

Number 219 February 2022 *50p*

Website: www.bromleyparishchurch.org



News of Saint Peter and Saint Paul

BROMLEY PARISH CHURCH

Church Road Bromley BR2 OEG



"Proclaiming the Word and Work of God"

Member of Churches Together in Central Bromley

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Hello Reader,

I hope you are well, and thank you for picking up the February edition of the Key. In this edition we have the usual Saint's Day, Bible stories and activities, as well as diary dates and the dates of upcoming Church walks. I have included two sermons this month, one is the final instalment of the Pastoral Principles series, and returning to the usual pattern I also included a sermon from the past month, the format we'll be going back to in the next issue.

As things pick up this year, do please keep sending me your articles and adverts for events to keep the Key relevant to our Church, it's always a pleasure to receive your contributions.

Have a good month!

With love and best wishes

Lisa

Below is the final sermon from the series on Pastoral Principles. The theme was 'hypocrisy', and the sermon is from the start of October. Many thanks to Mike for sharing this with the Key.

TEXTS:

Old Testament: Acts 7.54-8.3

New Testament: Romans 7.14-25a

Gospel: Matthew 7.1-5

I remember the moment after our elder son was born when the hospital staff announced that we were free to leave and take him home with us. I remember thinking: "How irresponsible is this, entrusting the care of a human being barely a day or two old to someone who is themselves little more than a child?". I just didn't feel equipped to take on this responsibility. Luckily my wife had entered adulthood some years before, and so there was at least one responsible adult around.

And I remember feeling something similar when I was accepted for training, and then licensed, as a Reader. You may know Groucho Marx's famous quote about not wanting want to join a Club that would accept him as a member. Well, I wondered how the Church of England could licence someone whose, let's be generous, disappointing Biblical and theological knowledge, spiritual and prayer life, not to mention other personal failings, how that someone could be allowed to lead their precious congregation in worship and spiritual development.

This morning is the final in the series of sermons based on the Church of England's Course on Pastoral Principles for living and learning well together, itself complimentary to the Church's Publication about Living in Love and Faith. The topic is hypocrisy, and my earlier comments were not a false modesty inviting people to come forward and say, you're being too hard on your yourself, you're not as bad as that. Although, to be honest, nor is it an invitation to come up to me afterwards and say, funny you should say that, Mike, but I often wondered how someone like you got accepted as a Reader!

The point is, that today we are thinking about hypocrisy. How often have you heard the expression – "you should practice what you preach"? Isn't it a worry that this expression about hypocrisy is associated with the church or religion in general, and with preachers in particular? "You should practice what you preach". Standing there in your pulpit with your "thou shall do this" and your "thou shall not do that", whilst you are certainly not doing this, and we know very well that you certainly have not stopped doing that!



I mentioned my acceptance for training as a Reader and standing up here preaching from the pulpit because there were a number of reasons I felt called to be a Reader. One of them was because I wanted to see how a fairly regular bloke with the demands of a job, family and little real evidence of Christian discipleship can balance the demands of life in the "real world" with the demands of following in Jesus' footsteps. Because there have been and still are some remarkable and inspirational people who have followed a simpler, more spiritual or more self-sacrificial life than mine. Cynically, I can be accused of having my cake and eating it – living the comfortable, developed world lifestyle whilst seeing how the demands of discipleship fit round this, which is rather putting the horse before the cart.

Anyway, this is not my therapy session, because the wider truth is that people of faith within the Christian church, and those who have yet to come to faith, live in the "real world". They have messy, complicated, challenging lives where it is not easy to work out what the right thing to do is; or, even if we do work this out, find that actually doing the right thing is not easy either. We are almost set up to fail. We are almost set up to be accused of not practicing what we preach, to be accused of being hypocrites.

I shall return to this later, but it is important to recognise hypocrisy and the damage that it does. But hypocrisy in fact shows itself in different ways. We heard this morning a well-known passage from Matthew's Gospel where Jesus refers to those who insist on trying to remove the speck from another person's eye whilst having a massive plank in their own eye. Again Jesus is using exaggeration to make the point that we can spend too long trying to point out the faults of others whilst conveniently ignoring our own much more significant faults that each one of us should be addressing instead.

More particularly Jesus is pointing to something which is one of those "isms" – in this case "judgmentalism". It's when we judge or condemn others, when we set ourselves up as moral guardians and critics of others. Or we arrogantly assume a superiority which we believe entitles us to assess the failings of others.

This does not mean that we should never judge or condemn, since God is a God of order and justice. We are called to be witnesses to God's word and action in the world, to challenge and to question.

Instead, what Jesus is challenging is those who adopt a hard-line which creates a moral climate in which everyone is looking at someone else to see if they are complying with the rigid standards of that moral climate. We have seen it many times in the Church but we also see it in relation to all the issues with which we are currently concerned. Sexual morality used to be the cause, but now it includes racism, feminism, transgender rights, climate change amongst others – all challenges requiring action, but how often do we

hear of ideologies and orthodoxies on those subjects which will tolerate no debate, no dissent, often of the means if not the ends, and, moreover, which condemn those who do dissent or, more often, have deviated now or in the past from that ideology or orthodoxy? Those who demand a purity and compliance which they police, judge and enforce with a zeal that makes the Spanish Inquisition look like, well, the wet, liberal, modern Church of England.

How would one of our own patron saints have withstood this modern approach? In fact, does he survive an intolerant assessment of anything he has ever said or done? As our reading from Acts recounts, it was Paul who was present and encouraged the stoning of Stephen, and later persecuted the early church. Could he, does he even, survive an absolutist, pure intolerance of his past which demands that he be cancelled and anything he later does or says blotted out? Is there no room for growth, confession, repentance, forgiveness and redemption?

It's not that we should not have high standards on issues, or should not challenge or judge others. Instead it's when we look down on others for their failures to such an extent that we become "hypocrites" in the true sense of the word – a play-actor or one who wears a mask. We wear a mask of righteousness and play or act as God, when clearly we are not God. And remember Jesus is not saying that we should not try to, or cannot help others to, take the speck out of their eyes. It's just that we should first take the log out of our own eyes.

It is when we judge others harshly, without applying the same standards to ourselves, instead of judging them with the generosity with which we are judged, and forgiven, by God. More than that, it is a sign of ingratitude that we treat others in a mean-spirited way when we have been treated generously and graciously by God.

Another aspect of hypocrisy is shown in a later story from Matthew's Gospel when he condemns the Scribes and Pharisees for concerning themselves with things which are less of a priority or relatively insignificant whilst much bigger issues are unaddressed – in that story, taxing commodities like garden herbs whilst ignoring the greater issues of justice, faith and mercy. And that is something of which the Church has stood accused in relation to sexual morality, for example – too much of an obsession with this, or fixating on the wrong issues of sexual morality, when there are more important issues out there.

It all sounds very disheartening and could cause us simply to give up. In the reading from his letter to the Romans, we hear the same Paul who was such a zealous persecutor of the early church tell of his inner conflict — in particular that "I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do."

As individual Christians, we are not perfect. As a Church, we are not perfect.



If, with humility, we acknowledge this whilst being true witnesses to our faith, then maybe we can show what those outside the Church will respect – and that is authenticity and integrity.

We need constructive criticism to grow as Christians, both as individuals and together as God's Church. We should offer constructive criticism as Christians and as a Church in our dealings with the world. But destructive criticism is counter-productive. It destroys any hope of the relationships on which we depend surviving to enable us to work together to achieve our common goals. As Christians, that is to work towards God's Kingdom and share the good news of Jesus Christ. However, how often are we seen by those outside the Church as judging how they live, whilst we are not seen as living as Jesus taught us?

They do not demand perfection – and indeed may be put off by a community of saints whose lives seem so different from their own and often unachievable! If they see a community that is open and honest about who they are and the lives they lead, and the world in which those lives are lived; a community that faces the same or similar demands, challenges, failings as they do; a community that still manages to walk with God and offers the same hope that they too can do so; a community that asks them, as Jesus asked his disciples at the start of John's Gospel: "what are you looking for?"; and when they reply, invites them to "Come and see"; then isn't that a Club of which we would all like to be a Member?

24th Feb: Matthias the Apostle, the chosen one

Have you ever been in the position where someone is desperately needed – and you fit the bill perfectly? It is almost as if all your miscellaneous qualifications that never made much sense before now make PERFECT sense. And you sense that you have been chosen by God for the task....

If so, then Matthias is definitely the patron saint for you! Matthias came into the picture shortly after the suicide of Judas. The early Church was missing an apostle, and so the remaining 11 apostles prayed for guidance on who to choose as a replacement for this key role.

The qualifications for the job were specialised: the person had to have been a follower of Christ from His Baptism to His Ascension, and a witness of the Resurrection. There were two possibilities: Joseph Barsabas and Matthias. How to choose?

Again, Matthias' experience may mirror yours: the decision was out of his hands, and up to others. In this case, the apostles drew straws – and the 'lot' fell to Matthias. He had been chosen to replace Judas! The tragedy of Judas' betrayal had led to an opportunity for service by Matthias – and he was well prepared for the task. Are you prepared for any task that God might suddenly open before you?

Like the other apostles, Matthias had been in Jerusalem and had received the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and he went on to do a good job. It is said he preached the Good News first in Judea, and then maybe in Cappadocia and by the Caspian Sea. It is thought he was martyred by the axe or halberd, and his relics eventually ended up being taken to Rome by the empress Helen.

Matthias is an encouragement to us to be faithful in small things - because you never know what the future might hold!

Saint's Day plus Picture Parable, Puzzle, Mouse Makes, Bible Bite, Poems and Prayers and other articles are courtesy of Parish Pump unless stated otherwise.

Noticeboard

Please use this space to pass messages on to the Church community – whether it is a prayer request, a thank you, a craft idea, a recipe...

Church Rooms for hire.

Available for hire for meetings, study and Exercise Classes, etc.

We have varied, comfortable, no smoking accommodation with kitchen facilities and disabled access and toilet facilities to the rooms.



Rooms can be viewed on: www.bromleyparishchurch.org





Friday 11th February
Shoreham to Otford
5 mile circular walk
across fields and along riverside
meet Shoreham station 10.20am

Friday 1st April
Farnborough – High Elms – Downe
5 mile circular walk
St.Giles' church to Downe village
meet Farnborough 10.30am

Friday 13th May
Petts Wood and Hawkwood
bluebell walk
meet Petts Wood underpass 10.30am

All are welcome

further details contact Lynn in the church office administrator@bromleyparishchurch.org We are lucky to have another sermon this month, provided by Rev James, to include a recent sermon following the look back at the Pastoral Principles series. This was from the week of prayer for Christian unity, many thanks to James for providing this for the Key.

There is an old joke that goes something like this:

A devout Christian who worships at their local cathedral dies and goes to heaven. There, St. Peter greets him and tells him "As you know in our Father's house there are many rooms, you're in room 73 where there is choral evensong with all the extras and an endless supply of tea. As you go though, just be quiet as you go past room 16." Ok then, obviously thinking its one of those strange bits of the afterlife you just have to get used to, and off he totters. A bit later along at the pearly gates comes a lady who had been a stalwart of her local Methodist chapel – "Welcome," says Peter, "Come along to room 47, where there are many wonderful hymns being sung and hearts strangely warmed. Just make sure you're quiet as you go past room 16." Fair enough and off she goes. Then comes a loyal son of the kirk, "Smashing," Peter says, "You're down in room 128 where a 9 week exposition of 1 kings 8 is about to begin, just be quiet as you go past room 16." Being an independent non-conformist type, he asks quite simply "Why?" "Ah, glad you asked!" says Peter. "Room 16 has the Anglo Catholics, they think they are the only ones here, and we want to break it to them gently later."

We are meant to talk about Christian unity today, but perhaps it is best to start with the rather more appropriate admission that for much of history the story has been one of Church disunity. That in the short years after Pentecost already there were huge questions over life and practice in the church, where does it expand, who can be part of it. In 1 Corinthians where Paul writes this quite eloquent analogy of the church to a body, he does so in the context of much strife and argument. You only have to glance your way through the letter to see all sorts of issues — over baptism and who carries it out giving more prestige to you, over money and the divide between the rich and poor borne out in the lack of proper sharing of the Lord's Supper, in the difference between those who think that only the most educated can properly understand

what it is really all about and everyone else who doesn't quite make the cut, of those who think there is no issue eating meat offered to idols and those whose consciousness are deeply offended by such ideas. If you want to see all the things that can go wrong in a church, 1 and 2 Corinthians are a fairly good place to look, indeed a good number of Paul's letters are in the context of trying to sort out deep disagreement about matters of faith and order.

And it doesn't stop there, as the church expands and meets new places, new people and continues to grapple with new questions. There are disagreements, often heated, sometimes vicious, over what is orthodoxy and what is heterodox. St Nicholas might be known as the prototype for Father Christmas, but students of theology all know him better for the apocryphal story of him decking the controversial priest Arius at the Council of Nicea. Churches grow, cultures change and there is schism, between east and west, schism within the western church, over who is rightfully Pope, schism at the Reformation as churches splinter away and then splinter again and again and again, often violently persecuting those who they disagree with. The highest death toll as a proportion of population still remains the European wars of religion and the heady mix of politics and faith.

That is why it is only half flippant when I sometimes say that the point of the church of England is to stop people killing each other. A church built on a level of vagueness and interpretation to hold very different people together so that they could spent the next few hundred years sniping at each other, which is preferable to actual violence of course.

The scars of these conflicts and memories of the disagreements and differences lingers deep in the fabric of the church, in many ways it is a miracle that the 20th century saw the birth of the ecumenical movement at all. The chaos and disunity that marred great swathes of that time spurred enough people to overcome antipathy to actually work together and hope for something better.

And there has been much done, but always in fits and starts, a bout of enthusiasm followed by a lull as the technicalities and practical questions are worked through – just how important are Bishops to the Church of England – often a sticking point.

That makes it sluggish progress as we slowly unpick through our history and ask just what we have picked up over the years which is unnecessary or

unhelpful. And it makes it challenging as our assumptions and tastes about what church is get challenged by others who look on slightly mystified by things we hold dear and helpful.

So this week of prayer brings two particular challenges to mind.

Firstly, that Paul's likening of the church to a body, diverse and yet in need of one another still holds true today as it did for the fractious churches he wrote to in the 1st century. Bodies are complex, often they go wrong, sometimes enough to try and kill you. But the basic sense of reliance and need is still there. Recognising that there is more that can be done with others that are apart is key to the future of the churches – not easy by any stretch, we have long been used to being our own self-sufficient ecosystems where we can do it all in our own way and by ourselves.

We can see across Bromley the things that happen when churches and Christians work together and share resources and vision – work of the shelter, CAP, the foodbank, town centre chaplaincy – things which make a great deal of impact. Hopefully soon we can add to that HIA – our church resources joining with that of others locally to help rehome and support those who have been on the streets, an undertaking we certainly could not have done alone.

Often it is through the practical that we first see where we can rely on and need one another

But it needs to go further – the second challenge is to continue to try and recognise that the presence of God and the mystery of Christ is as present and alive in other places as our own. History and human nature do not make that easy. We live in a fragmented world and a fragmented church.

In a time of concern about the health of congregation and finance and organisation, it can be difficult to trust God through it all. Other churches, other communities can be seen as sources of competition, not just collaboration, as we worry about the future of our churches and congregation. It is easy to be fearful of the other.

The bravest talk someone gave from an ecumenical perspective – someone big on the WCC admittance that perhaps her church and denomination which is declining might disappear one day, but that the work of the church of God continues in different ways. That the kingdom isn't limited to her church was a striking and necessary claim.

Recognise the work of God is bigger, calls us out of our own comfort, choices, broken history.

It is what we think that the work of God does to all people – that call to repent and turn from limited and selfish behaviours is central to what faith is about – we can embrace hope of a bigger story of Gods love and redemption.

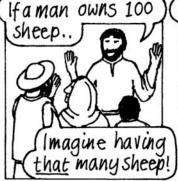
That call applies to the church as much as individuals – we continue to inhabit these tendencies which are not of God, but sacralise them as essential to the church. If we can continue to look beyond the horizons we create, recognise our need for others, recognise the work of God there, then we might just be able to find the unity He seeks for His church. Something to hold on to and pray for in these weeks of unity.

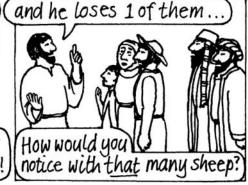


A short story from the Bible

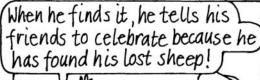
It can be read in the Bible in Luke chapter 15 verses 11-32 Jesus spent his time teaching everyone who would listen, whatever they were. The Pharisees and Law teachers watched Jesus.



















her house, and search until she finds it? That's what I'd do. What's special about a small coin?

Worltshe light a lamp, sweep

When she finds it she tells her friends to celebrate because she found the courshe had lost.



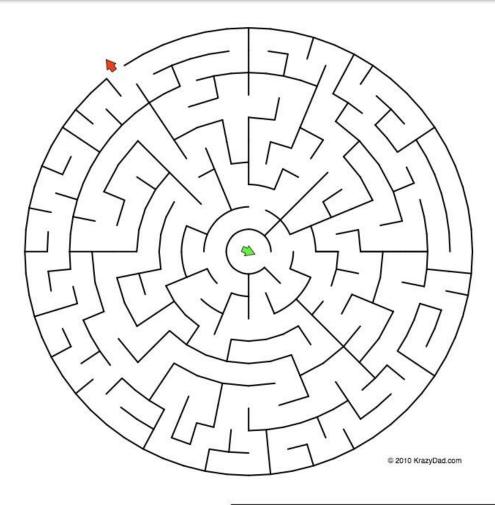
In the same way, God's angels rejoice when a bad person repents.





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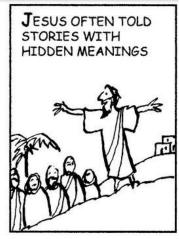
Sudoku:

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The Friend at Midnight













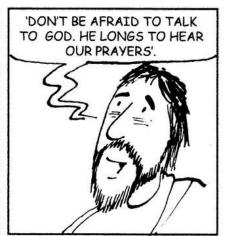


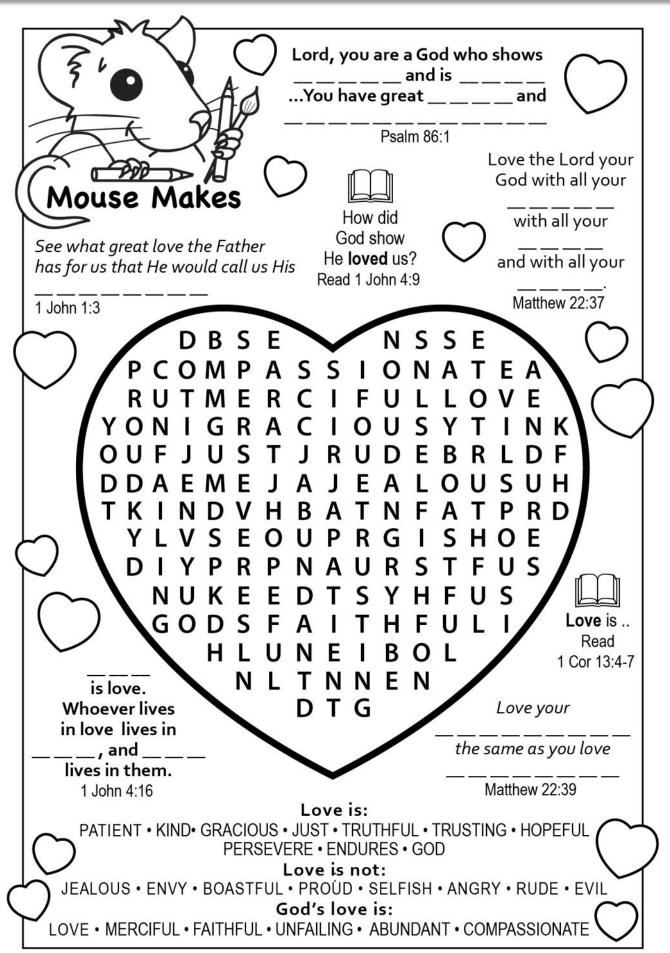






JESUS EXPLAINED - 'THE NEIGHBOUR AGREED TO SHARE HIS BREAD BECAUSE THE MAN KEPT ASKING'





Dear Lord God,

February can be a difficult, cold month, and this year there is much to be concerned about, with the pandemic still affecting our lives in so many ways. But thank you, Lord, that February can also be a month of wonderful signs of hope.

Help us, when we look down, to see the snowdrops - sometimes known as Candlemas Bells - and other bulbs pushing through the dark earth, showing the promise of Spring and brighter days ahead.

And then, help us to look up, to see the light of Jesus, Your revelation to all the world, in that baby who grew and died and rose again to offer salvation, hope and life to all who put their trust in Him.

Thank you, Father, for Jesus and that, because of Him, nothing – no pandemic, no circumstance - can ever separate us from You.

Thank you for Your Holy Spirit, living in all who trust in You, giving us strength for each new day of this and every month.

In Jesus name, Amen.

By Daphne Kitching

St Valentine's Day

Valentine was a priest during the reign of Emperor Claudius II who outlawed marriage for young men as he thought single men made better soldiers. Valentine defied the emperor and continued to marry couples in secret, but when found out he was sentenced to death and was executed on 14th February 269 A.D. A story goes that while in prison he fell in love with the jailor's daughter, and before his death wrote her a letter signed 'From your Valentine.' He was later made a Saint.

God's Valentine

For God so loved the world He sent His Son There was no other way to let us know, So Jesus came to us from heaven's realm To bring God's love to all of us below.

He took on flesh, became like one of us, Taught and healed and loved wherever He went Showing the Father's love for all to see He truly was a gift from heaven sent.

The Bible is God's precious Word of Life A living breathing word like no other, It is a heavenly letter of love to us Sent 'From your God the Everlasting Father'.



Tuesday 1st February

11.00am Toddler Praise

7.30pm Bell ringing practice

Wednesday 2nd February

12noon – 2pm Church open for private prayer

7.00pm Hope into Action prayer meeting - Zoom

Thursday 3rd February

10.00am Healing Prayer meeting - prayers are said from homes

5.15pm Pastoral meeting - Zoom

7.30pm Choir practice

Saturday 5th February

11.00am Baptism

Sunday 6th February Fourth Sunday before lent

10.30am Parish Eucharist

Tuesday 8th February

11.00am Toddler Praise

7.30pm Bell ringing practice

Wednesday 9th February

12noon – 2pm Church open for private prayer

7.00pm Hope into Action prayer meeting

Thursday 10th February

2.15pm Fellowship

7.30pm Choir practice

Friday 11th February

10.20am Church Walk Shoreham to Otford

7.00pm Half Peal of bells

Sunday 13th February Third Sunday before Lent

9.00am Family Breakfast Club10.30am Parish Eucharist with Baptism followed by coffee6.30pm Choral Evensong

Tuesday 15th February

No Toddler Praise

7.30pm Bell ringing practice

Wednesday 16th February

12noon -2pm Church open for private prayer

7.00pm Hope into Action prayer meeting

8.00pm Standing Committee

Thursday 17th February

7.30pm Choir practice

Sunday 20th February Second Sunday before lent

10.30am All age Worship with Communion.

President & Preacher: The Ven. Dr. Paul Wright

3.15pm Farewell service for The Ven. Dr. Paul Wright Rochester Cathedral

Tuesday 22nd February

11.00am Toddler Praise

7.30pm Bell ringing practice

Wednesday 23rd February

12noon-2pm Church open for private prayer

7.00pm Hope into Action prayer meeting

Thursday 24th February

2.15pm Fellowship

7.30pm Choir practice

Saturday 26th February

9.00am -9.00pm Bromley Music Festival

Sunday 27th February Sunday before Lent

9.00am Family Breakfast Club 10.30am Parish Eucharist 1.00pm -8.00pm Bromley Music Festival

Monday 28th February

Funeral Jean Davis
11.00am Ladywell cemetery
1.30pm Thanksgiving service in church followed by tea

Advance dates

Tuesday 1st March Shrove Tuesday 5.00pm Pancake party - Zoom

Wednesday 2nd March Ash Wednesday

8.00pm Ash Wednesday service

Morning Prayer is said daily at 8.00am in the Children's Chapel

The Children's Chapel is open daily for prayer and an opportunity to light a candle

Church is open on Wednesdays between 12noon and 2pm for private

prayer when consecrated bread is available for those who wish to receive.

Updates to services and events will be posted on our website

www.bromleyparishchurch.org

To join Sunday worship online please visit our website www.bromleyparishchurch.org and follow the link on our homepage.

Please continue to wear face masks in the church building.