

# News & Views

May 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.

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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**

### **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 (pages 1 & 16 bottom),  
Sylvia (page 16 top), Nick (pages 9, 10 & 15)

The front cover is of the Easter Cross at Elmers End Free Church.

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## **JUNE NEWS AND VIEWS**

Any articles or news for the next edition should be with me by Sunday  
24th May.

Anthony

## **SERVICES IN 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
- 17<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
- 24<sup>th</sup> 11.00 Morning Service led by Nick Comfort  
Organist : Peter Dowling  
The service will be followed by light refreshments
- 31<sup>st</sup> 11.00 Morning Service led by Janet Godden\*  
Organist : Stephen Davies  
The service will be followed by light refreshments

## **SERVICES IN EARLY JUNE**

- 7<sup>th</sup> 11.00 Morning Service led by June Mackenzie\*  
Organist : Peter Dowling  
The service will be followed by light refreshments
- 14<sup>th</sup> 11.00 Morning Service led by Janet Godden\*  
Organist : Peter Dowling  
The service will be followed by light refreshments

- \* Janet Godden is from St. John's URC Orpington
- \* June Mackenzie is from St. George's Beckenham
- \* Alison Driscoll is from Bromley Methodist Church
- \* Jonathan Dolling is from Herne Hill United Church



## **PASTORAL LETTER**

### **EASTER TO PENTECOST**

#### **TIMELINE FROM EASTER**

On Easter Sunday we had the resurrection of Jesus. Over the next 39 days Jesus appeared to his disciples.

The 40<sup>th</sup> day is known as Ascension Day. The Feast of Ascension of Jesus Christ commemorates the Christian belief of the bodily Ascension of Christ into Heaven. The 50<sup>th</sup> day we come to Pentecost Sunday (well actually 49 days). We ask the question. Why is Pentecost important? Pentecost itself takes place during the well-established Jewish Festival of First Fruits which was observed at the beginning of the wheat harvest.

A wheat harvest does not seem to be exactly a world changing event, but it became one of the most important days in World History. For Pentecost is the day that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit – the day the Church was born. That morning the Holy Spirit came to the disciples and followers of Jesus. Christians were suddenly full of life and power, utterly different from their former fearful selves. The change in them was permanent.

Of course, Pentecost is not the first time the Holy Spirit acted in this world. There are stories in the Old Testament how God's spirit guided people and strengthened them. But now, because of Christ's death and resurrection, He could dwell within them.

The colour red is also associated with Pentecost to symbolise the tongues of fire described in Acts 2 Verses 1 – 4. Verse 4 says "All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues". This ability to speak in different languages is a reversal of the Babel story in

Genesis Chapter 11. Pentecost shows God's desire for the Gospel to reach all nations, bringing unity in diversity rather than division.

This period, here in the UK, is also known as 'Whitsuntide' which covers the period including Whit Sunday, or Pentecost, and runs for the following week. It was also known as White Sunday as it was a traditional time for baptisms.

To close this month's Pastoral Letter, consider your family, your ancestors and their ancestors. At some point a Christian brought the Gospel message to them in their own language. So it was brought to you. Using this message the Holy Spirit created saving faith in your heart, that thrust faith you would receive forgiveness and everlasting life in order that you would be part of the Harvest. As you reflect on how the Holy Spirit empowered people to speak in other languages.

Give thanks to the Lord for He is good. His love endures for ever. Amen

*Dave*

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## WORDS OF WISDOM

### Drama around Resurrection

**Matthew's** drama is about an earthquake (to indicate that this is a cosmic event) and is disappointing in the lack of any major happening in Jerusalem. 'He's not going to appear here... so go to Galilee' is the message, then suddenly the two Marys *do* see him and fall prostrate to the ground clutching his feet, only for him to tell them to tell the men that they must go to Galilee, with nothing for the women personally.

Of course the Galilee message becomes important because it is the location for the Great Commission – the risen Jesus' command to go out, to make disciples, to teach and to baptise all nations. The pattern for Matthew is this: God's command to humanity was announced on *Mount*

Sinai with Moses and the Ten Commandments; then Jesus adds his precious take on those commandments – symbolically in the Sermon *on the Mount*; so it should be no surprise that Matthew comes full circle – back to Galilee where his mission had begun – and on a *mountain*, to express closeness to God the Father.

All that is precious and shows the stories that Matthew received, edited and passed on, with his understanding of what was significant. When we read **John's** account, we are in different territory – the drama is personal, with amazing detail, a human touch and deep emotion.

The feel of it is so much more appealing: Mary Magdalene distraught that someone has taken the body of her beloved Jesus; Peter and John competing with each other like teenagers to see who could get to the tomb first (with the winner John too scared to enter until Peter rushes in and notices how the grave clothes and the head-cloth are placed); then Mary is left alone and Jesus appears to her – but she does not recognise him, thinking he was the gardener, offering to take charge of the body if only the gardener will say where he has put him; then the highly-charged 'Mary' from Jesus, which enables her to recognise him; and Jesus' enigmatic instruction not to touch (or cling on to) him – making us wonder what this resurrected body was really like, and why ascension to the Father (in story terms, Luke's speciality) was vital.

Then, that evening, ten disciples (without Judas, of course, but also without Thomas) gather in a room that is locked for their safety – and Jesus appears to them. He twice wishes them peace with 'Shalom' and sends them out (in parallel with Matthew's Great Commission) and breathes on them, passing to them the power of the Holy Spirit (like the Pentecost event that Luke retells seven weeks later in Acts 2).

The climax arrives a week later when Thomas *is* present. Think more of 'Believing Thomas' than 'Doubting Thomas'... for Thomas is the first to use not just 'Master', 'Rabbi' or 'Son of God', but actually says, 'My Lord and *my God*' when he realises what has happened. He is well in advance

of the Church as a whole, which took until 325AD to formulate the doctrine of the Trinity that established the equality of Father, Son and Spirit as aspects of what we mean by the word ‘God’.

So everything has led up to that moment – it is there for us to share and follow – and the Gospel is brought to a close with, ‘[signs] ... recorded in order that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that through this faith you may have life in his name’.

It has been wonderful story-telling – and what a story! – but so much more than that. It is God’s great gift to us, that we ‘may have life in his name’. *Then*, guess what, we have a bonus Epilogue chapter 21 which gives further precious detail to add to what is already the most detailed and engaging account of the resurrection events... Read on!

*Bryn*

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## THIS MONTH’S QUESTION

How old is Oxford University?

Answer on Page 11

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## 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
- Phil (Jeanette's brother)

## **Internationally**

As usual we pray for peace. More so than ever! Every month, sadly, it seems the world is still in a very confused and worrying state. The war between USA/Israel and Iran/Lebanon is very worrying and may have horrific repercussions for the whole world, let alone the people of the Middle East. At the time of writing, will this ceasefire hold?

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? Have the Ukrainians got enough defence weapons or are they all going to the Middle East? The whole situation here is critical.

Then there are all the other worrying situations such as the civil wars in Sudan and Burma and Yemen,

There is so much to pray for!

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I couldn't understand why one of the cakes in the cafe was much more expensive than all the others until the owner explained: "That's Madeira cake!"

## BIRTHDAYS

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

Bryn

Emily

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## ELMERS END VARIETY SHOW

### **Our variety evening WAS the spice of life!**

After the cancellation of our Talent Evening last October and jitters over whether we really could put together our first public entertainment since Covid, the Variety Concert EEFC staged on 18 April turned out a complete success. Every act was warmly applauded, with Stephen Davies' jazz

group with their brilliant young trumpeter earning a standing ovation. We had a good enough attendance to create an atmosphere – with six other churches represented (two of them non-URC). And most important, the evening raised £400 for Medecins Sans Frontieres and the catering a further £47 for our own funds.



David Jordan proved a sure-footed compere, and the show opened with a superbly disciplined display of flamenco from Juani and her troupe who practice in our Hall. Anne Sander then took us on an entertaining poetical tour of Australia, Jonathan Dolling impressed us with a selection of songs from the shows. I then and Stephen closed

the first half with an organ solo by Thomas Arne.

After an extended interval for the musicians to set up, Jonathan opened the second half with some highly amusing conjuring tricks; Tej marked his return visit with Crystal by forsaking his own headgear for Tommy Cooper's trademark fez. A poem by Lewis Carroll and a macabre song from



Tom Lehrer completed my act, then Stephen introduced his D-Z-W Quartet to give us The American Songbook. It's no exaggeration to say they brought the house down. David then announced how much we had raised and wished everyone goodnight, before the group delighted us with an encore.

Thanks must go to David for introducing the show, to all the performers, to Anne for putting together the running order, to Elizabeth and Katherine for the catering and to Anthony for manning the welcome desk. If I do have one tiny regret, it is that more of our own congregation could not be there. Next time, perhaps? And I am now sure there will be a next time.

Nick

(Please see further photos on Page 15)

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## 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.

Long life milk

Cooking sauces

Tinned cold meats

Long life desserts

Washing Tablets / Pods

Shower gel / foam

Shampoo

Adult toothpaste

Ladies deodorant

Carry bags

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

1096 (there is evidence of teaching going back as far as this making it the oldest University in the English speaking world and the world's 2nd oldest in continuous operation.

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### **WHERE IS THIS?**

Last month we were at the Portsmouth Historic Dockyard with a photo of HMS Warrior. This 40 gun frigate built around 1860 should be better known as it is the first armour-plated, iron-hulled, steam powered warship, So where are we this month? Quite different. Have a look on the back page.

Anthony

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### **MEDECINS SANS FRONTIERES (MSF) (The church's charity for 2025/26) What is MSF doing in Iran and Lebanon?**

The most affected countries are Iran and Lebanon, where hostilities and airstrikes are driving displacement and increasing humanitarian and medical needs.

#### **Iran**

In Iran, MSF clinics remain prepared to respond to new and evolving emergencies. For now, MSF programmes are focused on supporting vulnerable populations.

- Before 28 February, when the escalation began, MSF had been running three projects in Iran, providing essential healthcare to marginalised people – including 6,000 medical consultations per month, as well as midwifery care, infectious disease screening and treatment, and mental health support. Although airstrikes have created operational challenges and despite the communication blackout, MSF has so far been able to continue some activities

- In Tehran, MSF is expected to reopen as a more specialised clinic following the authorisation granted in mid-March to strengthen support to local health systems responding to conflict-related needs
- Our teams are seeking authorisation from authorities to scale up emergency care support in response to conflict-related needs (opening our clinics 24/7 and supporting the local health systems). We are awaiting a response.

## **Lebanon**

In Lebanon, MSF has launched a nationwide emergency response, delivering large-scale distributions of shelter materials, water, and essential items to hundreds of thousands of displaced people, while adapting activities to maintain continuity of care and support health facilities receiving casualties.

- As of 15 April, MSF's medical mobile units have delivered 21,821 medical consultations, 4,465 sexual reproductive health consultations, and mental health sessions to 17,700 people
- We have also started providing shelters in Beirut with clean water and conducting assessments in Beirut, Rashaya and other areas to scale up mobile clinics and supplies
- Our medical teams continue to respond to mass casualty incidents following intense bombardment in different hospitals
- We are in touch with the relevant authorities to provide additional support where needed

Elsewhere in the region, our teams in Gaza and the West Bank continue to address the significant medical and mental health needs.

In Iraq, MSF has medical supplies available to be deployed in the region if needed.



# **ORGAN AND PIANO RECITAL**

**28TH MAY 2026 AT 2PM**

**WITH GUEST  
IAN LIU**

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# ELMERS END VARIETY SHOW



**THE LATEST ADDITION TO OUR CHURCH FAMILY. SIENNA ROSE BORN 9 APRIL 8 lb's 8 oz's CONGRATS TO PARENTS & GRANDPARENTS**



**WHERE IS THIS**

