QR code for information and booking.

 **CHRIST CHURCH
BECKENHAM**



USED POSTAGE STAMPS

The RNLI have stopped issuing postage free envelopes to send our used stamps to them. This is probably due to the cost.

I will be sending the last of our used stamps to them at the end of June. If you have any, please put them in the RNLI box, which is on the table at the back of the church.

There are other charities who will take used stamps, none of them are postage free. They can be googled. You may have a preference of charity.

The Charities below all take used stamps

RNIB

Oxfam

Macmillan Cancer Support

Many Tears Animal Rescue

RSPCA

Sylvia

SERVICES

Thank you to Anthony and Marion for arranging services and organists. It has been a pleasure to welcome new preachers to our church. Well done, long may it continue.

Sylvia

PHOTOS

All photos this month are thanks to Anthony (pages 1 & 20 bottom), Unsplash (page 15), Philip (page 19), Nick (page 20 top left), & Dave (page 20 top right)

FOODBANK

Most Wanted List:

Tinned Cold Meats

Tinned Vegetables

Sugar

Sweets

Nappies Size 4 or 4+

Cleaning Products - Bleach, Cleaning Sprays, Toilet Sprays, Disinfection and Cleaning Cloths

Toothbrushes - Adults

Toothbrushes - Children

Toothpaste

As usual, please don't feel under any obligation to give in any way, but this is simply a little guidance for any of you who would like to give at the moment.

Ending hunger together across the Bromley area.

Our warehouse is running low of donations which restricts how much can be given to those in need.

Thank you.

Sylvia

BIRTHDAYS

We would like to wish the following a Happy Birthday in May

Bryn
Emily

ANSWER TO THIS MONTH'S QUESTION

Marco Polo when visiting Sumatra. It is presumed that he saw rhinoceroses.

DESERT ISLAND DISCS

Please see the notice of this event on page 15 opposite

Don't forget that the event includes a raffle. Please start working out what you can offer as a prize and don't forget to arrange your ticket with me.

Anthony

THANKS

'Bryn writes to say how much he appreciated the way we celebrated Easter, with the beautiful floral cross and the wonderful fudge, mini-egg-cakes and hot cross buns. Thank you so much - to those who bought and arranged flowers, who created and cooked the cakes and fudge, and who served the rest of us so kindly and generously.'
We appreciated his Service too. Thank you Bryn.

ORIGINS OF WELL KNOWN EXPRESSIONS

GORDON BENNETT

James Gordon Bennett (1841-1918) was editor in chief of the New York Herald. He lived a wild lifestyle and was notorious for his drunken exploits, including the time he got irritated with a bulky roll of money in his pocket ... and set fire to it. As the headlines screamed about his latest antics his name became synonymous with remarkable news and was used as an exclamation of surprise

DESERT ISLAND DISCS

Saturday May 10th 2025

6pm at Elmers End Free Church

(entry via Langley Road entrance)

Castaway is Rev. Dr. Elaine Colechin

Interviewed by Rev. Bryn Thomas

Will Elaine's desert island look like this?

Or perhaps not?



Why not come along and find out.

Admission £10 including a fish & chip supper

Bring your own drinks and there is a raffle.

All proceeds are for our 2025 charity Medecins sans Frontieres

For tickets contact Anthony Bayley by 4 May

POPE FRANCIS



Jorge Bergoglio was a great man – we have known him as Pope Francis. While I think of myself as a convinced Protestant, I also understand that the boundaries between various versions of Christianity are unimportant in many respects, especially in the way our Christian faith relates to the rest of the world. We need a strong leader as we face issues in competing political and economic systems, and in our relationship with other faiths. Pope Francis provided that sort of leadership.

The United Reformed Church has provided an excellent reflection about Pope Francis, which you can download here:

<https://mailchi.mp/urc/on-the-death-of-his-holiness-pope-francis?e=0ff5240ae9>

The reflection begins as follows:

The United Reformed Church, with Christians everywhere, mourns the death of His Holiness Pope Francis, and extends its sympathy to Catholics who will grieve this loss most keenly.

Jorge Mario Bergoglio was elected Pope in March 2013 taking office after the abdication of Benedict XVI. It is rumoured Bergoglio was the runner up when Benedict was elected and was the first Pope ever to have his predecessor living in such proximity throughout much of his papal ministry.

All who are called to offices of leadership and oversight in the Church realise how demanding these roles can be; none is more demanding than that of Bishop of Rome. The complexity of the task tired Benedict to the point of exhaustion and the toll of the office was heavy for Francis.

Within the limitations and expectations of the Papal office Francis was an agent of change who sat lightly on inherited traditions and pomp. Rejecting an ermine lined red cape before being presented to the crowds in

St Peter's, Francis said to an aide "no thank you Monsignor ... the carnival is over!"

Living a simple lifestyle meant, for Francis, rejecting a move into the Papal apartments (which he said had room for more than 300 people) and remaining in a small suite in the Vatican guesthouse, taking his meals with other guests.

Francis saw his ministry, primarily, as being one who called the Church to be missionary. He wanted every element of the Church's life to reflect missionary discipleship and the building of the Kingdom.

From our Reformed point of view, Catholic thinking has a huge weight of tradition to overcome, particularly over the ordination of women, which has been possible in the Congregational side of our heritage since 1917. There was more than a touch of reforming in the papal ministry of Francis. We can admire so much of what Pope Francis set out to achieve. We thank God for all that he was as a man of God.

Bryn

RECOLLECTIONS OF ELMERS END

During the 1970s, I often walked down Goddard Road, and passed by the Church, but never went in. Now I walk to the Church on a Sunday, and am welcomed in.

I worked at Muirhead's electrical engineers for a year, during 1977/78. The works had been established at Elmers End since 1896, but they were demolished, along with Twinlock's the stationers, and Ackerman's bakery (on the south side industrial estate), in 1994. Muirhead also had an office block by Elmers End Green, on the site of the Odeon Cinema. There was an early computer suite there, in the days of punch cards. It has now been converted from an office block into apartments.

In 1994, I took a photograph of the demolition site, from the vantage of the newly widened bridge over the railway, in the vicinity of St. Margarets Road. There had been a temporary nursery here, relocated from Birkbeck, and a car storage compound. The cleared site that became Tesco's car park started with the ground works to divert the Chaffinch Brook into a huge concrete sewer. In the photograph (opposite), you can see the railway electricity substation building still standing on the right, which was superseded by the modern building in front.

There was another deep excavation, by the side of the railway, which filled with water over the winter, like an Olympic sized swimming pool. That became the Elmers End Interchange, for terminating bus routes 54 and 289, whilst the 367 and 356 continue to sail past on their way.

At the end of Goddard Road, there was a curious row of shops called the Pantiles, named after their characteristic clay tiled roofs. I was naturally drawn to the record shop as a teenager, when vinyl singles and albums were the norm. The buildings were demolished and the corner site landscaped, where an apple tree grows now.

On the opposite corner, there was a Post Office and Scobles, the Plumbers Merchant. I remember when our builder carried our new steel bath up the road on his back ! That shop became a block of flats. There was a row of ancient cottages next to the William IV public house, now the Elm Tree. That site was redeveloped as John Kirk House. Between all of these, we briefly had a bright blue Jet Garage, which was demolished to make way for a block of flats.

In the 1970s, there were three Banks in Elmers End, to serve the hundreds of factory workers, who were paid in cash each week. I spent some Wednesday afternoons of Work Experience at one of these, with the riveting task of assisting with cashing up after closure at 3:30 p.m., weighing bags of old pennies at 240 to the pound. That was enough to put me off a career in finance. The branch ironically later became a laundrette.

Along the twisting road and over the hump-backed railway bridge, on the borders with Croydon Borough, there was a low lying cricket ground, which was prone to flooding. When that ground was sold and redeveloped, the housing was built at a raised level, which you can see from a passing bus. Opposite there was the Randak tannery, where all manner of animal skins and hides were processed, including snakes, elephants and seals. Not a job for the squeamish, and of its day. The site is an industrial estate now.

When the wind was blowing in the wrong direction, as I recall in the school playground, my nostrils were assaulted by the combined delights of the tannery, the iron foundry behind the Bricky, and the Croydon sewage works. At least that is the country park now.

Next time, we shall explore the transport hub that is Elmers End, in the days of black and white photography.

Philip



EASTER CROSS INSIDE & THEN OUTSIDE



WHERE IS THIS?

