

# News & Views

**December 2025/January 2026**



**Elmers End Free Church**

**Goddard Road, Elmers End,**

**Beckenham, Kent BR3 4AE**

**Website : [www.elmersendchurch.org.uk](http://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 3<sup>rd</sup> 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

### **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

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## **PHOTOS**

All photos this month are thanks to Anthony (page 20 lower), Unsplash (page 1), Nick (pages 14 & 20 top), Sylvia (page 19)

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How did the art competition end?  
In a draw.

## **SERVICES IN DECEMBER**

7<sup>th</sup> 11.00 Morning Service led by Rev. Bryn Thomas  
including Holy Communion  
Organist : Peter Dowling  
The service will be followed by light refreshments

14<sup>th</sup> 11.00 Morning Service led by Hilary Miles\*  
Organist : Stephen Davies

21<sup>st</sup> THERE IS NO MORNING SERVICE  
6.00 p.m. Candle-lit Carol Service led by the Elders  
Organist : George Godsmark

24<sup>th</sup> 11.30 p.m. at EMMANUEL CHURCH WEST WICKHAM  
Midnight Communion Service

25<sup>th</sup> 9.30 a.m. Christmas Morning Service led by Nick Comfort  
Organist : Digital Hymnary

28<sup>th</sup> 11.00 Morning Service led by David Jordan  
Organist : Peter Dowling

## **SERVICES IN JANUARY**

4<sup>th</sup> 11.00 Morning Service. Details to follow  
Organist : Peter Dowling

11<sup>th</sup> 11.00 Morning Service. Details to follow  
Organist : Peter Dowling

18<sup>th</sup> 11.00 Morning Service led by Rev. Bryn Thomas  
including Holy Communion  
Organist : Peter Dowling  
The service will be followed by light refreshments

25<sup>th</sup> 11.00 Morning Service led by Simon Lang\*  
Organist : Peter Dowling

\*Hilary Miles is from Christ Church URC Petts Wood

\*Simon Lang is the Pastor of Neighbourhood Church Beckenham



## PASTORAL LETTER

### **“He hasn’t even been born yet”**

This time last year, some supermarkets were coming under fire in the media for putting hot cross buns on their shelves in early December. And no-one put the case against it better than the woman who rang in and said: “Hang on – He hasn’t even been born yet!”

The birth of our Saviour may be the most joyous event in the Christian calendar, but even if you put Advent, the Nativity and Epiphany together you are looking at six weeks, at most. The vast majority of the year is taken up with Jesus’ ministry, crucifixion and resurrection, and their world-shattering implications. And I see nothing wrong with that.

We also have to accept that every year, the commercialisation of Christmas seems to begin another week earlier. Not so long ago, there was not a mention of the festive season – even the launch of the John Lewis commercial – till we had put away our poppies. Then the cutoff date was Bonfire Night. More recently it has become Hallowe’en. Increasingly the pub and hotel chains are putting up Christmas trees at the start of November, if not before. And you can book a Christmas dinner from late August.

I’m sure we have all been looking at our Christmas card and present lists – not least to see how we can save on postage. Old-timers will be trying to remember which Sunday is the one when they should stir up their Christmas pudding (if they still make their own). But we all know, deep down, that the festive season that matters starts with Advent Sunday.

We may resent the way big business has tried to take over one of the two holiest times of our year. We may deplore even more that we are all being urged to spend money we haven't got on things nobody really needs, at just a time when more and more people are falling into poverty and homelessness.

Most of us will have a favourite charity – Trussell, Crisis, the Salvation Army or whatever – through which we can hope to bring the true message of Christmas to people who simply cannot afford to celebrate it. And at our Carols on Candlelight on 21 December – there's no morning service that day, remember - we shall be supporting Doctors Without Frontiers, working to save lives in war zones where the people have less than nothing.

But none of this means that, when the time comes, we should soft-pedal on the sheer joy of the Christian Christmas. The richness of our faith brings tears to our eyes as we sing those carols we love so much, and hear once again Luke's magical description of the Nativity. Yes, we know what lies ahead for our Lord, but for a few wonderful days we can celebrate with our families, enjoy one mince pie too many – and consign those hot cross buns to the freezer.

A very happy Christmas to you all, and every good thing you would wish yourselves for the New Year.

*Nick*



## WORDS OF WISDOM

I did say that we had come to the end of our exploration of Luke's Gospel. But along comes (rather like that extra bus you weren't expecting) another star piece of Luke's genius in telling the inspiring story of Jesus. It's his chapter 21, the last before he takes us into the two fateful chapters that lead to the Crucifixion.

I am sure you recall the way Luke depends so much on Mark, that we can tell that he had a copy of Mark on his desk as he wrote. He turns to Mark's chapter 13 and, as usual, tweaks it to suit his own approach.

To many it is a scary chapter because, on the surface, you can read it as if all the bad things can be put down to God's intention. That is not the case: Jesus is simply saying that God's kingdom will not come about immediately, and while we wait and hope for that to happen, evils will occur: wars between nations, insurrections, earthquakes, plagues and dreadful portents from the heavens.

Followers of Jesus will be persecuted, even by members of their own families; they will be brought before 'kings and governors' (i.e. as in a court of law). When this happens, says Jesus, you are not to worry about your defence – 'I will give you words and wisdom' and you will cope. By your endurance, your spiritual lives will be deepened.'

Jesus (with Luke as his editor, as it were) is pointing out that, in this self-centred world, some people in power will act in cruel ways and many innocent people will suffer. This is not God's will, but just how things are. The followers of Jesus will be safe. God's care of them is always to be relied on. They need not be afraid.

The take-away for us? Simply that if we are on God's side, then God is on ours. We can live confidently because we have God's love, whatever the circumstances. That, in a nutshell, is the Christmas message!

*Bryn*

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## THIS MONTH'S QUESTION

Who are the two best selling authors of all time?

Answer on Page 14

## WHERE IS THIS?

Last month we were in Wales, to be more precise at Caernarfon Castle. Built originally in the late 11<sup>th</sup> Century as a motte and bailey castle it was replaced by the current stone castle by King Edward 1 starting in 1283. Apparently, the walls are reminiscent of the walls of Constantinople. It is, of course, best remembered as the site of the Investiture of the Prince of Wales in 1969. So where are we this month? Quite a well known landmark. Have a look on the back page.

Anthony

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## FEBRUARY NEWS AND VIEWS

Any articles or news for the next edition should be with me by Sunday 18 January. They can be handed to me or my daughter Katherine or sent to me at [anthony.bayley@hotmail.com](mailto:anthony.bayley@hotmail.com).

Anthony

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## BIRTHDAYS

We would like to wish the following a very Happy Birthday .

### December

George, Elizabeth & Laura  
Jack  
Oscar  
Marion  
Philip

### January

Anne  
Steve  
Fara

# **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
- Jayne
- Jeanette
- Andy and his mother & stepfather
- Monica
- Pam

### **Internationally**

We pray for peace. As we seem to say every month, sadly the world is still in a very confused and worrying state. Will the ceasefire hold in Gaza? So far it has but at what cost to the Palestinians and even if it does what does the future hold for Gaza and the West Bank? Let's not forget that at the time of writing the Palestinians are still in a very serious condition. Look at the article from Medecins sans Frontieres.

Then there is the tragic situation in Ukraine. Is there any hope of a ceasefire here? But at what cost for Ukraine? (Mustn't get political but it's difficult not to!!!) The position is critical at the time of writing.

Then there are so many other worrying situations such as the civil wars in Sudan and Burma, the horrifying news from Nigeria, the results of the typhoons in Jamaica and the Philippines. Have you noticed that we hear nothing about these now. There is so much to pray for!

## **HILDA**

Yesterday, 12th November, I popped into Hilda as it was her birthday. I gave her a card and a bunch of flowers from her church family, which she was pleased with. Hilda was delighted to see me. She did comment that I hadn't been in for a while! Though she knew I had moved. Hilda was in good spirits, but, unfortunately, is nearly blind. Her home was filled with lots of cards and gifts. She told me she is nearly 100! Her granddaughter and grandson were there and the rest of her very large and extended family were coming through the day. Hilda asked me to pass on her thanks to you all for our card and gift. Also thanks to Nick for popping in to see her on occasions.

Sylvia

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## **ORIGINS OF WELL KNOWN EXPRESSIONS**

### **ON THE NAIL**

The meaning of “immediately” or ‘payment on the spot’ came from medieval business dealing. The nail was a shallow vessel mounted on a stand. When business deals were struck, payments were placed in the ‘nail’

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## **FOODBANK**

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. The Food Bank are short of the following items, and ask you to consider these in your donations:

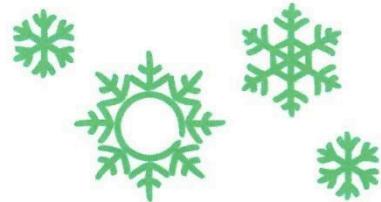
Tinned Desserts  
Sweets/Chocolate  
Long Life Fruit Juice  
Ladies Deodorant  
Soaps (Bar)

Christmas gifts would be greatly appreciated. Please see the advert which follows.

MANY THANKS once again for all your help - we really couldn't manage without our public donations!

Sylvia

# Christmas appeal



## Help support your food bank this Christmas

In the three weeks leading up to Christmas, the food bank will provide over 1000 food parcels for local individuals and families facing hardship.

### Donate food



Donate an item or two from our shopping list, ensuring we can provide food for people facing hardship in your community.

### Donate money



Help to cover the costs of storing and distributing food, as well as developing sustainable projects.

### Shopping list

- Tinned Ham
- Tinned Potatoes
- Tinned Salmon
- Crackers
- Cake/Yule Log
- Biscuits
- Mince pies
- Crisps/Savoury snacks
- Chocolate/Selection box
- Christmas pudding

**0800 8 20 23 24**

[bromleyborough.foodbank.org.uk](http://bromleyborough.foodbank.org.uk)

Registered Charity in England & Wales (1167961)





# Thank you!

Elmers End Free church

For your incredible harvest donation of 76.2kg of stock to Bromley Borough Foodbank.

Your compassion and generosity are bringing hope and nourishment to those in our community experiencing food crisis.

**Gabrielle Hanson-Williams**  
Administrator

Registered charity number 1167961. Registered in England and Wales.

## OUR POLITICAL CORRESPONDENT WRITES

For the first time that any of us can remember, we were joined for worship on Sunday 26 October by our local Member of Parliament. Prior to his election for Beckenham and Penge last July, Liam Conlon had committed himself to attend every church in the constituency, and he had joined the congregation at Emmanuel a few weeks before. He had offered to do one of the readings, and when the day's text from Luke was mentioned, he identified it as the one about the tax collector.

It was not one of our busiest services, but afterwards about ten of us stayed to chat with him over coffee in the Elmer Room. Inevitably, the nocturnal car races in Tesco's car park and Liam's part in getting them stopped featured strongly. We also discussed the prospects and merits of the Bakerloo Line eventually being extended beyond Lewisham to Elmers End and Hayes. For his part, Liam recalled his own thorough Catholic education, and underlined his commitment to work with all denominations and faiths.



He invited us to join in a multi-faith event he was staging at St George's, Beckenham on 10 November. I accepted, but with Jeanette in hospital had to send my apologies on the day.

*Nick*

## QUIZ NIGHT!

On Saturday November 22 the Elders took up the offer from Emmanuel Church of a table at a quiz evening organised on behalf of Eco Church. Churches of various denominations from quite a wide area took part. The questions were interesting & thought provoking, mostly with a 'green' tinge. Our team came 4<sup>th</sup> out of about 10 and the evening raised more than £400 for the A Rocha organisation which supports 'green' activities.

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## ANSWER TO THIS MONTH'S QUESTION

William Shakespeare and Agatha Christie (estimates between 2 - 4 billion).

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## TOP OF THE PEW

The Grand Final of the competition took place on November 21 at Christ Church URC Petts Wood. After a very closely fought match Beckenham Methodist Church (who have never before won) beat St. Augustine's (who won last year) by 77 points to 74. Our charity for the year, Bromley Homeless, were presented with a cheque for £924 and were able to tell us a little of their valuable work. Thanks to Christ Church for donating the use of their premises and providing the mid-session refreshments and to Bill Bowman for acting as QM.

Anthony

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This is the number of arrows that a skilled archer could fire in one minute using a medieval longbow and they could hit targets more than 200 metres away. Wow!!!!

# **MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERES (MSF)**

## **(The church's charity for 2025)**

### **WARNING.**

**These statements from MSF could be described as political**

A ceasefire has been agreed in Gaza. It is a moment of overwhelming relief and hope for both the people of Gaza and the families of the Israeli hostages.

But an agreement does not undo the immense suffering experienced by so many. Two years of catastrophic violence have left deep scars. More than 67,000 people have lost their lives during this genocide, including 15 of our own MSF colleagues.

Families displaced from their homes on multiple occasions are now experiencing another devastation: returning to find nothing left, their homes and sometimes whole neighbourhoods razed to the ground.

### **What is happening in Gaza?**

Prior to the ceasefire, our teams have seen: the deliberate targeting of medics and hospitals; the use of starvation as a weapon of war with a blockade starving people of food, water, fuel and medical supplies; the militarisation of aid, and the massacre of starving people queuing for aid.

In short, we are witnessing a genocide.

Through deliberate actions — including forced displacement, annexation, and mass killings — Israel is systematically destroying the conditions necessary for Palestinian life.

Much of Gaza's civilian infrastructure has been intentionally destroyed. Hospitals have been completely overwhelmed and have faced running out of critical supplies. Some medical facilities have been hit by indiscriminate bombing while others have been under siege.

We are witnessing a campaign of ethnic cleansing as the very fabric of society and Palestinian life is being wiped away in Gaza.

This campaign not only displaces Palestinians on a massive scale but also seeks to deny them — and future generations — their right of safe return, effectively erasing entire communities from the map.

### **Supply shortage and famine in Gaza**

Israeli authorities have deliberately choked Gaza, imposing a total siege, with severe restrictions on fuel, water, food, and medical supplies. A policy of collective punishment, including starvation by design, has achieved its brutal objective – famine has been declared.

Infectious diseases – including diarrhoea, respiratory infections and hepatitis – are increasingly reported across Gaza. Access to safe, clean drinking water is particularly difficult, exacerbating living conditions, hygiene and health issues. Infected wounds are common with patients facing the double hit of unsanitary living conditions and a healthcare system that is unable to provide the in-hospital treatment and support that they need.

Pregnant mothers struggle to access maternity care and delivery rooms, leading to dangerous childbirth complications.

Through the Gaza Humanitarian Foundation, launched on 27 May, humanitarian aid, especially food, is being weaponised. It is being used as bait to forcibly displace people, to meet military objectives, or blocked entirely. Aid is not a bargaining chip. It is a lifeline. Denying it is collective punishment – a war crime.

### **What is MSF calling for?**

“We are not sure that words can save lives, but we know that silence can certainly kill.”

These are the words spoken by Dr James Orbinski, as he accepted the Nobel Peace Prize on behalf of MSF 25 years ago.

As a medical humanitarian organisation, MSF not only treats the wounded, but also speaks out about what we see and do.

**MSF is an independent, impartial and neutral humanitarian organisation. We operate based on medical need alone, going wherever that is greatest.**

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## **CHRISTMAS POST-BOX**

The post-box for Christmas cards for other members of the regular congregation will be available for your use on December 7 and 14. They will then be sorted and distributed after the service on December 14<sup>th</sup>.

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## **THANK YOU'S**

It has come to that time of year when Elmers End Church would like to thank those who keep our Church going.

Firstly, our thanks go to Nick, our Secretary, who keeps us all on the right track, and is ably assisted by Dave. Thanks then go to Anne, our Treasurer, who looks after the Church Accounts, to Katherine for leading the Brownies, supervising the safeguarding role and baking if the opportunity presents itself as well as organising communion. Then there is Elizabeth who is always the first to help with anything including refreshments, assists Katherine with safeguarding and is a great support in so many ways. Thanks also to Anthony for booking our preachers and editing News & Views, to Sylvia who looks after property matters and keeps us on the straight & narrow in so many ways. Then there is Philip who looks after the website now that it is up and running, Bryn who leads our worship every month, all our other preachers and Peter and Stephen our organists. Lastly, but certainly not least, thank you to our Church family, the congregation who come on a regular basis, without whom there would be no Elmers End Church.

We wish you all a very Happy Christmas and New Year.

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## **GENUINE CHURCH BULLETIN**

At the evening service tonight, the sermon topic will be "What is hell?" Come early and listen to our choir practice.

## OUR RIVIERA

I am currently reading 'Endgame 1944' by Jonathan Dimbleby and read with surprise that Hitler used to tell his cronies that he planned to remove all residents from Crimea to make way for his own colonists whose principal task would be to turn the peninsula into 'our riviera'.

Where do I seem to have heard something like this before????

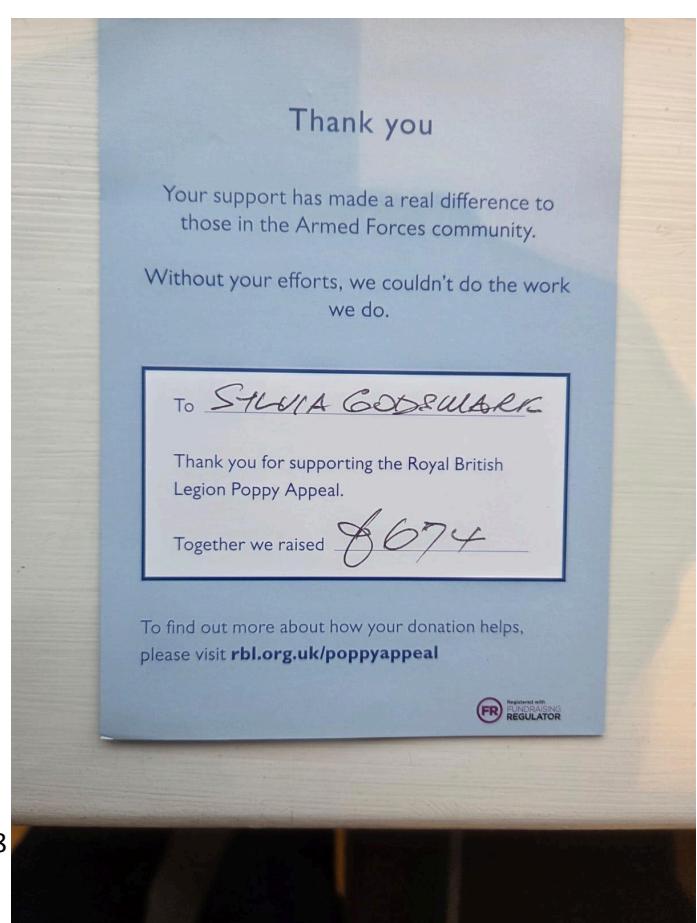
Anthony

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## POPPY APPEAL

Below is Sylvia selling poppies for the Royal British Legion at Tesco's and the thank you card she received for her hard work there over several days. Most payments these days are made by card which is not included here. The total raised at Tesco's was £16,700 and in the area more than £100,000 was raised.

Well done for your part, Sylvia



## VISIT OF LIAM CONLON M.P.



WHERE IS THIS?

