

**Rev'd Amanda would appreciate it if anyone knowing of illness or any other trouble in the Parish would notify her as soon as possible on 020 3940 1897 so that she, or a member of the Church, can call without delay.**

**If you have any enquiry about baptism, marriage or another service, or if there is something else you would like to discuss with a member of the team, please make an appointment, through the Church Office (020 8462 1373) or by emailing [info@stmaryshayeskent.co.uk](mailto:info@stmaryshayeskent.co.uk)**

## **FEBRUARY 2026**

February often feels like a month caught between seasons. Christmas is well and truly packed away, although our Crib is still present until Candlemas, the first Sunday of February. Here we remember the presentation of Christ in the Temple, and the appearance of Simeon and Anna, two elderly figures who have waited faithfully for years and finally see what they have long hoped for: the light of God coming into the world. Simeon proclaims Jesus as “a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel”.

It may be grey and overcast, with cold only relieved by rain and the days still short. Yet, there are glimpses of light, sunshine breaking through at times. And if we look closely we see signs of hope, bulbs already pushing through the chilly ground. Snowdrops appearing in the churchyard during January and daffodils defiantly welcome me on my wintery walk to church. Light remains just a little longer each evening.

Light is such a powerful image at this time of year. We are all weary of darkness by February... dark mornings, dark evenings, and sometimes dark news that weighs heavily on our hearts.

Sadly, locally, one of the Bromley FC players was recently subjected to online racist abuse after the Chesterfield game. On their Facebook page Bromley responded in support of their player and stated “Unfortunately, as a football club, we can't change the way people think. However, we can use our status and platform to continue to fight for those who are subject to such vile and cowardly abuse.”

It is Racial Justice Sunday on 8<sup>th</sup> February. Bishop Jonathan and Bishop Simon are encouraging churches across the Diocese of Rochester to mark Racial Justice Sunday, as it offers an important opportunity to reflect on the importance of racial justice, to give thanks for the diversity of the human race and the Church, and to renew our

commitment to working for justice, dignity, and belonging. Bishop Jonathan and Bishop Simon share: "As bishops we encourage all parishes to mark this day in prayer, worship, teaching and fellowship; not to see this as a once a year event but as the platform for deeper conversation and spiritual reflection round racism, which is both evil and idolatrous in the way it diminishes people and the God in whose image we are all made.

"Cultures of fear and division should be met with faith and hope."

Candlemas can remind us of that hope, that God's light does not wait for perfect conditions. It shines into ordinary, imperfect, and difficult circumstances.

February sees the beginning of Lent, which will call us to reflect once again on Jesus' journey to the Cross; a time to possibly ask, 'How might we be a small bearer of that light to others?'

Maybe to be 'neighbours' checking in on one another. Maybe to stand with those who require justice, to be treated with dignity and have a sense of belonging. They are reflections of God's care, lived out in everyday faithfulness.

As we move through February, my prayer is that we would have eyes to notice the light already among us, to see God in the small details of a friendly 'hello' or a glimpse of the first snowdrops and the warm welcome and the promise of God's light for you in our churches which we'd love to share with you.

Rev'd Amanda



## **ANNUAL PARISH CHURCH MEETING** **Sunday 3 May, Following 10am Morning Service**

The APCM will be held after the 10am Morning Service. Hopefully as many as possible will be there. This is your chance to see and hear what has been done – **and is being done** - on your behalf at St Mary's.



Many thanks to those who have been busy knitting hats for the Mission to Seafarers. They have been very much appreciated.

As we begin a New Year the Mission is continuing to reflect on the best ways it can help in an era when geopolitical instability and climate change

are posing fresh challenges. In Canada the Mission's work spans 13 ports, thousands of miles and four time zones. Eric Phinney, the Regional Director for the Mission to Seafarers in Canada, reports on the great challenges and the expansion of its operations in Newfoundland and Labrador, a province over four times the size of the UK. Family support services are being set up in St John's in Newfoundland. The Mission is considering how to support the Inuit communities in Baffin Island as climate change influences shipping routes, opening up the Northwest Passage and increasing traffic.

Automation within ports and dramatically reduced turnaround times have resulted in seafarers frequently having little time ashore. In their downtime they may well stay in their cabins where loneliness and anxiety can creep in. Thomas Morrow, Port Chaplain in Houston, has found different ways to connect with the crews when he goes on board. For Filipino crew he has been providing renovated old guitars and he writes, 'You start playing music and the effect is magical - everyone comes out and suddenly there's laughter, conversation and community again. With other crews connection takes a different form. For Chinese seafarers Chūn Lián (the red paper blessings that are part of Chinese New Year) because they can't get them on ships.' For Russian, Latvian or Ukrainian crews he takes on board Paska, the traditional Easter bread. Small gestures like these show seafarers that they are valued but it also open the doors for deeper conversations.

Several new appointments have been made in Europe. Sergo Artesian has become chaplain for the Black Sea ports of Batumi and Poti in Georgia, In Greece Victoria Ashworth leads operations as Chaplain in Piraeus, one of the world's major maritime hubs. Shane Moore has become a full time chaplain in Northeast England and Kate Powell has taken on the role of Assistant Chaplain in Southampton with a particular focus on women seafarers. Such appointments help to ensure that the Mission to Seafarers will be present when they are most needed by seafarers.

Thank you all for your continued support.

**Jean Wilson, Parish Link**



At the moment I have a lot to be thankful for, and indeed am grateful that I am alive! I have had a total stage three heart block and it is only through the skills of the doctors and nurses that I am here today with a pace-maker keeping me alive! Thank you to everyone for your prayers. I feel blessed and ready to face the next journey along the road.

Last month I talked about Celebrating 150 Years of Mothers' Union: **Join Us, Join In** – Lighting the Way for Generations to Come. "Let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven." (Matthew 5:16)

And shine a light is what our MU members do. Whether someone finds themselves unexpectedly in the hospital, a family is grappling with a parent going to prison, or a baby is born prematurely, Mothers' Union members are there offering care, support, and love without judgment. We speak out against injustice, create safe spaces for conversation, and run parenting support groups - all helping to build stronger, more resilient communities.

All of our work is guided by our three core pillars of transformation:

*Ending Violence* – promoting peace and safety,  
*Ending Injustice* – advancing gender justice and  
*Ending Poverty* – fostering self-reliance and resilience.

Our global programmes include literacy and savings groups, parenting and resilience training, and domestic abuse awareness campaigns. These initiatives are rooted in local communities - we listen first, then respond with practical, faith-led action. Every day, globally, our members carry out thousands of quiet acts of service that bring hope and healing.

Mothers' Union today reflects the diversity of the modern world. We are a movement that continues to evolve, welcoming people of all backgrounds and identities. While we are a women-led movement, men are welcome to join! 150 years of courage, care, and community, and we're just getting started – so why not join us?

## Join Us, Join In

As we celebrate 150 years of courage, care and community, we're looking to the future. There's a place for you here.

Whether you're passionate about social justice, community outreach, prayer, or simply want to connect with others who care, we invite you to get involved. In the next six to twelve months, we have some exciting activities to join in locally coming up. More next month!

One of my favourite hymns is 'Lord of all hopefulness'. In verse 3 it says, 'Be there at our homing and give us we pray, your love in our hearts Lord, at the eve of the day'.

That really got me thinking. I suppose that many of us are 'in the eve of our days'. The big question is, can we still be of service to God? Maybe we feel that we can no longer contribute towards church ministry in the way that we used to be able to. Things like organising rotas and being part of a hospitality team and even church cleaning suddenly seem daunting. And then there comes a time when we no longer feel able to attend regular morning or evening services at church, because we don't feel up to making the effort to face the weather or the dark evenings.

Life often feels as though it's shrinking, as though we're becoming less significant in the world and frankly, we feel a bit useless!

Well, I'm about to tell you that these are lies told us by the enemy. Satan would love us to believe that we no longer have any usefulness or value to God and that we are HAS BEENS!

In Proverbs 9 verse 11 it says 'wisdom will extend your life, making every year more fruitful than one before'. In Psalm 139 in verse 13, we read 'before I had even become exposed, the number of days you planned for me were already recorded in your book'. Again, in Isaiah chapter 46, verse four, we read 'even as you grow old and your hair turns grey, I'll keep caring for you. I am your maker and your caregiver. I will carry you and be your Saviour'. We can trust God for His lifelong support. We serve as a testament to his goodness by learning from our experiences and by maintaining an active mind. Ageing isn't just physical. It's about spiritual growth, letting go of bitterness and cultivating a positive, resilient spirit through life's inevitable changes. Older adults are 'living archives' offering valuable lessons and wisdom from life's journey, making our age group a precious group, a heritage to be honoured. We can stay engaged and find new ways to serve and not let our physical limitations stop our mental and spiritual growth. We can spend time cultivating our inner qualities and we can stop trying to always 'fit in'. Each one of us is unique and amazing! We can accept past hurts as opportunities for healing and sharing wisdom. We can read, listen to

podcasts, learn and focus on internal treasures and not just worry about the earthly ones and inheritance planning! We can use any remaining strength to love and build up and encourage others. And most of all we can pray, holding our brothers and sisters up to Christ for a blessing. Uniquely we can be a living testimony, a flourishing example of God's faithfulness and goodness throughout all the seasons of the year and the seasons of a life.

God really does love you, appreciate you, and finds you a blessing to others. There's a lovely saying 'bloom where you are planted'. For all of you reading this Parish Magazine, remember that this is your garden and this is where you can bloom for the Lord.

- Our next meeting is on Tuesday, **3<sup>rd</sup> February**, 11am, at the New Inn for a social coffee followed if wished by a meal.
- On **16<sup>th</sup> February** we have two MU members from Sutton coming to show a film "The Longest Yarn." Please do support this meeting. Members of the congregation and friends are welcome to join us. It should be very interesting to anyone interested in craft and needlework. Their debut project, "The Longest Day", was created to mark the 80<sup>th</sup> anniversary of D Day on June 6<sup>th</sup> 2024.
- **3<sup>rd</sup> March** , 11am, at the New Inn for a social coffee followed if wished by a meal.

Please let me know what you would like me to arrange for our 2026 programme of meetings, along with as many suggestions for speakers as possible. What would you like to do to celebrate our 150<sup>th</sup> birthday. We will need more help in setting up the room, and with the refreshments. Please offer help if you are able. **02084687785**.

**Avril Ashford**

## **PANCAKE PARTY**

There will be a **Pancake Party** for children aged 0-11 in half term on **Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> February** between 12-1pm in the church meetings room. There will be games, activities and of course decorating and eating your own pancake! Refreshments will be provided. Please book by contacting the church office **020 8462 1373** / [info@stmaryshayeskent.co.uk](mailto:info@stmaryshayeskent.co.uk) . For any queries, or if you are able to help, please contact Stuart on **07917 024481**.

## **BEYOND THE DAFFODILS**

Bathe in their richness,  
Sink in their beauty  
Mask true emotions,  
Surround yourself with  
Infinite perfection.



But beyond the daffodils  
Lies truth of uncertainty,  
Wondering what will happen next.  
Which way to seek  
Contentment.

Somewhere lies something,  
Somehow, which could  
Reach over perfection,  
And give back happiness  
Beyond the daffodils.

**Mary Glover Bandy**

## **CHARITIES – OUTCOME OF MEETING ON 10 JANUARY**

Being mindful of St Mary's generous giving to charities, we met to refine our Charity Giving for 2026. We will continue to support Welcare, The Children's Society, Christian Aid, CASPA, Hayes Community Foodbank, St Christopher's Hospice, Mission to Seafarers, Royal British Legion, Diocesan 'Poverty and Hope' and Mpwapwa Tanzania. We were encouraged to have congregational links for each of the charities, which will give focus to each charity as fundraising events occur. Of course, we hope that you will continue to support us in our quest to support those less fortunate than ourselves whether they be near or far.

Unfortunately, during COVID, we had to abandon the popular coffee mornings but now we ask you to think about arranging such a fund-raising event for your favourite charity. Do speak to Rev'd Amanda and the office to arrange a suitable date.

**Mary Whytock**

## ST. MARY'S CHURCH DIARY FEBRUARY 2026

**Morning Prayers take place daily at 9.15am Monday to Wednesday on Zoom\* and Monday to Friday in Church (10am on Saturday) throughout the year, except Bank Holidays.**

### PRESENTATION OF CHRIST AT THE TEMPLE

<b>Sunday 1<sup>st</sup></b>	8.00am 10.30am	Holy Communion BCP Morning Praise Sunbeams** (age 3-6)
<b>Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup></b>	11.00am-12.15pm	Bible Study**
<b>Wednesday 4<sup>th</sup></b>	10.30am  12.30-3.00pm 2.45pm	Coffee Morning for the bereaved and those living on their own**  Warm Welcome Space** Hayes Men's Fellowship in OCS

### RACIAL JUSTICE SUNDAY

<b>Sunday 8<sup>th</sup></b>	8.00am 10.30am	Holy Communion BCP Parish Communion CW Blaze and Sunbeams Session** (age 3-10)
<b>Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup></b>	10.00-11.00am	Prayer Group
<b>Wednesday 11<sup>th</sup></b>	12.30-3.00pm	Warm Welcome Space**
<b>Thursday 12<sup>th</sup></b>	10.30am-12.30pm	Craft Group**
<b>Saturday 14<sup>th</sup></b>	12.30pm	Churchyard Tidy-Up

### SUNDAY NEXT BEFORE LENT

<b>Sunday 15<sup>th</sup></b>	8.00am 9.15am 10.30am	Holy Communion BCP Fresh Start Morning Praise
<b>Monday 16<sup>th</sup></b>	10.30am	Mothers' Union meeting**
<b>Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup></b>	12.00-1.00pm	Pancake Party**

## Ash Wednesday

<b>Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup></b>	10.30am 8.00pm	Ash Wednesday Service Ash Wednesday Service at St Peter and St Paul, Bromley
<b>Friday 20<sup>th</sup></b>	12.30-3.00pm 10.00-11.00am	Warm Welcome Space** Twinkles – singing, story, snacks**

## FIRST SUNDAY OF LENT

<b>Sunday 22<sup>nd</sup></b>	8.00am 10.30am	Holy Communion BCP Parish Communion CW Blaze Session** (age 6-10)
<b>Tuesday 24<sup>th</sup></b>	10.00-11.00am	Prayer Group
<b>Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup></b>	12.30-3.00pm	Warm Welcome Space**
<b>Thursday 26<sup>th</sup></b>	10.30am-12.30pm	Craft Group**

\*For Zoom link contact the church office

\*\* denotes Meetings Room

**The church is also open for quiet space on Tuesdays, Fridays and Saturdays from 10.00am to 12.00noon unless there is a wedding or funeral taking place. Details of these will be given in the weekly pew sheets.**



## HALLS FOR HIRE

**The Old Church Schools, Hayes, has 3 halls – two large and one medium, and a committee room available for hire.**

**For further information please contact Julie Clark on 07538 254508 or email [ocs.hayes@hotmail.com](mailto:ocs.hayes@hotmail.com)**

## HAYES MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

As we write these words for February already (ahead of the usual printing deadlines), it still seems incredible that Christmas seems so far behind us and yet in some religious denominations, particularly Catholic, Candlemas, celebrated on 6 February each year **as** a Christian festival, marking the presentation of Jesus in the Temple together with Mary's purification 40 days after his birth as laid out in Chapter 12 of Leviticus, in fact traditionally marks the conclusion of the Christmas season.

The purpose of this church celebration is now to bless and process the candles which will be used in services throughout the coming year, denoting the Light of the World in our daily lives. In some parts of Europe, particularly in Italy, France or Belgium, servings of savoury or sweet pancakes (crepes) are served as festive food.

As for HMF activities, as we write, we are looking forward to our traditional Annual Lunch which is scheduled to take place on 23 January at the Parklangley Club. This replaces, as usual at this time of year, a monthly outing and remains enormously popular, with 67 members and guests booked. A full mouth-watering report will appear here next month.

During our Christmas break no outing or walk is scheduled, so our report on recent HMF activities is restricted to the meeting when we resumed in January. At that meeting we had a very topical talk on "Frosts, Freezes and Fairs" just after a brief period with snow and ice, with another colder period in prospect! Our speaker, Ian Currie, was eminently well qualified to speak on this subject as he is a full-time weatherman, broadcaster, author, columnist, speaker and editor of Weather Eye magazine. He is a Fellow of the Royal Meteorological Society, provides forecasts to gardeners and growers on BBC local radio. And Ian also correctly forecast the October 1987 storm!

Most of the talk was about the different Frost Fairs on the Thames but Ian also explained why they are unlikely to happen in the future – the last one was in 1814. In Roman times the Thames was much wider than it is now because of development of the embankments, etc., channelling the water and increasing the rate of flow making it harder for it to freeze. The original London Bridge had numerous small arches and many buildings along its length - with their residents throwing rubbish into the river below. Both factors slowing the flow by comparison with modern bridges with much broader arches. As a result, the Thames has become more tidal up stream of the most frequent frost fair locations between London Bridge and Westminster Bridge.

The frozen Thames was a big problem for those who earned a living from the river perhaps as ferrymen or lightermen. But the Frost Fairs brought with them huge business opportunities too, with Ian showing slides of paintings from the time depicting a huge range of activities on the ice including:



- Theatres built on the ice along with venues for other entertainment such as bear baiting;
- Marquees for the sale of beer or stronger drinks – referred to as “Befuddling tents”! Also places selling the “new fangled” coffee;
- Tents providing food such as beef roasted on a spit;
- Printing presses that enabled visitors to buy a certificate to prove they had attended the frost fair;
- Barber's booths;
- Ice collection too, to be taken away for use in ice houses – up to a million tons in a winter season;
- Sport as well with, for example, Colf, a Dutch stick and ball game considered to be a precursor to modern golf. You would just hope that the holes were not too deep or the balls would be lost!
- Patrols and boats to ensure safety for the revellers.

Full details of all HMF activities are always available on our website ([www.hayesmensfellowship.org](http://www.hayesmensfellowship.org)) or please contact us as detailed below for a friendly chat. Bye for now.

**Allan Evison, Asst Secretary**

**Contact details: [secretary@hayesmensfellowship.org](mailto:secretary@hayesmensfellowship.org)**

**or phone 07764 153383**

**Graham Marsden, Secretary**

## THE PRINTED ENGLISH BIBLE – CELEBRATING 500 YEARS

*Though I speake with the tonges of men and angels, and yet had no love, I were even as soundyne brasse: and as a tynklynge Cynball, and though I coulde prophesy, and understande all secrets, and all knowledge: yee, if I had all fayth so that I coulde move mountayns oute of there places, and yet had no love, I were nothyng.*

500 years ago St Paul's beautiful passage on love, in his first letter to the church at Corinth, was unveiled in English, and in print, for the first time. Tyndale's translation, even today in its original spelling as above, clearly brings us into the challenge of Paul's powerful and inspiring imagery. And we can see how modern versions still reflect his memorable use of English.

Yet Tyndale's translation of the New Testament, published in 1526, arrived on English shores not to a fanfare but discreetly and secretly hidden amongst bales of cloth. Merchants were happy to run the risk of seizure: some attracted simply by the profits to be made (demand outstripped supply) but many believing in the cause. For over 100 years, translating the Bible into English – or even possessing a copy – had been against the law. And in England in the 1520's, with the Reformation movement on the continent and in England gaining increasing momentum and adherents, this ban was rigorously enforced by the church authorities in England.

Our previous article (HH January 2026) set out the background to Tyndale and how he had dedicated his life to bringing the word of God to his fellow Englishmen in a language everyone could understand. If the scriptures were the voice of God how could people hear Him if written in a foreign language (Latin)? Tyndale was appalled that the adventures of Robin Hood could be read in English but the truth of God's word lay silenced by those who should have been going out of their way to nurture the people in their Christian faith.

In the late Middle Ages the surrounding culture was profoundly Christian and life dominated by the church. But if the gospel was good news it was largely hidden, apart from mystery plays and occasional sermons from visiting friars. Most people saw no benefit; just the need to pay the tithes, attend church and obey the church authorities.

So what sort of impact did Tyndale's translation have when it arrived in England?

It is important to remember that the 16<sup>th</sup> century Reformation in England was not just the overflow of ideas from the continent, used by Henry in the pursuit of his divorce. The seeds of reform had long been

planted and the arrival of the scriptures in English was a significant factor in helping bring them to life. So one chronicler writing in the 1580s looked back to ‘the fervent zeal of those Christian days’ when people sat up all night reading or hearing the Bible in English. Readers included ‘barrel-makers, weavers, tailors, monks, carpenters, nail-makers pewter workers, furriers and carpenters.’

We also know from the writings of John Foxe the life-changing impact for many. For example, Anne Askew, a provincial ‘gentlewoman’ in the mid 1520’s, taking seriously what she saw as her responsibility to make the gospel known and reading the scriptures to domestic and estate servants. John Tewkesbury, a leather-seller, converted by reading Tyndale’s New Testament, and condemned and executed at Smithfield in 1529.

And the accuracy of Tyndale’s translation? What assessment can we make of his English?

Tyndale deliberately wrote for the man in the street not the academic. The New Testament had originally been written in the common (so-called ‘koine’) Greek of the 1<sup>st</sup> century, and he wanted to replicate that in the common spoken English of the 1520s. As a brilliant linguist he was faithful to the Greek original yet translating into an English of simplicity and force: ‘Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven’.

So many of his expressions are not just memorable but have slipped into the heart of the English language: the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak (Matthew 26:41); signs of the times (Matthew 16:3); eat drink and be merry (Luke 12:19); twinkling of an eye (1 Corinthians 15:52) and so on.

He also translated much of the OT. Where would we be without such words and phrases as: let there be light; scapegoat; the powers that be; my brother’s keeper; fight the good fight; flowing with milk and honey; broken hearted; stumbling block; two-edged?

Tyndale’s text was the foundation of all succeeding English Bibles, including the celebrated 1611 King James version, of which the New Testament is 83% Tyndale. That version was spread and read across the globe for nearly 400 years. As noted Tyndale scholar David Daniell has written, “Tyndale has reached more people than Shakespeare.”

But at the end of the day Tyndale’s aim was not a literary monument but to enable everyone, particularly the ‘lay and unlearned’, to read the scriptures and so ‘understand and delight therein’. Tyndale was rightly convinced that in reading the scriptures, we may hear the

voice of the Lord; and in repentance and faith, we may be “born anew, created afresh and enjoy the fruits of the blood of Christ”.

It was said famously of Churchill that he mobilised the English language and sent it into battle.

500 years ago, William Tyndale “captured the heart and wealth of the English language and brought it into God’s service”. (Wycliffe Bible Translators)

**David James**



*The bronze statue of Tyndale by the Thames Embankment in London.*

*Everyone is warmly invited to join us in our Bible Study group. We are currently studying the early chapters of the Gospel of Mark. The central Bible Study meets first and third Tuesdays in the Church Meeting Room. 11am -12.15pm.*

## **THE CHRISTINGLE AND CRIB SERVICES 2025**

If you remember my article about last year’s Christingle and Crib Service you needn’t read this one because it is practically the same!

Again, the Christingle was run along the lines of a Fresh Start service and led by the Fresh Start team. It was very well attended with a good number in the congregation and plenty of children. As there were too many children to sit on the carpet last year, this time we joined it to the children’s carpet from the Meeting Room which was a great improvement and allowed for many more children. They sat there while the meaning of the Christingle was explained to them, the Christingles having been made following the instructions. While this was going on the congregation was given colouring sheets and a Christingle word search and the latter proved very popular. There were songs with musical instruments and at one point a procession of children with instruments was led round the church. Once again it was truly a joyful service which both adults and children appeared to enjoy and the Fresh Start team certainly did.

As last year the hunt for children to take part in the Crib Service was challenging, but with the help of friends and relatives, nineteen children were able to take part, which was exactly the same as last year. There were far more girls than boys but we did have Joseph and three Kings and a shepherd. The remaining shepherds were girls but fortunately they didn't seem to mind not being angels. The roles were allocated and the costumes sorted and ironed and on Christmas Eve the meeting room was prepared with a labelled chair for each child. A costume was placed on each chair along with belts, head-dresses, tinsel, crowns, as well as a Star. The 'baby' was ready and also the gifts for the Kings. The children duly arrived and to my delight everyone turned up. They were dressed and photographed and then taken to the Lady Chapel to wait for the service to begin. Some of the children were very young and one of the Kings was only three years old but he was absolutely fine. In fact they were all quite terrific and did very well.

As usual for this service the church was packed. The children walked round to appropriate carols so everyone could see them and gradually built up the tableau in the chancel. First the Star was paraded to 'Twinkle, Twinkle Christmas Star' before Mary and Joseph travelled to the chancel with a huge donkey. Then Gabriel delivered the baby and switched on the lights around the crib. Next came the angels leading the shepherds and finally of course the three Kings with their gifts, which had been repaired since last year and which now require repairing again! One of the Kings had a costume which was very droopy and the King behind kept treading on his train and stopping him in his tracks which slowed the procession a little.

I had prepared the talk and this year gave it with Tim's help who held up the visual aids as they were mentioned. These included a present, balloons, baby Jesus, straw, a donkey, a camel, a teddy, a mallet, a piece of wood, a proclamation, crisps, a blanket, sheep, a lamb, and a travel bag. It was a lot to remember but this year I did not forget the camel! When the gold, frankincense and myrrh were mentioned each King held up their gift in turn. It was all great fun but at the end of the talk we were reminded that this familiar story is not a fairy tale but a moment in history.

Finally Tim gave an additional short talk explaining that whether we are happy or sad, as some people might be even at Christmas, Jesus understands. Everyone of us is loved by God and Jesus came to earth because he really wanted to be with us.

How lovely to have so many people in church at this special time.

**Hilary Burtonshaw**

## OUR DOG, SKYE

We rescued her aged three. She had been used for breeding puppies which were then sold. We collected her from a small bungalow where other dogs were growing too old for providing puppies. A crowded home with a sick child.

She leapt into the back of our car and slept all the way from Suffolk to Bromley, arriving confused by a new house with a STAIRCASE! She settled quickly and learned how to climb up and down stairs and has been the most perfect, loving dog.

Now she is 14 years old and cannot climb stairs so she sleeps alone in the lounge. Her back legs are not as strong as they were which makes lying down and getting up difficult. She loves everybody and everybody who knows her never forgets her.

I often look inside myself and wish that I had her constancy and faithful heart. I look back over 65 years of life since I gave my heart to Jesus but I have lacked the constancy to which I aspired when I first believed. When I come to God in prayer I feel ashamed by my lack of faith and the way I have lived over so many years because he has saved me from three life-threatening illnesses and I have let him down more times than I care to remember. But I do remember.

All I can do, I suppose, is what every Christian has to do each day of life...start afresh with renewed commitment in the hope of doing better. I have realized that God never gives up on me whatever my failures may be. He is the 'Lord of the dance,' so...as Bruce Forsyth used to say... KEEP DANCING!



David Langford

*Illustration on p11 is The Frost Fair of 1814 by Luke Clenell*

**Items for the March magazine by 16<sup>th</sup> February please. Copy to the Editor: Clare Wickert, 3 Hayes Garden, Hayes**

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**March magazines will be ready for distribution on 28<sup>th</sup> Feb.**

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