

News & Views

February 2026



Elmers End Free Church

Goddard Road, Elmers End,

Beckenham, Kent BR3 4BN

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

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

PHOTOS

The front cover is of some of the glorious windows of Hereford Cathedral. All photos this month are thanks to Anthony (pages 1, 9, 19 & 20 both), Katherine (page 4), Wikimedia Commons (pages 6 & 8)

Intentionally losing a game of rock, paper, scissors is just as hard as trying to win.

SERVICES IN FEBRUARY

- 1st 11.00 Morning Service led by June Mackenzie*
Organist : To be confirmed
- 8th 11.00 Morning Service to be led by Clive Timehin*
Organist : To be confirmed
- 15th 11.00 Morning Service led by Rev. Bryn Thomas
including Holy Communion
Organist : Peter Dowling
The service will be followed by light refreshments
- 22nd 11.00 Morning Service led by Janet Godden*
Organist : Peter Dowling

SERVICES IN EARLY MARCH

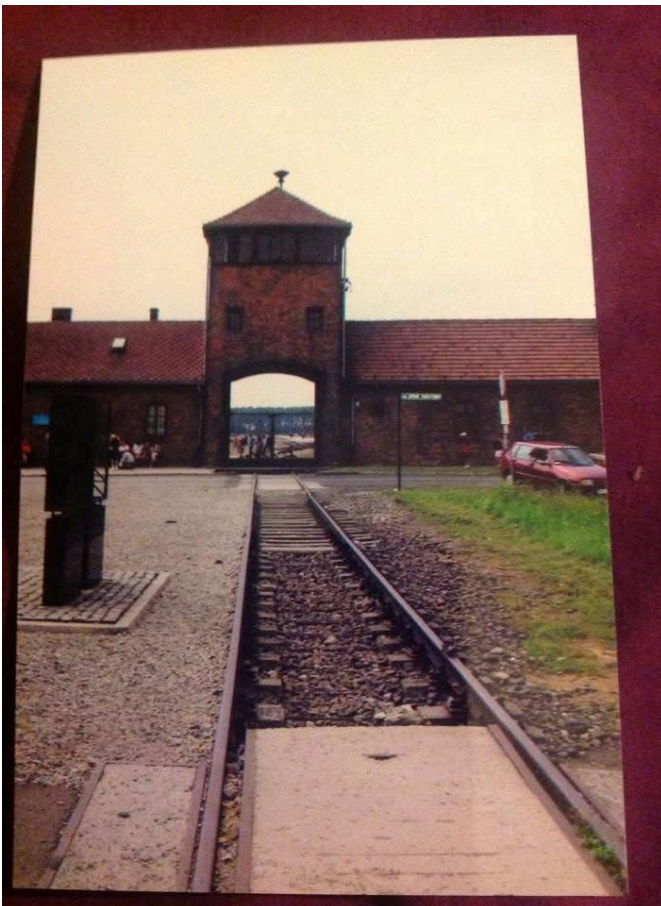
- 1st 11.00 Morning Service led by the Elders with a talk by
Ray Dickens of Bromley Foodbank
Organist : Peter Dowling
- 8th 11.00 Morning Service led by Sue Thomas
Organist : Peter Dowling

- * June Mackenzie is from St. George's Beckenham
- * Clive Timehin is from the Bromley Methodist Circuit
- * Janet Godden is from St. John's URC Orpington
- * Sue Thomas is of course from Emmanuel URC



PASTORAL LETTER

As this edition of News and Views is distributed, it is not long until International Holocaust Remembrance Day is commemorated on the 27th January. This date was chosen as it is the date that the largest concentration



camp, Auschwitz-Birkenau, was liberated. The idea behind this Memorial Day is to officially remember all who lost their lives during the horrific time of the persecution of the Jewish population, along with the millions of others murdered by the Nazis.

Alongside the remembrance comes education. It is vital to promote Holocaust education around the world in a bid to stop history repeating itself. Sadly, this day also commemorates more recent genocides which followed in Cambodia, Rwanda, Bosnia, and

Darfur and given what is happening right now around the world, it is vital to keep this going! In fact, I learnt of a memorial in Italy where members of a community have arranged 22,678 pieces of cloth or paper each with

the name of a child murdered in Gaza. This reminded me of visiting Yad Vashem (The Holocaust museum in Jerusalem), of walking through the children's memorial by the light of five candles reflected in mirrors with a taped recording of the names of the 1.5 million children and young people who died during this time. Oh, it takes three months to get to the end!

When will there be enough of senseless, innocent killing?

In researching the question of where was God during so much suffering, I looked at the Christian perspective, and from Luther preparing the way with many antisemitic views and writings to the fact that at the very least Hitler performed his murders in mostly Christian countries and many who helped him would have identified as proud Christians, it is rather depressing. However, Dr Andy Rix reflects "I would do well this day of remembrance to humbly remember the prejudice and violence that my fellow Christians have perpetuated in God's name, and to prayerfully seek to apply lessons learned."

The theme for 2026 International Holocaust Remembrance Day is Bridging Generations. Obviously, survivors are becoming rarer and so it is vital that the memories they share are kept alive. It is a call to action to make a bridge between memory and action, history and hope for the future. The website for Holocaust Memorial Day Trust states "The Holocaust threatened the fabric of civilisation, and discrimination and persecution must still be resisted every day. Our world often feels fragile and vulnerable and we cannot be complacent. Wherever it takes place, including in the UK, prejudice and the language of hatred must be challenged by us all." Important words for our times.

Take heart, we have a powerful weapon on our side, Jesus told his disciples "I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world." John 16:33.

I leave you with this poem from PASTOR MARTIN NIEMÖLLER (who started as a Nazi supporter but changed his opinions when put in a concentration camp for arguing over Nazi control of Churches.

First they came for the Communists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Communist
Then they came for the Socialists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Socialist
Then they came for the trade unionists
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a trade unionist
Then they came for the Jews
And I did not speak out
Because I was not a Jew
Then they came for me
And there was no one left
To speak out for me

Katherine

WORDS OF WISDOM



It's a New Year and the Lectionary has since the first Sunday in Advent moved on to Matthew as the leading gospel.

Last year people seemed to like the way we looked at Jesus through Luke's eyes – mainly, I think, because knowing that a gospel is in an important

*The Call of St
Matthew*

sense the ‘word of God’ leaves big questions unanswered about how it came about. To realise what actually happened helps: like Luke and Matthew having Mark’s gospel on their desk, along with some material they have in common, and some other sayings and stories that only one of them knows (like Luke’s *Good Samaritan*).

They picked up developments of thought during that first century, for example, Jesus’ conception being by the Holy Spirit, to explain his amazing life (no inherited tendency to sinfulness). Both Luke and Matthew picked up that idea. They show their own preference regarding aspects of the teaching and conduct of Jesus: as we saw last year, Luke’s prioritises poor people (e.g. the shepherds), while (in the birth stories) Matthew points out that the intellectual élite (the Wise Men) set aside their superiority in deference to a small boy under the age of two...

We are in the season of Epiphany, which means a manifestation, with *epi* meaning ‘upon’, ‘over’ or ‘to’, and *phan-* meaning ‘shine’ or ‘appear’. If a person ‘shines over us’ or ‘appears to us’, then that is an indication of God in action. In the early centuries of Christian usage it included any manifestation of Christ as Messiah, including his birth – where it remains in Eastern Orthodox Christian practice. On the western side of the faith (Catholic and Protestant) it became more specialised and refers to the manifestation of Christ to the gentiles, as represented by the Wise Men. Our (western) Christmas cleverly ‘converts’ a pagan festival.

The aspect of Epiphany that appeals to me is the identification of the Magi with the intellectual élite. Assuming there really were three of them (some traditions said there were twelve!) they may well have been Zoroastrian priests, who, within that calling, could have been ‘astrologers’ – which is the translation of ‘Magi’ used in the Revised English Bible.

I had some fun a year or two ago with the Magi being professors or research fellows at the Babylon Institute of Advanced Science, with specialisms of Astrology (that star...), Metallurgy (turning iron into *gold?*) and Pharmaceutical Botany (researching medicinal myrrh). All that is

fiction, of course, but maybe not far from the truth. *The* truth put forward in Scripture is that highly-tuned expert minds came to pay homage to, not to lord it over, the precious small boy; meaning that, however clever people think they are, they are still subject to all the teaching given by Jesus. In tandem with that is the idea that they were non-Jews – so faith in Jesus is for the whole world, not just the inhabitants of that tiny country at the eastern end of the Mediterranean.

Intriguing, also, is the way that thinking turned to kings they are also subject to the power of the risen Christ – but this interpretation dates (apparently) from the 4th and 5th centuries, and was then developed by zealous medieval monks who had a point to make about temporal power being subject to spiritual power – a pity that did not quite work between Henry II and Thomas Becket (pictured), whom we remembered recently as he was assassinated on 29th December (in 1170).



And Matthew? Well, he is masterly in his organisation of all he has to say about Jesus: he sets out five blocks of teaching known as ‘discourses’ – chapters 5/6/7, 10, 13, 18 and 24/25. The first block (the Sermon on the Mount) will keep us going (if you see what I mean) for a lifetime, as it provides Jesus’ fundamental guide to living a good life... Then, in between these five discourses, Matthew takes the story of Jesus’ ministry forward, with healings, parables, interactions with individuals and the crowds, and the sheer incomparable magnetic presence of the Master – until chapters 26/27 relate the tragic circumstances leading to the Crucifixion, and chapter 28 gives us the triumph of Resurrection. Matthew’s is still regarded by many as the top gospel – it will repay many times over the attention we give to it. *Bryn*

THIS MONTH'S QUESTION

In 1946 the Argentine military imported 23 pairs of beavers from Canada in the hope of starting a fur industry in Tierra del Fuego. How many beavers are there in Tierra del Fuego today?

Answer on Page 12

WHERE IS THIS?

In the last edition we were at Wells, to be more precise at Wells Cathedral which was basically built between 1175 and 1306 (although subsequently expanded somewhat) and was the first English cathedral built in the gothic style. It has a famous clock built in 1390 which is the second oldest clock mechanism in original condition and still in use in Britain and probably the world. There has been a church on the site since 704. So where are we this month? Quite a well known landmark. Have a look on the back page.



Anthony

MARCH NEWS AND VIEWS

Any articles or news for the next edition should be with me by Sunday 15 February. They can be handed to me or my daughter Katherine or sent to me at anthony.bayley@hotmail.com.

Anthony

GEORGE WASHINGTON

Having completed his time as first President of the USA he had another successful career as a whisky maker. In 1799 he produced 40,000 litres.

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
- Jayne
- Jeanette
- Andy and his mother & stepfather
- Monica
- Rosina
- Pam

Internationally

We pray for peace as always. 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?

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 still critical at the time of writing.

Now there is the issue of Greenland. President Trump wants to buy it and will not take no for an answer. What will he do next?

Then there are all the other worrying situations such as the civil wars in Sudan and Burma, Lets not forget Venezuela. There is so much to pray for!

ORIGINS OF WELL KNOWN EXPRESSIONS

STRAIGHT FROM THE HORSES MOUTH

The only sure way of telling a horse's age is to look in it's mouth and count the number of teeth. A first set appears at the age of 2½, a second set a year later and a final set between age 4 and 5. Thus, no matter what an owner claimed, a prospective purchaser of a horse could always check for themselves, hence it's modern meaning of receiving first-hand information that need not be doubted.

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:

Coffee

UHT Milk

Cooking Sauces

Long Life Fruit Juice

Long Life Desserts

Washing Up Liquid

Bleach

Shaving Foam/Gel

Shampoo/Conditioner

Kids Toothbrushes

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

Sylvia

GIFT PARADE SERVICE

On November 30 Katherine led a Gift Service which included a good turnout of Brownies, as it was also a Parade Service. The morning included lots of carols being the first Sunday in Advent, together with some interesting quizzes and competitions. During the service many of the congregation generously brought forward some gifts which were collected by a representative of the Community Vision Children & Family Centre who will re-distribute them as Christmas presents for needy families. Please see the photo on the inside back page (19) which shows what a successful morning it turned out to be. Thank you Katherine.

ANSWER TO THIS MONTH'S QUESTION

According to the National Geographic, between 70,000 and 110,000.

MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERES (MSF) (The church's charity for 2025)

WARNING.

These statements from MSF could be described as political
Excerpts from an end of year message from Dr Natalie Roberts, MSF UK
Executive Director

This year, MSF teams have been working in unimaginably challenging conditions to deliver crucial medical care. Thanks to your support, we've been able to move fast in response to rapidly-evolving crises and be there for people who continue to suffer long after the headlines stop.

1 | Gaza

Few humanitarian events have been experienced like Israel's war on Gaza. The astonishing situation faced by civilians has been broadcast around the world and filled social media feeds for more than two years in an unrelenting stream of suffering.

For those inside the Strip, the violence evolved in 2025 with the clear weaponisation of aid. We witnessed the establishment of the Gaza Humanitarian Fund - an Israeli-US-backed proxy - that has seen more than 900 civilians shot during its food distributions. Meanwhile, mass starvation has gripped the entire population, causing death and driving disease. With supplies low and aid blockaded, MSF teams were not immune - many lived and worked with extreme hunger. MSF teams in Gaza have now carried out over 1.4 million consultations, performed more than 20,000 surgeries and assisted in almost another 20,000 births. And, despite the ceasefire that came into effect on 10 October, we have continued to see civilians killed and injured, and no let-up in the vast medical needs of Palestinians.

2 | Sudan

As the war in Sudan entered its second year in 2025, people continued to be bombed, besieged, displaced and deprived of food, medical care and basic life-saving services.

In April, the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) and their allied armed groups attacked Zamzam, Sudan's largest displacement camp. The majority of the camp's 500,000 residents were believed to have fled to the nearby city of El Fasher. However, in May, fighting intensified in the city itself, which has since become an epicentre for atrocities, with an alarming trend of ethnically-motivated attacks. Finally, after months of siege, El Fasher was captured by RSF in October. The resulting mass killings have shocked the world.

Across the country, MSF teams, most of whom are Sudanese, continue to deliver vital healthcare in many places which have been abandoned by the international community.

3 | The fight against aid cuts

Despite humanitarian crises across headlines and social media feeds, 2025 saw the shutdown of USAID, the world's largest provider of aid, followed by the slashing of the UK's 'foreign aid' budget. These shock decisions immediately began impacting vital healthcare programmes worldwide - from HIV services to maternity care and childhood vaccinations - as well as hindering already frustrated humanitarian efforts in places like Gaza and Sudan. In July, leading medical journal The Lancet predicted that the USAID cuts alone could kill 14 million people in the next five years.

4 | Disaster response

In 2025, hurricanes, cyclones, floods and earthquakes devastated lives around the world. Communities - many that were already vulnerable - have suffered death, injury, damage to infrastructure, and the risk of infectious disease outbreaks that often follow in the wake of such disasters. While these destructive events may occur in moments, the humanitarian consequences last much longer.

MSF teams have been responding to natural disasters since 1971. We have the expert staff and the robust supply networks that make the critical difference. This year, our teams have taken life-saving emergency action from Jamaica to Afghanistan, Myanmar to the Philippines. Whether they're providing urgent medical aid to crush victims, supporting water and sanitation work, or addressing mental health needs, our teams have responded quickly to allow communities to recover.

5 | Democratic Republic of Congo

Beginning in December 2024, the decades-long instability in the east of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) escalated as the armed group M23 took control of towns and cities in a rapid advance. By February of this year, more than 400,000 people had already fled the clashes, many heading for shelter in sites already hosting more than 600,000. The scale of movement was massive, with a critical need for food, water, and healthcare for civilians wounded in the violence.

MSF dispatched mobile medical teams to reach people fleeing along the crowded routes, while our hospital in Masisi came under fire as it sheltered 10,000 people. Sadly, MSF staff have been killed in the violence this year. Elsewhere, in September, an Ebola outbreak was declared in a remote region of the south. MSF rapidly mobilised to set up a specialist treatment centres and contain the virus.

6 | People on the move

Right now, more than 117 million people are forced from their homes - one in every 70 people alive. The crisis in Sudan alone accounts for a staggering 11 million, while the Rohingya camps in Bangladesh remain the largest refugee sites on Earth, eight years on from the exodus of 2017. However, from the US-Mexico border to the EU's frontier, humans are seeking safety, only to become caught in preventable healthcare crises that

are so often driven by dangerous deterrence policies and political inaction. The UK is no exception.

From high-profile humanitarian events to overlooked crises that play out far from the cameras, reaching displaced people has and always will be fundamental to MSF's life-saving mission. Despite the language of migration being louder than ever in 2025, MSF remains neutral and impartial, committed to our principles of treating people based on medical need alone, whoever they are, wherever they are from.

7| Attacks on healthcare

Last year was the most deadly year on record for aid workers, and by August of this year, 2025, was already following the same bleak trend. Targeting hospitals and healthcare workers violates international law and strikes at the heart of humanity. But in places such as Gaza, Sudan, the DRC, and Myanmar, healthcare and healthcare workers have been attacked. In October, we mourned the death of MSF physiotherapist Abed El Hameed Qaradaya, our fifteenth colleague killed in Gaza by Israeli forces since 7 October 2023.

In May, MSF's hospital in Old Fangak, South Sudan, was bombed. Our medical colleague David Charo Kahindi shared his eye-witness testimony: "At first I thought there was a chance that we could save some of the medications that were inside, but it quickly became clear that whoever bombed the hospital wanted this pharmacy and all the medications inside it to be completely burned..."

JAYNE

Jayne was delighted with the flowers and get well card from all her friends at church. Jayne asked me to pass on her thanks for the beautiful flowers, card and prayers.

Sylvia

I didn't make it to the gym today. That makes five years in a row.

A DAFFODIL MOURNS

It is dawn, I lift my face to the gentle sun,
I nod to my kin in the morning breeze,
I am dressed in my fine yellow gown,
The sky is blue, all's well with the world.

Danger!

A humankind approaches,
Its tendrils armed with the scissors of death,
Not me, I pray,
Please don't choose me.

The humankind comes closer,
A young one of its breed in tow,
It holds my face and peers at me,
I am petrified with fear.

It releases me and moves on,
I have survived another onslaught,
It peers at my neighbour,
The scissors draw close,

No! screams my friend, please spare me,
But the humankind ignores her cries,
Are you deaf, I shout – have you no heart,
The scissors go snip!

My friend's life blood drips from her slender body,
I weep,
The young one points at me, ,
Look at the dew on that flower, it says.

Oh unfeeling one,
Are you stupid as well as cruel,
That is not dew,
Those are my tears!

I mourn my lost friend.

Jeanette

SCRABBLE

What phrase can you make out of these words?
They are kind of connected to the original.
To get you started 'The eyes' make 'They see'
Answers on next page (18)

DORMITORY
PRESBYTERIAN
ASTRONOMER
DESPERATION
THE EYES
THE MORSE CODE
SLOT MACHINES
ANIMOSITY
ELECTION RESULTS
SNOOZE ALARMS
A DECIMAL POINT
THE EARTHQUAKES
ELEVEN PLUS TWO

If God wanted me to touch my toes, he would have put them on my knees

SCRABBLE

These are the phrases you can make out of these words.
How did you get on?

DORMITORY	DIRTY ROOM
PRESBYTERIAN	BEST IN PRAYER
ASTRONOMER	MOON STARER
DESPERATION	A ROPE ENDS IT
THE EYES	THEY SEE
THE MORSE CODE	HERE COME DOTS
SLOT MACHINES	CASH LOST IN ME
ANIMOSITY	IS NO AMITY
ELECTION RESULTS	LIES LETS RECOUNT
SNOOZE ALARMS	ALAS NO MORE Z'S
A DECIMAL POINT	IM A DOT IN PLACE
THE EARTHQUAKES	THAT QUEER SHAKE
ELEVEN PLUS TWO	TWELVE PLUS ONE

CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT

On the evening of December 21 we held our annual Carols by Candlelight service which was well attended. This year it was arranged by the Elders with a wide variety of stories and poems interspersed with a large number of carols accompanied by George Godsmark on the organ. The service was followed by light refreshments and a chance to chat with our fellow worshippers. A collection was taken for our current charity, Medecins sans Frontieres, and the amount raised will be advised next month. Thanks to everyone who took part and helped in any way to make this such a successful evening.

Why did the bike fall over?

It was two tired.

WINTER IN KELSEY PARK 2008



WHERE IS THIS?

