

# News & Views

April 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**

All photos this month are thanks to Anthony (pages 10 & 20 both), & Unsplash (page 1)

---

## **ELDERS MEETING**

There will be an Elders Meeting on April 14<sup>th</sup> at 6.30 p.m.

---

## **AFTER SERVICE COFFEE ETC**

With immediate effect we're going to start serving coffee, tea etc at the back of the church after each morning service giving us an opportunity to have a chat and get to know each other better before setting off for home. Please join us whenever possible. It's an experiment so please help to encourage us to make it permanent.

## SERVICES IN 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
- 12<sup>th</sup> 11.00 Morning Service led by June Mackenzie\*  
Organist : Peter Dowling  
The service will be followed by light refreshments
- 19<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
- 26<sup>th</sup> 11.00 Morning Service led by Joyce Brissett\*  
Organist : Peter Dowling  
The service will be followed by light refreshments

## SERVICES IN EARLY MAY

- 3<sup>rd</sup> 11.00 Morning Service led by Alison Driscoll\*  
Organist : Peter Dowling  
The service will be followed by light refreshments
- 10<sup>th</sup> 11.00 Morning Service led by Jonathan Dolling\*  
Organist : Peter Dowling  
The service will be followed by light refreshments

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

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

\* June Mackenzie is from St. George's Beckenham

\* Joyce Brissett is from St. Paul's URC Croydon

\* Alison Driscoll is from Bromley Methodist Church

\* Jonathan Dolling is from Herne Hill United Church



## **PASTORAL LETTER**

### **Jesus shoulders his Cross – and our sins**

I had been intending this message for Holy Week and Easter to concentrate on the fluffy end of the Christian year – our joy on Easter Sunday at finding the grave empty and Jesus risen. We celebrate the Resurrection with eggs, little chicks and loads of chocolate; in Serbian villages until recently the men marked it by chanting: “Christ is Risen!” and firing their blunderbusses in the air. I just hope they weren’t still in church at the time.

I don’t want us to lose sight of the rapid transition from the agony and despair of the crucifixion to the sheer delight of knowing that Christ has overcome death and is still with us. Every year, it requires an extraordinary mental change of gear from each and every one of us. But my approach to Easter was changed just a few weeks ago by one of those light bulb moments we all occasionally experience, and which transform the way we think.

Over the past year, we at Elmers End have been taking a fresh look at how we can deepen our faith. Left without a minister, we realized there were some things we hadn’t been doing, and Bible study seemed a good place to start remedying this. Several of us have joined the Lent course Elaine Colechin put together at Bromley URC, and I for one have found it fascinating. The Letter to the Hebrews is quite tough theologically, and the very useful booklet that goes with the course hasn’t been helped by a rather clunky translation compared with the one in our pew Bibles. But it’s a fascinating insight into how Jesus was portrayed to Jewish believers in

the context of their tradition. And the accompanying prayers make Hebrews highly relevant to our life today.

But the light bulb moment didn't come from Bible study. As some of you know, I occasionally worship at St Michael's, Jeanette's spiritual home in what she has always called the "High Church of England"; she has never accepted the term "Anglo-Catholic".

When I looked at their schedule of services in the run-up to Easter, the only one I could get to was a Friday evening "Stations of the Cross", culminating in a short Mass. Led by Fr Russell Stagg, half a dozen of us assembled, then processed to each of the 14 stations in turn to sing a verse of the Stabat Mater; only that evening did I realise that those words, which I've known almost all my life, refer to Mary standing at the foot of the Cross as her beloved Son is put to death.

We had got to the fourth of the stations, where the image shows for the first time Jesus bearing his Cross as he carries it to his place of execution. Father Russell was reading a prayer, when suddenly an insight swept through me – in bearing the weight of his Cross, Jesus was carrying the full, horrendous, weight of our sins.

That may seem blindingly obvious to you, but the message struck me as though I was processing it for the very first time. And what a message it is! The latter books of the New Testament tell us repeatedly that Jesus died on the Cross for our sins – but it is left to us to realise that as he struggled with this weighty encumbrance through the streets of Jerusalem on the way to Golgotha, it embodied the cruel burden imposed on God by sinful man.

A switchback of emotions lies ahead for us. The joyful reception of Jesus on Palm Sunday. The Last Supper, his betrayal and trial. The agony of his crucifixion. And the sheer wonder of his Resurrection. But through it all, we can marvel that Christ died to lift the weight of our sins from us.

We know that as humans we will not entirely succeed. But let us pray that from this Easter, we keep the burden of our sins on our Saviour as light as possible.

A very happy Easter to you all.

*Nick*

---

## WORDS OF WISDOM

On 15<sup>th</sup> February we simply read through the two chapters of Matthew's gospel that give us the last two days in the life of Jesus. Our communion was at its simplest, as, like those twelve disciples, we responded to Jesus' invitation to take the bread and the wine.

Because our Lectionary covers a lot of the Bible in small chunks every week, it is rare to get the full picture by reading two whole chapters in one worship service. Somehow, compared with having a sermon, it touched a different aspect of our minds. There *was* a 'thinking' side to it, because we had to concentrate just to keep following the narrative with all its detail, but it was not the same sort of thoughtfulness needed for a sermon. We were left with intense sorrow, horror, maybe even shock, when we took in the depth of anxiety, anger, rejection, anguish, abandonment and sheer physical pain suffered by Jesus. As the saying goes, you couldn't make it up...

On the human level, the men who had benefitted for three years from his leadership, healing and teaching slept through his anguish in Gethsemane, and then deserted him. The group's leading member asserted that he would never deny his Lord, and then, when challenged, did precisely that. And one of them used a kiss to identify Jesus in the darkness, thus betraying him into the hands of those intending to have him crucified. If their behaviour illustrates human behaviour in general, then that lands us with some pretty negative thoughts about the humanity we belong to.

I find it interesting that Matthew, Mark and Luke do not theorise – they just tell the story as best they can, gathering material from times past, and presenting the events through the lens of their own understanding of them. If we look for any hope, it is seen, not in the cross itself, but in the resurrection appearances to his followers, for they imply ‘you thought He was dead – but, tell you what, you ignorant lot, He is very much alive!’

Of course Paul is the great thinker who transforms the meaning of the cross from complete disaster to an amazing vindication of God’s love for humanity: ‘You traditional Jews can’t imagine the messiahship of a crucified failure; you Gentiles just think it is ridiculous to see triumph in a crucified loser; but I, Paul, see crucifixion as the very basis for my faith, for He gave his life *for me and for us* – and that shows God’s forgiving love.

Read that in the first chapter of 1 Corinthians – but then the whole of Paul’s thinking is based on this insight. Offering a sacrifice in the Temple was in Judaism a hugely significant act, in which the human being showed repentance and God gave forgiveness. *That*, says Paul, is the way to think of the death of Jesus of Nazareth: it was sacrificial – moreover, *that* is what confirms his high status as Messiah to Jews and Lord to all the world. So Paul, writing before any of the gospels, gives the world a way of understanding *the depth of goodness and love that transcends anything the forces of evil can do to it*.

While the Putin war in Ukraine and the Netanyahu/Trump war in the Gulf continue, that is the thought we need just now. Hold on to it. Stick to the goodness and love. We are right to do that. Keep hope alive and well. Light overcomes the darkness. And somehow, as humanity responds to God’s requirements, the evils will be overcome.

From 5<sup>th</sup> April we are in resurrection time – or all the year round, if you prefer! – so we return to that glorious theme next month.

Bryn

## THIS MONTH'S QUESTION

Why was the German battlecruiser Goeben called 'The Ship that changed the World'?

Answer on Page 12

---

## 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
- Anne's cousin Fiona & her husband Gary who is currently battling cancer
- Anne's friends Terry & Gerry & their family who are dealing with multiple medical issues
- Jeanette
- Andy and his mother & stepfather
- Monica
- Pam
- Hilda

### Internationally

We pray for peace as always. Perhaps even more than usual this month. Every month, sadly, it seems the world is still in a very confused and worrying state. The war between USA/Israel and Iran is very worrying and may have horrific repercussions for the whole world, let alone the people of the Middle East.

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?

We must 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. Have the Ukrainians got enough defence weapons or are they all going to the Middle East (Sorry if I'm getting political!!) The whole situation here is critical.

Let's not forget Greenland. Will President Trump suddenly remember this. Alternatively, will he turn his attention to Cuba which he talks about from time to time!

Then there are all the other worrying situations such as the civil wars in Sudan and Burma and Yemen, The Venezuela situation seems to have calmed.

There is so much to pray for!

---

**BIRTHDAYS**

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

Dave

Andy

Tendai

Barbara

---

## SUNDAY MARCH 1<sup>st</sup>

### EEFC supports Bromley Borough Foodbank during Lent

Although a small congregation, EEFC has a big place in Bromley Borough Foodbank's heart. Over the years, EEFC has consistently supported their work – not only through donations, but also with congregation members volunteering regularly at their foodbank, and lifting those in need through prayer.

In honour of Lent, the Foodbank was invited to speak during the Sunday service on 1 March to share an overview of their services and current initiatives. Their speaker and member of staff, Ray Dickens, provided an engaging update on the different ways the foodbank supports local people in need.



- **3 day emergency food parcels.** EEFC donated 55kg of stock during the service on 1 March to support these parcels
- **Supermarket vouchers.** Giving people access to fresh food and restoring the dignity of choice.
- **Fuel vouchers.** Helping to offset energy costs.
- **SIM cards with 6 month' free data, calling and texting.** Made possible through their partnership with Trussell/Tesco
- **Listening with holistic support.** The foodbank offers a safe space where people can talk about challenges. This might result in assistance with housing or job hunting, connecting to mental

health services, or advocating alongside clients to their local councillor or MP to resolve ongoing issues.

Ray also spoke about her role as a Local Organiser and Campaigner, a position established through the Trussell Foodbank Network. In this role, she helps support their larger mission to end the need for foodbanks in Bromley Borough and across the UK by campaigning for change to ensure everyone has enough income to meet basic needs (food, housing and bills). She reminded us that in a wealthy country like the UK, food poverty is not about a lack of available food – it's about insufficient income.

We also learnt about how the need in our community continues to increase. Over 50% of the people who visit their foodbank do so only once a year, yet demand continues to grow as wages remain low and the cost of living rises. Between 2024 and 2025, they provided over 8,400 food parcels to local families and individuals – a 7% rise overall compared to the previous year, and an 11% increase in the number of children supported.

The rise in demand comes as donations have become less predictable, and the foodbank now buys food regularly to keep up. Ray reminded us that every donation, no matter the size, has a real impact – every tin, packet and carton goes directly into someone's food parcel, bringing hope and relief during increasingly difficult times.

Ray closed by sharing feedback from a client they supported in January, highlighting the real impact our support has on those who use the foodbank:

*“I used to work for the NHS and I know how thankless working with the public can sometimes be. But I'd like to say thank you on behalf of all of us that have found ourselves in a bit of a muddle. I never thought it would happen to me. You never know which road life will take you down. However I have a lot to be grateful for. The work you all do is selfless and without people like all of you, where would people in my situation be? Thank you for helping us and thank you to those who donate. I've just received my food parcel and oh my goodness, there is enough to last me a long time.”*

## **FOODBANK**

Please don't feel under any obligation to give, but in case you are, here is a little guidance from the Foodbank on items particularly needed at the present time. Many thanks.

Tinned cold meat

Tinned potatoes

Long life desserts

Coffee

Sugar

Cereals

Long life fruit juice

Shampoo

Shaving foam/gel

Multi surface spray/wipes

---

## **ANSWER TO THIS MONTH'S QUESTION**

The German battlecruiser Goeben avoided the Royal Navy in the Mediterranean Sea in 1914 to get to Istanbul where it was instrumental in persuading Turkey to join Germany's side in the First World War.

---

## **REV. DR. PHIL WALL**

Some will remember Phil Wall who spent part of his training with Bill Bowman principally at Emmanuel but also at Elmers End. It has now been announced that he has been appointed Head of Ministries Learning and Development for the United Reformed Church.

Congratulations to Rev. Dr. Phil Wall

## **WE SAY GOODBYE TO BOBBY WELLS**

On Friday 13 March, EEFC was privileged to host the funeral of Bobby Wells, husband of Maureen who attended our church for so many years, who died on 7 February aged 89. He had been in poor health for several years; though originally he drove Maureen to church, in the time before she became unable to attend herself Pat Beeson would bring her.

It was a pleasure to meet the family and show them where Maureen used to sit. The service was conducted by the Rev Elaine Colechin – her first funeral at Elmers End – before committal at Beckenham Crematorium. The eulogy from Bobby's grandson Jude highlighted the passion for ballroom dancing that he shared with Maureen, and his trenchant support for Millwall.

Nick

---

## **ORIGINS OF WELL KNOWN EXPRESSIONS**

### **TO GIVE A PERSON SHORT SHRIFT**

A shrift was a confession to a priest, and short shrift, meaning lack of sympathy, relates to the time it took a priest to absolve a convict of their sins before execution

---

## **WHERE IS THIS?**

Last month we were in North Yorkshire at Castle Howard, whose dramatic Baroque architecture was designed by Sir John Vanbrugh whose death was exactly 300 years ago. It is particularly famous for being featured in *Brideshead Revisited* and *Bridgerton*. So where are we this month? Quite different. Have a look on the back page.

Anthony

## **MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERES (MSF)**

### **(The church's charity for 2025/26)**

After decades of conflict and economic instability Afghanistan is experiencing a humanitarian crisis with many people unable to access healthcare. Our medical teams have continued to provide care to the people of Afghanistan throughout recent conflict and following the change of government in 2021.

What is the situation in Afghanistan?

Since 2021, most hospitals and medical facilities across the country have faced extreme pressure with staff and equipment shortages due to a severe lack of funding. Following heavy sanctions the country faces economic crisis and tens of thousands of people lost their jobs.

In June 2022, an earthquake hit Khost and Patika provinces in Afghanistan. Hundreds of people were killed and thousands wounded.

MSF sent teams to provide urgent medical care and mental health support.

We also launched an emergency response to an earthquake in 2023.

Authorities have increasingly marginalised women and girls from society and severely reduced their access to education and healthcare.

MSF teams are responding to the crisis in Afghanistan, providing medical aid, expertise and life-saving supplies during the crisis.

How is MSF helping people in Afghanistan?

MSF has continued to provide life-saving medical care to people caught in a humanitarian crisis. Our teams are treating emergency trauma cases, supporting people with chronic conditions and welcoming new life into uncertain times.

MSF is working in Lashkar Gah and Kandahar, both in the south, Herat in the west and Kunduz in the north. We also run a maternity hospital in Khost, in the east, which is our busiest maternity hospital worldwide.

Other activities include:

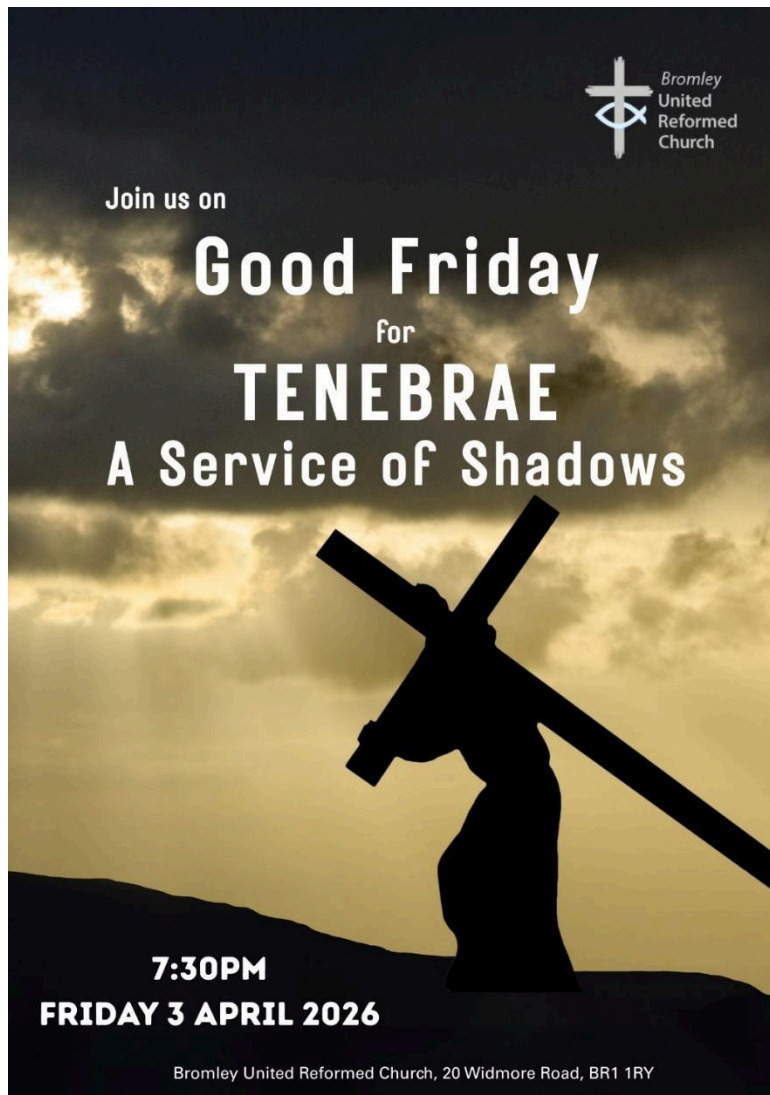
Treating children for acute malnutrition

Treating patients for infectious diseases such as measles

Running our drug-resistant tuberculosis project in Kandahar

Conducting vaccination campaigns such as for COVID-19

# GOOD FRIDAY SERVICE AT BROMLEY URC



---

## CHURCH DIRECTORY

Don't forget that a new edition is being arranged. If you are already in the current issue but some aspect has changed please let me know and 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 6.30 p.m. in the church. (Please note the change of time) Admission will be £10 per person payable at the door. We have singing, dancing, jazz, organ solos, magic and 2 of the Elders will be performing. So put the date in your diary and make sure you come along. Proceeds are for our current charity Medecins sans Frontieres



## MAY NEWS AND VIEWS

Any articles or news for the next edition should be with me by Sunday 19 April. They can be handed to me or my daughter Katherine or sent to me.

Anthony

---



**HOLY WEEK REFLECTIONS  
THE PERFECT SACRIFICE**

Booklet of daily readings that takes us on the journey with Jesus to the grave.

Daily reflections will also be posted on YouTube:  
<https://www.youtube.com/@bromleyURC>

Monday 30<sup>th</sup> March to Saturday 4<sup>th</sup> April 2026

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**

**WORSHIP 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**





Join us on

# Maundy Thursday

for

# Communion around the Table



**7pm**

Elmers End Free Church, Goddard Road, BR3 4AE

## SUNSET ON THE SEA OF GALILEE



**WHERE IS THIS?**

