

# News & Views

March 2026



## Elmers End Free Church

Goddard Road, Elmers End,

Beckenham, Kent BR3 4BN

Website : [www.elmersendchurch.org.uk](http://www.elmersendchurch.org.uk)

## **Minister**

We are without a Minister for the time being.

.....

## **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**

.....

## **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 the magnificent Basilica of St. Mary, Krakow, Poland. All photos this month are thanks to Anthony (pages 1 & 16 both),

---

”You can start changing our world for the better daily, no matter how small the action” Nelson Mandela

## SERVICES IN MARCH

- 1<sup>st</sup> 11.00 Morning Service led by the Elders with a talk by Ray Dickens of Bromley Foodbank (See Page 9)  
Organist : Stephen Davies
- 8<sup>th</sup> 11.00 Morning Service led by Sue Thomas\*  
Organist : Peter Dowling
- 15<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
- 22<sup>nd</sup> 11.00 Morning Service led by the Elders  
Organist : Peter Dowling  
The service will be followed by a Church Meeting  
Please advise an Elder if you have an item for the agenda
- 29<sup>th</sup> 11.00 Morning Service led by Janet Godden\*  
Organist : Stephen Davies

## SERVICES IN EARLY APRIL

- 2<sup>nd</sup> 7.00 p.m. Maundy Thursday Service led by Rev. Elaine Colechin\* including Holy Communion  
Organist : Bryn Thomas
- 5<sup>th</sup> **10.30** Easter Morning Service led by Janet Godden\* including Holy Communion  
Organist : Peter Dowling  
The service will be followed by light refreshments

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

\* Sue Thomas is of course from Emmanuel URC

\* Rev. Elaine Colechin is the Minister of Bromley URC



## **PASTORAL LETTER**

When this edition of News and Views is published, we will be into Lent. Each year Lent invites us to slow down and reflect, it mirrors Jesus' time in the wilderness and gives us time to think about our own faith journey.

It is often a time when people give up something, such as a favourite thing, for me this has often been chocolate (for I consider myself a chocoholic).

But for others it is about trying to add life giving things, such as reading, scriptures, daily prayers or performing simple acts of kindness, these can remind us of what really matters.

Lent is also a time of honesty, reminding us of our human frailty and our need for God's grace.

Wherever you are on your journey, may this Lent offer moments of stillness and reflection as we walk together towards the joy and renewal of Easter.

Elizabeth

---

## **WORDS OF WISDOM**

Matthew is the master of organisation. You might say he has a 'cunning plan' – deeply committed to his Lord and able to process detail, he is determined to present the words and actions of Jesus in a way that will help the followers of Jesus to understand what He requires of them.

Remember the basic starting point? Mark's gospel is on his desk, with a pile of sayings and stories that he, Matthew, knows about and another pile that Luke also has. He is writing some 50 years after the events, so he has to decide *the order in which to present* the material he has at his disposal. Mark's gospel is a precious guide – but he has so much more to add.

First, he separates the *actions* (healings, dealings with individuals and crowds, travel) from the main *teachings*. He then sorts the *teachings* into five categories, which he groups into sections (for us, chapters\*) and positions them at five points during the ministry of Jesus:

- 5/6/7 How to lead a life pleasing to God – the Sermon on the Mount
- 10 Going out, spreading the word, as disciples
- 13 Parables celebrating the Kingdom of Heaven
- 18 Relationships among followers of Christ
- 24/25 God's final purposes.

In between these five sections he places the actions and movements, chiefly the amazing healings: after the Sermon on the Mount (5/6/7), it is no surprise that Matthew presents a whole string of wonderful healing stories. After chapter 25, we have two chapters of the Passion narrative and the final chapter 28 given to Resurrection.

So how does this super-organiser present the start? In logical order:

- A genealogy going back to Abraham
- The birth story with a focus on Joseph, visions and scriptural references, and a massive statement (the Magi) that faith in Jesus was available for all peoples, not only Jews, and that the intellectual élite were subject to Him.
- The declaration 'This is my beloved Son', with baptism by John the Baptist, even though the cleansing aspect of baptism does not apply.
- The Temptations: Jesus' commitment to a real, not a 'magic', ministry.
- A nutshell summary of Jesus' ministry, with the call of two disciples.

THEN, with all preliminaries completed, he sails straight in to his ordering of Jesus' basic teaching-for-life: topic-by-topic we have three chapters that gather together saying after saying as The Sermon *on the Mount*: i.e. Jesus

has his way of developing the commandments given by God via Moses on Mount Sinai. First, eight ‘Blessed’ statements – showing God’s approval – that are significantly different from what the world rates as important. Then six topics that start with ‘You have heard it said...’ (in Hebrew Scripture) followed by ‘But I say to you...’ in which Jesus extends their meaning in a challenging way. That brings us to the end of chapter 5: we shall look at 6 and 7 later.

Having got this huge statement completed, he launches in chapter 8 into the day-to-day actions – healings – accomplished by this unique human being, whose conduct goes so far beyond what anyone can expect that he will be redefined as Messiah and Son of God.

Is the structure of the sermon on the Mount the work of Jesus or of Matthew? The words – dozens of sayings recorded from 50 years previously – are the words of Jesus. The structure is the work of Matthew. So *did* Jesus go up a hillside and preach and teach? Of course he did, many times. Matthew’s inspired gathering together and ordering of all the separate sayings gives him the opportunity to imply: the Almighty via Moses gave instructions to humanity on Mount Sinai; now the Almighty via his only and beloved Son has raised these instructions to a new level on a hillside in Galilee.

*\* Chapters were created by Stephen Langton, Archbishop of Canterbury and theologian of the University of Paris, in the early 13<sup>th</sup> century.*

Bryn

---

## THIS MONTH’S QUESTION

Which was Britain’s first motorway and when did it open?

Answer on Page 10

---

## MARTIN NIEMOLLER

Last month Katherine's inspiring Pastoral Letter focused on Holocaust Remembrance Day (27<sup>th</sup> January). Her letter closed with the words of Martin Niemöller, a prominent German Lutheran minister, who briefly supported the Nazis but, as early as 1933 started an organisation that opposed Hitler's attempts to unify German Protestants as a church loyal to the Nazi regime. Niemöller was one of the founders of the Confessing Church that opposed Hitler. For his outspoken witness he was sent to two concentration camps between 1938 and 1945.

The reason for this note is that I can record one of the privileges and regrets of my life. In 1956 I was awarded a London County Council travel scholarships to spend twelve weeks in Germany. I stayed with four different families and one of them was that of Martin Niemöller. The privilege was to meet and talk briefly to the great man, who was then the equivalent of a bishop or moderator in part of Germany's Protestant church. The regret is that, as a 16-year-old, I had enough German to cope (I was very fortunate to have had excellent teaching in German at school), but I had little idea about what this minister had experienced. I knew he was famous... but that was about it. So I think of the visit as an opportunity missed.

I was there for only two or three days, which did not include a Sunday. I do remember a dinner time when he concentrated on me – largely to give me a chance to ask him questions – and I did not have enough background information to handle that as well as I might have done. Still – I have enough to write this for N&V now! Perhaps the best outcome for me is to go back and re-read Katherine's contribution to February's N&V, with Niemöller's words that stir our conscience profoundly.

Bryn

---

If at first you don't succeed, skydiving is not for you

# **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
- Pam
- Hilda

## **Internationally**

We pray for peace as always. Every month, sadly, it seems the world is still in a very confused and worrying state. Will the ceasefire hold in Gaza? Will Stage 2 actually start? How many Palestinians have got to die in Gaza while it is discussed? What is happening in the West Bank to the Palestinian residents there?

Let's not forget the tragic situation in Ukraine. Is there any hope of a ceasefire here? But at what cost for Ukraine, being bombed every night? All power stations are damaged, so there are massive shortages of water and electricity (I know, I'm getting political!!) The position is still critical at the time of writing.

Then there is the issue of Greenland. President Trump wants to buy it and will not take no for an answer. Or will he? Europe seems to have stood up to him!

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

---

## **BIRTHDAYS**

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

Hayley

Sylvia

---

## **SUNDAY MARCH 1st**

On this day the Elders will be taking the Service and we will be welcoming Ray Dickens (Community Mobilisation Coordinator of Bromley Foodbank) who will be telling us about the work of the Foodbank. It seems most appropriate for us to take this opportunity to make donations to the Foodbank and the list below are the currently most needed items.

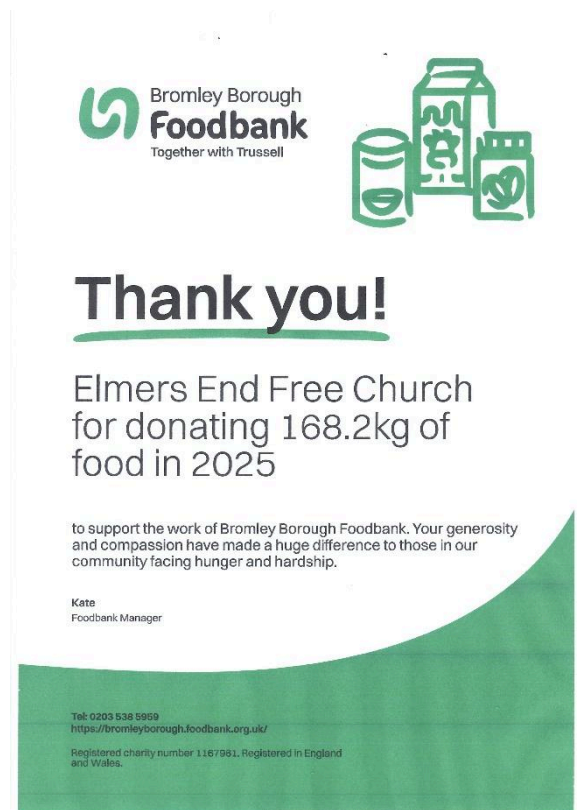
Cereal  
Long Life Fruit Juice  
Squash  
Long Life Dessert  
Sugar  
Washing Up Liquid  
Shaving Foam/Gel  
Shampoo  
Razors  
Bleach

They don't need any more Pasta, Rice, Tea.

As usual, please don't feel under any obligation to give, but this is a good opportunity to help if you are able.

# FOODBANK

On behalf of Bromley Borough Foodbank I would like to thank everyone from Elmers End Free Church for donating an incredible 168.2kg of food to us in 2025. Unfortunately there is still a requirement for food banks in the Borough to support those in need. To operate we rely upon donations such as yours. Last year we provided almost 8,300 food parcels to people in our community, including for some 3,100 children. We could not have done that without your help.



Many thanks once again for your continuing support.

I have attached a certificate of thanks.

Yours sincerely,

Bruce

Bromley Borough Foodbank  
Warehouse Volunteer

---

## ANSWER TO THIS MONTH'S QUESTION

The M6 Preston bypass, December 1958.

## ORIGINS OF WELL KNOWN EXPRESSIONS

### BITE THE BULLET

In field surgery, before the use of anaesthetics, a soldier would be told to bite down on a bullet to distract him from the pain, but also to minimise his screaming

---

### WHERE IS THIS?

Last month we were at Edinburgh, a view of the famous castle. This has existed since the 11<sup>th</sup> century and is situated on top of an extinct volcano. It has been besieged 26 times in its history (more than anywhere else in Britain) and was during the 19<sup>th</sup> century home for some years to an elephant. So where are we this month? Quite a well known building. Have a look on the back page. Anthony

---

### APRIL NEWS AND VIEWS

Any articles or news for the next edition should be with me by Sunday 22 March. 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

---

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

This month we are in Haiti. We rarely hear about this Caribbean nation

- In Port-au-Prince, Haiti, MSF teams are seeing an increasing number of people in need of care for violence-related injuries.
- Many civilians, including injured people, are trapped by gunfire and drone strikes in their neighbourhoods, making it difficult to reach medical care.

Port-au-Prince — In the first two weeks of January, Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) treated just over 100 people injured by violence at the MSF hospital in Drouillard, in Port-au-Prince, Haiti. Since late December, the city has seen a surge in clashes between the Haitian

National Police and armed groups, mainly in densely populated neighbourhoods under armed group control. For thousands of civilians, daily life is now marked by gunfire and drone strikes, leaving many trapped in their armed groups-controlled areas.

In Port-au-Prince, being injured no longer simply means surviving violence: patients must also cross multi-metre barricades, navigate blocked roads, and pass through neighbourhoods under fire to reach one of the few hospitals still operational. Many medical facilities in the capital are closed or only partially functional, some having been attacked or looted by armed groups. Only one public hospital with surgery capacities remains open, while most others are private and largely inaccessible to people who are the most vulnerable in the city.

“In my area, there are no hospitals and no medicines,” says Anderson, a kitchenware merchant and MSF patient. “There are a few doctors, but they barely have enough to provide basic dressings.” He was admitted to MSF’s Tabarre hospital in early January after being shot in the heel while returning home in a Port-au-Prince neighbourhood controlled by armed groups.

“People no longer dare to leave these areas. They are afraid,” he says. “Those coming from my area are always seen as criminals, especially if they are shot, even if they haven’t done anything wrong. Ambulances do not come here, and mototaxis often refuse to transport the injured for fear of being targeted themselves.”

Despite these severe constraints people face trying to access care, MSF has recorded a marked increase in violence-related admissions at our Drouillard hospital. Between 29 December 2025 and 12 January 2026, 101 patients injured by violence were admitted in just 15 days, including 66 with gunshot wounds. This two-week figure already far exceeds the monthly average of 54 gunshot wound admissions at Drouillard in 2025. Of these patients, 30% were women and 9% were children under 15.

Patients requiring surgical care are referred to Tabarre hospital, one of the last facilities in the capital still able to provide free specialised surgical care. These referrals, however, occur under precarious conditions. For over a year, MSF has had to suspend our ambulance service due to repeated threats and attacks on vehicles and patients during transfers between medical facilities.

Some vehicles from the state ambulance centre remain operational, but their capacity is insufficient. As a result, many critically injured patients arrive late, after fighting has subsided in their neighbourhoods, often transported by non-medical means, such as mototaxis.

“Many patients arrive with worsened injuries because they were unable to access care earlier,” explains Dembélé Dionkounda, physician and medical coordinator at Tabarre hospital. “In the past two weeks, most violence-related admissions involved gunshot wounds, often severe, causing open fractures or abdominal trauma.”

“With over 40 such cases, these injuries make up the majority of patients we treated during this period,” says Dionkounda.

In 2025, 686 patients injured by violence were admitted to MSF’s Tabarre hospital, nearly 90 per cent of them with gunshot wounds. Among those shot, 193 were women and 47 were children under 14. The trend shows no sign of slowing. On 6 January alone, MSF admitted eight patients with gunshot wounds in a single day, highlighting the persistence and intensity of violence in the capital.

---

## **CAROLS BY CANDLELIGHT**

At our Carols by Candlelight Service in December we took a collection for our charity Medecins sans Frontieres which totalled £165.55. Thank you to all those who contributed,

---

## **16<sup>th</sup> BECKENHAM BROWNIES**

On Monday 15<sup>th</sup> December the Brownies sang Brownie Bells for the last time before shutting the doors for the final time on the 16<sup>th</sup> Beckenham Brownie Unit. It was not an easy decision but it was the right one. We just didn't have enough leaders to run the unit and support each girl in the way they needed. We finished on a high with a Christmas Escape Room, cake and secret santa sock exchange. I have been a leader at this unit for 30 years and have been a part of its life since I was 7 and have been blessed to work with many great leaders. Debbie Baxter (or Morren as she was then) and Sue King were the first leaders I remember. Claire Bryant (nee Minett) and Lizzie Ibbs were with me for most of my journey and Paula has been our backbone for decades up to Lisa at the end. We have all enjoyed running the unit and helping each girl fulfil their potential. Thank you to Elmers End Church for all the support and encouragement you have given us over the years.

Katherine

---

## **CHURCH DIRECTORY**

Over the coming few months I will be organising an updated Church Directory. If you are already in the current issue but some aspect has changed please let me know. If you are not in the current issue and would like to be, please also let me know. Many thanks.

Anthony

---

## **VARIETY CONCERT**

On Saturday April 18<sup>th</sup> we will be hosting a variety concert at 7.00 p.m. in the church. Admission will be £10 per person payable at the door. More details will be published next month but please put it in your diaries at this stage.

JOIN US FOR THE

# SOUTHERN SYNOD BIG DAY OUT!

**SATURDAY  
20TH JUNE  
10.00AM TO 4.00PM**

**TICKETS  
£5**

**SHIRES OAST AT  
THE HOP FARM  
TUNBRIDGE WELLS  
TN12 6PY**

MORSHIP TOGETHER

INFLATABLES FOR ALL THE FAMILY

PRAYER & REFLECTION

POP UP CHOIR

CREATION STATIONS

TICKET INCLUDES A BURGER & SOFT DRINK, WITH  
ADDITIONAL FOOD & DRINKS AVAILABLE TO BUY AT THE BAR



**JERUSALEM FROM THE DOMINUS FLEVIT CHAPEL**



**WHERE IS THIS?**

