

**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)**

## **LENT**

We began our Lent at St Mary's with our Pancake Party, welcoming local families and children, some who had not been to our church before. We also had lots of helpers, so a **big thank you** to everyone who took part, planning and helping on the day.

As well as the games, craft, activities and of course pancakes, part of the session the children learnt about Shrove Tuesday and what it means. Shrove is taken from shrive, which was where people confessed their sins as a preparation for Lent and were absolved by the priest, a usual practice in Europe in the Middle Ages. In the past, a 'shriving' bell was rung on Shrove Tuesday to call people to church to confess their sins before Lent began. The children enjoyed ringing the handbells we have at church, ringing up and down the aisle... until all the adults were properly 'shrived' of course. The Christian community was also invited to study and repent, the extension of which over forty days would remind them of the forty days that Jesus spent in the wilderness, being tested by Satan. It begins with Ash Wednesday.

I was asked at Welcome Space, on that Wednesday, 'Why ashes?' Ashes are an ancient sign of penitence; from the Middle Ages it became the custom to begin Lent by being marked in ash with the sign of the cross, often using the ashes from the burnt palm crosses of the previous year.

This was the same this year; palm crosses that were blessed last year on Palm Sunday, were brought back to church and burnt for ash for the following Ash Wednesday, a sign of the start of the 40 days of Lent, where we remember God by taking something up or giving something up, for the fast.

On Shrove Tuesday we heard what Jesus had to say about fasting.

## **Jesus Teaches about Not Eating So You Can Pray Better**

*When you go without food so you can pray better, do not be as those who pretend to be someone they are not. They make themselves look sad so people will see they are going without food. For sure, I tell you, they have all the reward they are going to get. When you go without food so you can pray better, put oil on your head and wash your face. Then nobody knows you are going without food. Then your Father Who sees in secret will reward you. (Matthew 6 v16-18.)*

So, is Lent really about giving things up? Or is it about so much more? It can be about changing our behaviour, being a blessing to others. It is not about making a show to others about what you are giving up. It is about getting closer to God.

The children thought about what they could stop, that can get in the way of our relationship with God? Then each one drew or wrote on a strip of paper one thing that they could give up or take up for Lent, remembering the reading that God sees what is done in secret – the good things that we do that no one else knows about.

What do you think you could change about yourself that would bring you closer to God? Maybe it's a mundane or thankless task that you don't really want to do, or maybe it's something that you've been putting off for ages. Or it could be something that you have noticed needs doing but hasn't been done yet.

The children's pledges were sealed in envelopes, with their names on, collected and are displayed at the back of church.

On Ash Wednesday we remembered 'Brothers and Sisters in Christ, since early days Christians have observed with great devotion the time of our Lord's passion and resurrection and prepared for this by a season of penitence and fasting'. And we were invited to pray, fast, practise self-denial and read and meditate on God's holy word.

This Lent season you are all invited to come and join us to explore God's holy word and the meaning for the purposes in areas of life. No matter how mundane our everyday tasks and interactions may seem, they all have deep purpose in God's eyes. Come to one, or more sessions. Mornings and evenings are available.

## **Discover God-Given Purpose in Everything We Do All Are Welcome**

So, remember we can travel together with God through Lent. And on Easter morning, we will be given new life and resurrection, but to get

there we too join with Jesus in offering ourselves to God as a living sacrifice, just as Jesus did for us.

Almighty and everlasting God,  
you hate nothing that you have made  
and forgive the sins of all those who are penitent:  
create and make in us new and contrite hearts that we, worthily  
lamenting our sins and acknowledging our wretchedness,  
may receive from you, the God of all mercy,  
perfect remission and forgiveness;  
through Jesus Christ your Son our Lord, who is alive and reigns with  
you,  
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,  
one God, now and for ever  
**Amen.**

**Rev 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.

## **A BIG THANK YOU**

Julie Clark is leaving her role at the Old Church Schools after many years. She supported the running of the OCS and the hirers. She would be happy to talk through the role with any who would like to share the role, on behalf of St Mary's, which takes a couple of hours a week.



# Wondering what is our purpose?

**This Lent season come and join us to explore purposes in areas of life.**

**ALL WELCOME**

**Choose which sessions**

**Tuesdays 11am-12.15pm 24<sup>th</sup> Feb – 31<sup>st</sup> Mar**

**Wednesdays 7pm-8.15pm 25<sup>th</sup> Feb – 1<sup>st</sup> Apr**

- 1. Purpose in everything**
- 2. Purpose in work**
- 3. Purpose in family**
- 4. Purpose in friendship**
- 5. Purpose in our neighbourhoods**
- 6. Finally, in Holy Week we'll discover how Easter reveals Jesus' true purpose**

**No matter how mundane our everyday - tasks and interactions may seem, they all have deep purpose in God's eyes.**

**DISCOVER GOD-GIVEN PURPOSE IN EVERYTHING YOU DO.**



Thank you all for your continued prayers. I am most grateful for them. At the moment, it is quite a challenge trying to keep up with everything, so my Hayes Herald contribution is short and to the point.

We enjoyed our last meeting, "The Longest Yarn," when Humphrey and Janice Clarke, two Mothers' Union members from Sutton, showed us a fascinating film of all the different knitted tableau scenes telling the story of the Second World War from 3<sup>rd</sup> September 1939 to VE day – 8<sup>th</sup> May 1945. It was really interesting to see how imaginative the knitters had been.

The picture is of our speakers Janice and Humphrey Clarke, along with Ann Rogers. They are standing on the mat in the children's corner of our church's meeting room. They noted how appropriately the mat of people 'holding hands around the world' illustrates the MU prayer.



*Loving Lord, we thank you for your love so freely given to us all. We pray for families around the world. Bless the work of the Mothers' Union as we seek to share your love through the encouragement, strengthening and support of marriage and family life. Empowered by your Spirit, may we be united in prayer and worship, and in love and service reach out as your hands across the world. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Last week we celebrated Shrove Tuesday and Ash Wednesday, and the beginning of one of the most solemn seasons of the Church year - Lent. The word Lent comes from the Latin word Lencten meaning Spring but is also the period of 40 days which reminds us of the time the Hebrews were wandering in the desert and also of the forty days that Jesus spent in the desert preparing for his ministry and being tempted by Satan. In the middle of this period of fasting and repenting, we celebrate 'Mothering Sunday'. This is a time when in past years, youngsters away 'in service' were released to come home to their own family and mother and visit their mother church. Traditionally we remember this by giving posies of Spring flowers to all the mothers who attend church on that day.

Thank you to all of you who have sent me your good wishes; they have meant a lot.

### **Dates for your diary:**

Our next social gathering is on **Tuesday, 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2026 at 11am** at The New Inn. Some of us will stay for lunch.

**Monday, 16<sup>th</sup> March at 10.30am** Rev Tim will celebrate Holy Communion with us in church, followed by a social gathering in the Meetings Room.

**Tuesday, 7<sup>th</sup> April at 11am** we meet socially at The New Inn. Some of us will stay for lunch.

**Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> April at 10.30am** in the Meetings Room, Allan Evison will talk about his role in Anna Chaplaincy.

Please contact me on **020-8468 7785** to find out more about the Mothers' Union. All are welcome to the meetings – bring your friends!

**Avril Ashford**

## FLIPPING MARVELLOUS! ST MARY'S PANCAKE PARTY

It was so lovely to welcome some of Hayes' young families into St Mary's Church to celebrate Shrove Tuesday with us. Our church building was buzzing with laughter, excitement and the sweet smell of pancakes as we hosted our annual Pancake Party.

We started with some fun activities around the church and finished up with delicious pancakes served in the meetings room. Together we tucked in to a mighty 50 pancakes decorated with soft fruits, squirry cream, chocolate sauces/spreads, colourful sprinkles as well as with the more traditional lemon and sugar toppings.

The activities included pancake tossing races, tossing the beanbags at felt pancake targets, paper plate pancake decorating, a pancake themed treasure hunt, and culminated in a discussion about the meaning of

Shrove Tuesday led by Rev Amanda. All the children chose something that they were going to 'give up' or 'take up' for Lent.

There was even a chance for the children to run up and down the aisles with handbells in a nod to the tradition of ringing the church bells to call parishioners to church to 'shrive'.

A massive thank you to everyone who came and celebrated with us - visiting families and also our lovely volunteers.



**Stuart Spence**

## ST. MARY'S CHURCH DIARY MARCH 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.**

### SECOND SUNDAY OF LENT

<b>Sunday 1<sup>st</sup></b>	8.00am	Holy Communion BCP
	10.30am	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	Coffee Morning for the bereaved and those living on their own**
	12.30-3.00pm	Warm Welcome Space**
	2.45pm	Hayes Men's Fellowship in OCS

### THIRD SUNDAY OF LENT

<b>Sunday 8<sup>th</sup></b>	8.00am	Holy Communion BCP
	10.30am	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

### MOTHERING SUNDAY

<b>Sunday 15<sup>th</sup></b>	8.00am	Holy Communion BCP
	9.15am	Fresh Start
	10.30am	Morning Praise
<b>Monday 16<sup>th</sup></b>	10.30am	Mothers' Union Service

<b>Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup></b>	12.30-3.00pm	Warm Welcome Space**
<b>Friday 20<sup>th</sup></b>	10.00-11.00am	Twinkles – singing, story, snacks**

### FIFTH 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) Prayer Group
<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**

### PALM SUNDAY

<b>Sunday 29<sup>th</sup></b>	8.00am 10.30am	Holy Communion BCP Morning Praise
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\*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.**



### A RECENT FUNERAL IN THE PARISH

Karlean Burgess

## HAYES MEN'S FELLOWSHIP

March is heralded by lighter mornings and evenings as flowers and foliage in gardens and streets start to announce Spring is on its way. Let us hope that the continual rain forecast (as we write this report ahead of printing deadlines in mid-February) will have held off or lessened for the walk planned around the Greenwich Park area on 25 February, so that we can resume reporting on that activity next time after the unavoidable lack of a walk in January. We hope too for finer weather for our visit later in March to the 330-acre site of Kew Gardens followed by a swift trip just up the road to the London Museum of Water & Steam. You can look forward to full reports on both events in our April contribution to these pages.

Meanwhile here's what we have been doing recently. First, our Annual Lunch which we anticipated in last month's article. With 68 diners on the day, the event was even more popular than we had expected. We again had exclusive use of the Parklangley Club's light and airy first floor function room which had its own bar and a lift for easy access. There was plenty of space for people to move around and chat before and after the meal making it a very sociable event. There were 14 menu options



across the three courses complicating things for the staff but service was once again excellent. The most popular combination of options was Prawn Cocktail followed by Beef Bourguignon and Apple Crumble and custard – the last two being welcome hearty options on what was a chilly day. All the options seemed to go down well with lots of compliments

about the quality of the food and the generous portion sizes. A super event once again.

For our second talk of 2026 we had the very popular speaker, Hugh Alford, with his usual fast paced and fact packed take on “Apollo 11 Moon Landing: The Real Story!” with 41 members attending the meeting. Hugh has been an Outreach Officer of Orpington Astronomical Society since 2008 and has spoken at HMF twice before.

The moon shot programme was born out of US rivalry with the Communist Soviet Union which had stolen a march by putting the first man in space. This led to US President John F Kennedy pledging in 1961 that NASA would land a man on the Moon, and bring him home safely, before the end of the decade. At the time this was a wildly optimistic pledge but, in the end, was a promise kept with the landing of Apollo 11 on the Moon and its safe return in July 1969. The astronauts were Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin in the Lunar Module, Eagle, and Michael Collins who remained in the Command Module. The landing was arduous as the timing and trajectory of the Lunar Module were not quite according to plan. The intention was for the onboard computer to land the craft but with the need for recalculation it was struggling – not surprising as Hugh explained that it had half the computing power your smartphone uses today to send an email. In the end Armstrong had to land the craft manually with almost no visibility through the moon dust storm created by the lander’s engines. Hugh explained a range of other issues that the crew of the Lunar Module had to deal with, such as incorrect warnings about low fuel, making Armstrong and Aldrin’s successful mission all the more remarkable. All of this while an estimated 650 million people around the world were able to watch the momentous event live on their TVs.

As you can see, whatever the weather provides, our sociable club keeps going. If you are a retired or semi-retired man of any faith or none, who would like to join in, please take a look at our website ([www.hayesmensfellowship.org](http://www.hayesmensfellowship.org)) for up-to-date details of all our activities or get in touch for a friendly chat on the contact details below. You are also welcome to come to the next meeting (on the first Wednesday of each month) for a free cup of tea and biscuit!

**Allan Evison, Asst Secretary**                      **Graham Marsden, Secretary**  
**Contact details: [secretary@hayesmensfellowship.org](mailto:secretary@hayesmensfellowship.org)**  
**or phone 07764 153383**

*Photo on p.10 by Graham Marsden*

## **RAIN**

I suspect that I am in a minority when I say that I love rain.

I grew up in Cardiff which used to share the highest rainfall in the UK each year with Manchester. Lying in bed as a child I used to listen to the rain falling on the slate roof outside my open window and hear it gurgling down the drain pipes. It always felt like a comforting sound. However, some people moaned about wet shoes in the hall, stuffed with newspaper to dry, which left white marks in the leather, needing polishing. The buses were steamed up and wet with umbrellas but it was just normal life to me and I loved it.

When I lived in Wiltshire in the 70s, there was a prolonged period of drought and it was quite scary. Lawns turned into cracked mud and rationing of water had to be introduced with standpipes in the street. When it eventually rained, I remember dancing with neighbours in the street. When my wife and I moved to Hayes 27 years ago, we realized that the area was quite dry, needing a hosepipe to keep plants alive in the summer. Climate change has caused an increase in rain in recent years for which I am grateful! I can still hear rain through my open bedroom window more frequently at night.

There are times in life for me when there seems to be a spiritual drought. I feel sure that I am not alone in this. I sing the words of hymns which have usually lifted my spirit but my heart feels empty and God seems far away.

In Psalm 32 King David felt that his body was wasting away because of unconfessed sin. Once he acknowledged it, he found peace and fellowship with God again. Sometimes we can be low in spirit because of the circumstances of our lives. We need to be honest with God about how we feel and seek his help.

Once we come to God with open hearts, these times in the desert are either followed by the steady rain of the Holy Spirit or a deluge of God's love and reassurance. Nothing God gives us is deserved but the rain of his Spirit is a foretaste of heaven.

I still keep my bedroom window open to hear the sound of rain thinking that maybe his Spirit comes more easily to me through the open window! A silly thought because God is everywhere in his universe. But I think it is the sound of rain that is more easily heard through the open window that reminds me of God's nearness.

**David Langford**

## **ALZHEIMER'S RESEARCH**

Recently I received the heartbreaking news that my dear sister, Pat McKenna, has been diagnosed with Alzheimer's disease. Thirteen years ago she suffered a ruptured aneurysm at the base of her brain. We really didn't think that she would make it through but she was strong and has come through well. However, it has taken her near memory so she can't remember what she did half an hour ago! I feel that maybe this has masked the onset of Alzheimer's disease so that now she is on medication for moderate to strong Alzheimer's. From the loving, sociable person that she has always been she is now very agitated. She lives in a care home and has been moved to the dementia ward. I'm told by my niece that she's not very happy about that, understandably.

My sister lives in Keynsham, near Bristol, so I'm not in a position to be of much practical help. So I'm doing what I can by opening a fundraising page on Justgiving. I'm committing to making greetings cards every day in March as this is something that I can do to help raise funds for Alzheimer's research. There are new treatments being discovered all the time and I want to do all I can so that people's suffering can be minimised and, hopefully, progress will be slowed down. My father suffered with Alzheimer's for years and it changed him so much.

Anything that you would be willing to donate would be very much appreciated.

The link to my online fundraiser is:

[www.justgiving.com/page/eileen-cohen-1](http://www.justgiving.com/page/eileen-cohen-1)

Thank you so much.

**Eileen Cohen**

## **ARCHBISHOP OF SAN SALVADOR, MARTYR 24/03/1980**

Oscar Romero was a bit of a modern Thomas Becket – loyal to the authorities until he was given great responsibility for the Church. Then, like Becket, there was trouble.

In Romero's case, it all began when he was born Ciudad Barrios in El Salvador back in 1917. Devout from a young age, he was ordained in 1942, and became a parish priest in the diocese of San Miguel.

For 25 years Romero worked hard in his parish, where he was a traditional priest, very conservative, ascetic, and devoted to the Virgin Mary. In 1967 he was appointed Secretary to the Episcopal Conference of El Salvador. He was elevated to be Bishop of San Salvador and then Bishop of Santiago de Maria. An admirer of the conservative Opus Dei movement, Romero firmly opposed any liberation theology.

Then in 1977 Oscar Romero was appointed Archbishop of San Salvador. The Salvadorian government saw him as a safe pair of hands for the job.

But they were in for a shock. For Romero's new responsibilities made him look afresh at the relationship between Church and State in El Salvador. He did not like what he saw. Romero saw that social unrest and poverty were the direct result of government repression, and even worse, that the Church played its part in the on-going violence of Salvadorian society. After the murder of several outspoken priests and then the expulsion of several allegedly Marxist Jesuits, Romero felt compelled to speak out.

The right-wing Latin American governments were well used to priests who worked with the poor speaking out against them. But this was the first time that an Archbishop had raised his voice, and they were furious.

But Romero became a champion of liberation theology. He condemned government violence and championed the right of the poor to economic and social justice. He even wrote a pastoral letter from the Salvadorian bishops, supporting proportionate counter-violence towards the oppressive right-wing regime. When, nonetheless, he also still tried to act as a mediator between the rival groups, he was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

For several years Romero received death threats from both left- and right-wing paramilitary groups. Finally, while celebrating Mass, he was shot through the heart by a government assassin. It was 24<sup>th</sup> March 1980, and 40 more people died in the gunfire and explosions at his funeral. The Church worldwide mourned for him.

*Parish Pump March 2026*

## OUR LOVE AFFAIR WITH OUR PHONES

It was 150 years ago this month, on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1876, that the world's first telephone call was made. Alexander Graham Bell called his assistant and said: "Mr Watson, come here. I want you." That phone call was the beginning of a worldwide addiction to phones. Phones spread quickly, constantly improved, and after more than 100 years of landlines, mobile phones arrived.

The first was introduced by Motorola in 1983 in the USA. The Motorola DynaTAC 8000X weighed nearly two pounds and cost around \$3,995.

The first smartphone, the IBM Simon Personal Communicator, was released in 1994, combining phone calls with PDA features like email, fax, and a calendar on a touchscreen. It was so expensive it sold only about 50,000. But by the late 90s, the BlackBerry had become a top favourite, with its popular email and messaging services beloved by Barack Obama, among many others. Then in 2007, Apple released the first iPhone, informally known as the iPhone 2G, with an advanced multi-touch interface and app ecosystem.

Fast forward nearly 20 years, and there are now about **7.5 billion** active smartphones in the world. The total number of all connections (SIMs/devices) now even exceeds the human population of about 8.3 billion.

Parish Pump, Mar 2026

*Reading the above made me nostalgic for those happy, pre-smartphone days when you had to make arrangements to meet someone well in advance and then stick to them. That ominous text that arrives after you have set off to see a friend, saying 'Running late', or even worse, cancelling, is a sorry by-product of our reliance on mobile phones.*

*It's hard to believe there was once a time when you could go travelling for weeks or months and be completely unreachable. I remember the ominous tones of those urgent SOS messages on BBC radio for people on holiday. "Could Mr Smithers, believed to be travelling in the West Country, please contact Carlisle hospital where his Aunt is dangerously ill."*

*Now we track our adult daughter's progress around Asia and Australia on a phone app and feel enormously reassured to be able to know where she is at any moment. But I wonder if something has been lost as well as gained.*

**Clare Wickert**

## **This is the Magic**

This is the magic:  
Ever-increasing and evermore  
Swords of blue and green  
Dwarf forest, dense,  
From and up to each far fence,  
Threatening any other defence  
For modern gardener's tragic;  
But for a natural mind:  
This is the magic.

Winter, stark, cold, come through.  
Stave off weeds of green and blue  
Stood starkly in cold scarcity.  
Now appears another curtain:  
Azure spears, point forward, certain,  
Frozen sticks in wilderness  
Transform to everlasting promise.  
This is the Magic...

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### **Good Friday**

Anchusa,(borage) is the blue weed which invades the bottom of my garden every Spring. I have learned to live with it despite its sting, because its bold blue colour heralds the new season so vibrantly.

### **The Magic?**

Jesus Christ died on this day, and ultimately rose from the dead. This blue plant represents to me, Christ's strength, and the fact that He was a man.

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

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**April magazines will be ready for distribution on 29<sup>th</sup> March.**

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