

# *the*KEY

Number 242

January 2024

50p

Website: [www.bromleyparishchurch.org](http://www.bromleyparishchurch.org)



**In God alone my soul quietly rests,  
for my hope comes from Him. Ps 62:5**

News of Saint Peter and Saint Paul

**BROMLEY PARISH CHURCH**

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"Proclaiming the Word and Work of God"

Member of Churches Together in Central Bromley



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Dear Reader,

Welcome to the January edition of the Key, the first of 2024!

I hope you all had a wonderful time celebrating Christmas and welcoming in the New Year.

In this edition there is a sermon kindly provided by a guest speaker, Alison. Watch out for the diary dates on the last pages as well to see what is going on in our Church in January following a very busy festive period.

I hope you enjoy the magazine and as always, please do continue to send me your articles, recipes, news and suggestions, you can email me at [thekeyeditor@gmail.com](mailto:thekeyeditor@gmail.com).

With love,

Lisa

*This month's sermon has been kindly provided by Alison, from the second Sunday of Advent. Many thanks to Alison for sharing this for us to revisit.*

There is very often, these days, a real temptation to ask, "When will there be good news?", echoing the title of a crime novel by Kate Atkinson, and at the same time to observe as Shakespeare puts it in *The Tempest* "Hell is empty and all the devils are here".

It is much more than just noticing the presence of evil in the world around, and a seeming lack of good, it comes with a sense of escalation, things seem to be getting worse. Or perhaps we are just getting tired.

We live in uncertain times and the tide of terrible events, human wickedness, violence and incompetence seem unrelentingly to increase. Holding onto faith and hope is really challenging as we move through Advent and towards Christmas. Even more challenging is refusing to dwell only on the bad news, but as Christians we are called to look out for positive signs of God's presence and activity in our world.

Even Christmas, which is now for many just a social celebration, as well as a joyous festival of faith for us as Christians, celebrating the birth of Emanuel - God with us, comes so heavily weighed down with issues of poverty, of peace and justice, of sustainability, simplicity and excess, that much of the joy in the good news of the birth of Christ is lost in the sheer volume of need and disaster.

So whatever else we do in Advent, by way of watching, waiting, and preparing for the Lord to come, we are also longing for good news and hoping for peace, scanning the world around us locally, nationally and globally, watching the news and all our different media connections for signs of hope that might grow into opportunities for peace making if we can spot them and encourage them to grow.

Our lectionary readings today give us mixed messages. Isaiah 40 offers the comfort of forgiveness for sin, the bringer of good news preparing the way, comfort in the enduring word of God, and in the promised restoration of God's presence with the people, gathering, feeding and leading them like a shepherd.

The Epistle encourages patience and godly living, whilst we wait for God's

timing and ours to coincide.

But the fulfilment of promise and prophecy is highlighted right at the beginning of the first chapter of Mark's gospel and has been picked up by Mark, who straight away heads his first chapter:

The beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

So whatever comes next in the way of story, miracle, parable, exorcism, or teaching or any other event in Jesus's life in Mark's gospel, it is always going to be the beginning or part of the beginning, of the good news of Jesus Christ. It is the unexpected answer to the question we started with "when will there be good news ?" and the answer is now! with the coming of Jesus, - the good news begins.

The first words of the good news in Mark begin with two prophetic texts one from Malachi and one from Isaiah announcing a forerunner who will go before the coming of God's Messiah. A messenger of God will go "ahead of you" and one who will: "Prepare the way of the Lord, make his paths straight".

So the scene is set from the Hebrew scriptures for the arrival of John the Baptist.

He is very much like an OT prophet in his clothes and his presentation, as a wilderness man whose character was shaped by the simplicity and the hardship of living in the wilderness. He is so like Elijah that at times he himself is regarded as a second Elijah. He it is who proclaims the coming of the Messiah, as the one more powerful than I who will baptise you with the holy spirit.

In Israel's history, the wilderness is the place for key acts of transformation. When the Israelites were brought out of Egypt, it was in the wilderness that they travelled for 40 years journeying towards the promised land being transformed, prepared and made ready for their arrival there.

It was in the wilderness that God gave his people the law; it was there that they learnt what it really meant to believe and trust in God.

Centuries later and here they were again - hearing a voice out in the wilderness - going out into the wilderness to be baptised, to be cleansed and renewed. John the Baptist's message was simple: 'Repent - and be baptised.' Now repentance is the call to turn around and learn to live in a new and different way, to be made ready for the coming of Jesus.

There is an awful grim irony that as we here prepare for our Christmas celebration this year, that they will not be able to celebrate Christmas in

Bethlehem, not least because the war in Israel/ Palestine has reduced large areas of that promised land, flowing, if you remember, with milk and honey, to a place of wilderness and death.

There is no language strong enough to bear or to carry the meanings of such appalling horrors inflicted on people who are often just innocent bystanders. Every person killed is someone's child, and a brother or sister, a parent or a friend, multiply connected to many others. Each one of them is a child of God.

To be human seems to mean that we will forever be at war somewhere on our planet, it means that we have not learnt to repent, to turn round and be transformed, that we have learned collectively no lessons at all, from our shared past about how to live together and flourish living collaboratively and in peace.

To be human is often to be weary in spirit as we look at our world and its continual attraction to darkness rather than light, to endlessly repeat war and conflict, oppression and persecution, and yet despite the difficulties of holding on to hope and faith and despite fear for the future we know that Christ came for the first time as Emanuel, to be God with us.

He came, because as the gospels tell us he has compassion on the people, because he loves them and so he also loves us. Compassion is a beautiful word, which means "to suffer together " to be moved deeply with gut wrenching empathy( as the late Bishop Richard Holloway said). He came to walk together with us, so that we do not feel alone, when harassed or helpless, he came to hold onto hope for us, and to share it with us. Jesus came to us to suffer together with us.

In the midst of all the darkness the flickering lights of love remain, parents love their children and seek their good, lovers are prepared to sacrifice themselves for one another, partners, wives, husbands and friends remain constant through thick and thin.

There are generous donors locally and nationally giving everything from cash to food to share good things with those who are poor.

There are the brave volunteers in the Road to Recovery project in Israel who still drive sick Palestinians to hospitals in Israel for major treatments, despite taking huge risks.

We know that Jews, Muslims and Christians kept vigil together at Downing Street, last Sunday, as witnesses to our shared concern for the common good.

I live in a caring neighbourhood and we keep an eye out for each other. One of my neighbours tells my husband never to move house as she will not manage without his help.

Small, but frequent, signs of hope populate all our lives, and we can see them easily, moments of beauty, of love and generosity, of peace and delight, but only if we pay attention.

It is quite clear that God's compassion in Jesus prompts him to act, he comes to us, God with us, he loves, heals and forgives us, bringing new life and transformation. Jesus's very presence in the world is the ultimate act of compassion.

We know that He was born of Mary, but he was also born of God's grace and God's unconditional love.

Even in the darkest of times we can hold onto that love of God for us, because despite appearances, and no matter how we may *feel*, we learn from scripture, especially from passages like this one from Ps 103 :

'Can a mother forget the baby at her breast  
and have no compassion on the child she has borne?  
Though she may forget,  
I will not forget you!' .....

As a father has compassion on his children,  
so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him'

God's compassion, grace and unconditional, generous love are the key notes of our journey of faith, he is here, to suffer, together with us. If we are looking for Jesus in our times, remember, we may well find him in the dark, difficult and dangerous places, with those who suffer. **Amen**

**14<sup>th</sup> January - St Felix of Nola, saved by a spider's web**

What do you do when you find a large spider web in your house? If you ever feel some sympathy for the spider who went to all that trouble, then Felix is a good patron saint for you. He was saved by such a spider, spinning such a web.

Felix had been born to a Syrian soldier who had retired to Nola, near Naples in Italy. When his father died, Felix gave his property and money away, and was ordained by St Maximus of Nola. Felix went to work with him, ministering to the people of Nola.

Then Decius, the Roman Emperor, began another persecution of the Christians. Maximus escaped to the mountains, but Felix was arrested and badly beaten. Legend has it that he was rescued – and freed from captivity - by an angel. In any case, Felix followed Maximus and found him sick and in need. Felix hid him in an empty building, and prayed for God's protection. The soldiers were out looking for the two men, but then a spider arrived at the door of the building where they were hiding. The spider spun such a magnificent web across the door that it fooled the imperial soldiers into thinking the building was long abandoned. The spider saved Maximus and Felix that day, and the two men stayed on the run until Decius' death in 251.

After that, the people of Nola wanted Felix as their bishop. But Felix refused, and returned to farming his lands; giving the poor most of the food that he managed to grow. Though Felix went on to die naturally, he was still thought of as a martyr, or 'witness' because he had suffered torture, imprisonment and privations in the persecution. Felix did not mind: he served a King who was not of this world, and he looked forward to a better future life with that King in a new heaven and a new earth.



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# Bible Bite

A short story from the Bible

It can be read in the Bible in Exodus chapter 2 verses 1 to 12

In Egypt the Hebrew people flourished so well that the new Pharaoh grew scared and ordered all their new-born boys to be killed.

Moses' mother hid him when he was born, but he grew too big.



She made a basket from reeds for him and put it in the grass by the river Nile.



She told Moses' sister Miriam to keep watch.



Pharaoh's daughter found Moses



Shall I get someone to look after the baby?



So Miriam got her mother.



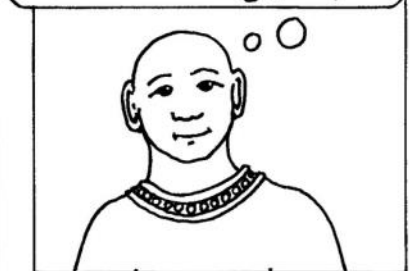
The princess adopted Moses as her son.



When Moses was grown up he went to see where his people worked as slaves.



Perhaps I will be the one to save my people.



Moses saw an Egyptian beating a Hebrew slave.



Moses checked no-one was looking and...



He hid the body in the sand.



o	w	n	m	m	g	r	a	s	s	b	y
r	l	s	i	p	o	x	c	l	z	a	i
d	p	i	r	l	k	t	n	a	o	s	e
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d	i	e	p	s	a	n	d	a	e	m	b
o	l	b	o	t	i	o	c	v	e	o	r
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sand  
mother  
grown  
grass  
save  
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Pharaoh  
flourished

reeds  
Nile  
Egyptian  
slaves  
river  
son  
Moses  
scared

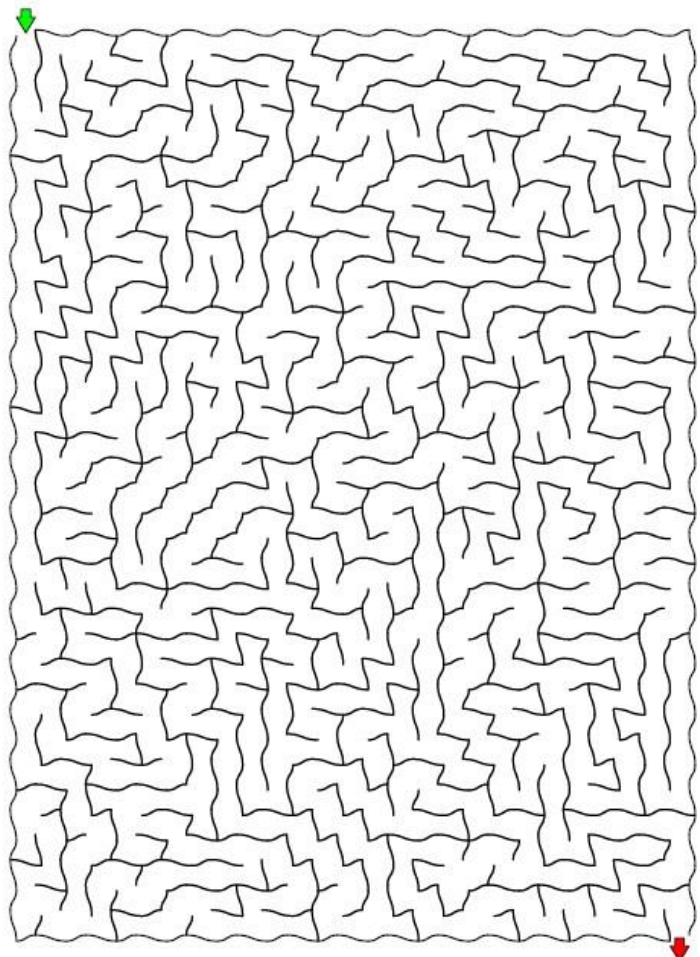
basket  
killed  
daughter  
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Miriam  
body  
baby  
Hebrew

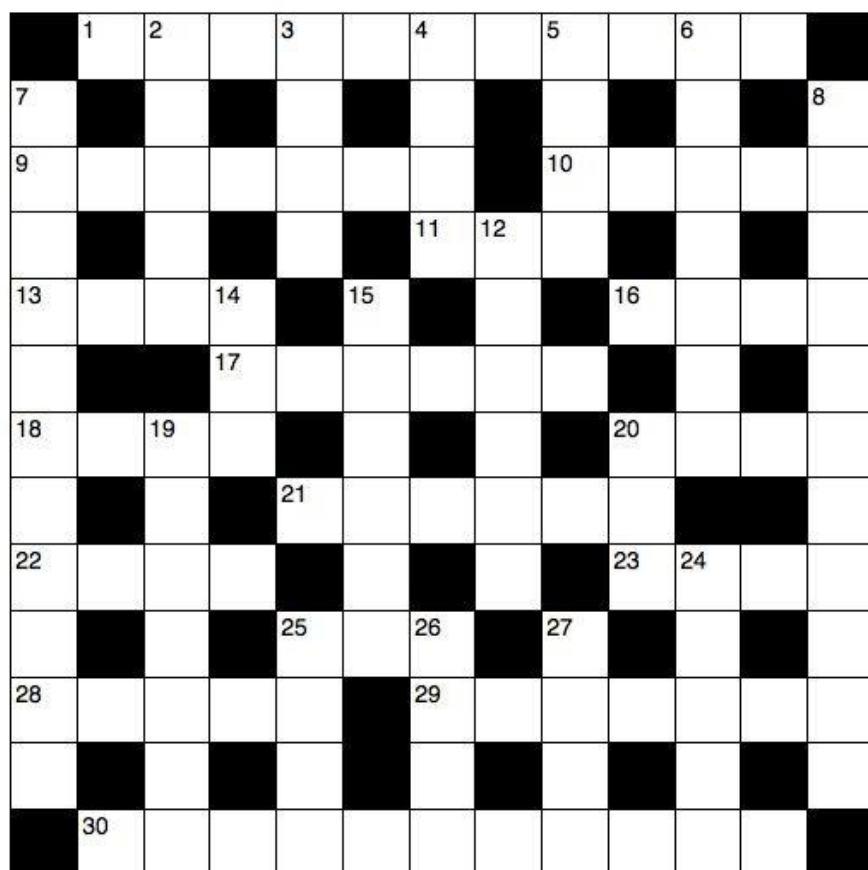
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Sudoku:

Insert numbers 1-9 in every row, column and 3x3 box.





### Answers:

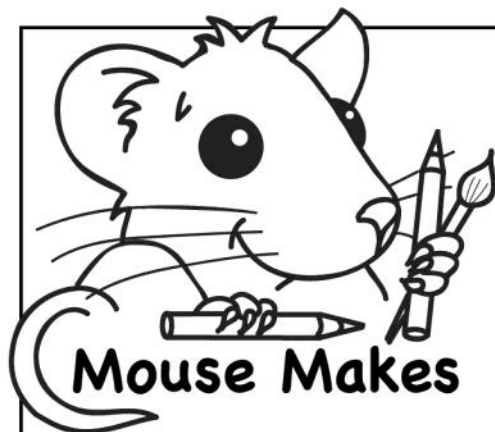
ACROSS: 1, Godlessness. 9, Egotism. 10, After. 11, Eat. 13, Sort. 16, Plan. 17, Escape. 18, Odds. 20, Idem. 21, No fear. 22, Idle. 23, Abet. 25, Ail. 28, Eaves. 29, Achieve. 30, Grasshopper.  
DOWN: 2, Odour. 3, Lair. 4, Same. 5, Neat. 6, Settled. 7, Gershonites. 8, Grandmother. 12, Apples. 14, TES. 15, Octopi. 19, Deliver. 20, Ira. 24, Breve. 25, As is. 26, Lash. 27, Whip.

### ACROSS

- 1 Paul said the wrath of God 'is being revealed from heaven' against this (Romans 1:18) (11)  
9 Go smite (anag.) (7) 10 'But — I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee' (Matthew 26:32) (5)  
11 'Take and —; this is my body' (Matthew 26:26) (3) 13 Type (2 Thessalonians 2:10) (4)  
16 'Woe to those who — iniquity' (Micah 2:1) (4)  
17 'How shall we — if we ignore such a great salvation?' (Hebrews 2:3) (6)  
18 Opposite of evens (4)  
20 Previously cited (Latin) (4)  
21 'There is surely — — of God in this place, and they will kill me because of my wife' (Genesis 20:11) (2,4)  
22 The Thessalonians were warned to keep away from every brother who was this (2 Thessalonians 3:6) (4)  
23 Beat (anag.) (4)  
25 To trouble or afflict (Job 16:3) (3)  
28 Part of a roof (1 Kings 7:9) (5)  
29 Attain (Job 5:12) (7)  
30 Insect noted for its gymnastic ability (Psalm 78:46) (11)

### DOWN

- 2 Smell (John 11:39) (5)  
3 Lion's home (Jeremiah 25:38) (4)  
4 'Jesus Christ is the — yesterday and today and for ever' (Hebrews 13:8) (4)  
5 Tidy (4)  
6 Made their home (Genesis 47:27) (7)  
7 Their task was to carry the curtains of the tabernacle (Numbers 4:25–26) (11)  
8 Timothy's was called Lois (2 Timothy 1:5) (11)  
12 The Lover likened the fragrance of the Beloved's breath to these (Song of Songs 7:8) (6)  
14 Times Educational Supplement (1,1,1)  
15 Eight-tentacled sea creatures (6)  
19 'And lead us not into temptation, but — us from the evil one' (Matthew 6:13) (7)  
20 D.L. Moody's legendary song leader, — D. Sankey (3)  
24 Rarely used musical note (5)  
25 'Your will be done on earth — it — in heaven' (Matthew 6:10) (2,2)  
26 and 27 'The Lord Almighty will — them with a —, as when he struck down Midian at the rock of Oreb' (Isaiah 10:26) (4,4)  
27 See 26 Down



**EPIPHANY** is the time in the Church year that we remember when the 'wise men' or 'Magi' followed a star that led them to the Christ child Jesus. They bowed down, worshipped him and left *three* special gifts.



Where was Jesus born?

\_\_\_\_\_

Luke 2:1



What three gifts did the wise men give Jesus?

\_\_\_\_\_



Who was the king?

\_\_\_\_\_

Luke 2:1

and \_\_\_\_\_

Luke 2:11

Where did the wise men come from?  
the \_\_\_\_\_

Luke 2:1

How were the wise men warned not to return to Herod?  
In a \_\_\_\_\_

Luke 2:12

What had the wise men seen?

a \_\_\_\_\_

Luke 2:2



Look up the Bible verses, fill in the blanks, find them in the word search then look for the words opposite.

C H I L D S T A R J D K  
J E S U S W A E B O B I  
E S R E J O I C E Y O N  
W H A C H R I S T H R G  
S E E E O S J C H U N O  
Y P L A U H R U L E R L  
G H I S S I T H E R O D  
I E M T E P I P H A N Y  
F R A N K I N C E N S E  
T D R S W I S E M E N E  
S M Y R R H D R E A M I

JESUS  
WISEMEN  
WORSHIP  
SHEPHERD  
KING • JEWS  
CHRIST • CHILD  
BORN • RULER  
ISRAEL • REJOICE  
JOY • HOUSE • MARY  
GIFTS • EPIPHANY

How many other words can you make from the letters in EPIPHANY?



# The tale of the Two Sons



JESUS OFTEN TOLD STORIES WITH HIDDEN MEANINGS



HE ONCE TOLD A STORY ABOUT A FATHER WHO HAD TWO SONS.



THE FATHER WENT TO HIS OLDER SON AND ASKED HIM TO WORK IN THE VINEYARD



'NO I WON'T!' SAID THE OLDER SON...



....BUT THEN HE CHANGED HIS MIND AND WENT AND HELPED.

THE FATHER THEN WENT TO HIS YOUNGER SON AND ASKED HIM TO HELP IN THE VINEYARD TOO.



'OF COURSE I WILL!' SAID THE YOUNGER SON. BUT HE PROMPTLY FORGOT ALL ABOUT IT....

...AND DIDN'T DO A STROKE OF WORK!



'WHICH ONE DID WHAT HIS FATHER WANTED?' ASKED JESUS...



'WHICH DO YOU THINK IT WAS?

**New Year Prayer 2024**

Lord,

We stand on the threshold of a new year. Some of us are excited, some of us are fearful. We don't know what 2024 will bring, but we know that there will be ups and downs, joy and sadness mixed in with the months.

As we step into this new year, help us to keep our eyes fixed on you; to know for certain that, whatever happens, you will be in it with us, not watching from the sidelines, but right in the middle of it with us.

Help us to put our trust in what Jesus did on the cross, maybe for the first time, maybe as a New Year re-commitment, so that we will *know* that nothing can separate us from you.

Let the storm rage, let the sun shine – we are safe!

In the name of the risen, living Lord Jesus.

Amen.

Daphne Kitching

**New Year**

A carillon, then twelve long chimes  
We join in noisy 'Auld Lang Syne'  
To celebrate the changing times -  
And times of hope, not fear!  
Even while the chimes still ring  
And while we gaily laugh and sing  
We pray the coming years will bring  
Good reasons for good cheer!

All the sadness of last year -  
Every sorrow, every tear  
Let them fade and disappear;  
Yes - let them fade away!  
Hearken to the chiming bells!  
See the fireworks ' sparkling spells!  
The sights and sounds and tastes and smells  
Of ev'ry New Year's Day!

*By Nigel Beeton*

**Turn your love**

... Turn your love to Him, who in His love  
Upon a cross, our souls to save today,  
First died, then rose, and sits in heaven above;  
And now will fail no-one, I dare to say,  
That will His holy heart upon Him lay!  
And since He best to love is, and most meek,  
Why should we feigned love go to seek?

*By Geoffrey Chaucer (1343 – 1400)*

**Let nothing disturb thee**

Let nothing disturb thee, nothing affright thee;  
All things are passing; God never changeth';  
Patient endurance  
Attaineth to all things;  
Who God possesseth  
In nothing is wanting  
Alone God sufficeth.

*By St Teresa of Avila*

**Great lives**

Lives of all great men remind us  
We can make our lives sublime,  
And, departing, leave behind us  
Footprints on the sands of time.

*By Henry Wadsworth Longfellow*





**PRAYER POINTS**

January 2024

*Please hold the following in your prayers this month.*

1. Happy new year to you and we would like to thank you for your prayers and support. We pray that this year will be a positive year to you, our supporters, to the young people JusB serve and to us as a staff team as we aim to meet those needs of the young people we work with.

2. We give thanks for the successful and vibrant Showcase of Talents event in December.

The young people performed brilliantly and the testimonials given were thought-provoking. We also give thanks to all who attended and kindly provided support, raffle prizes and food for this event.

3. We continue to pray for further funding that is urgently needed in the next few months. Please pray for the staff team and trustees as there is further uncertainty about the long-term future of JusB unless we are successful in our bids.

4. Give thanks for new volunteers who are looking to join the youth work team in the new year.

<b>Sunday 7</b> <b>Epiphany</b>	10.30am Parish Eucharist
<b>Monday 8</b>	10.30am Bumps & Babies
<b>Tuesday 9</b>	11.00am Toddler Praise 7.30pm Bell ringing practice
<b>Wednesday 10</b>	12noon Midweek service 12.30pm -2.00pm Church open for private prayer 12.45pm Bible Reading Group
<b>Thursday 11</b>	12.30pm Church Administrator's Lunch 2.15pm Fellowship 7.30pm Choir practice
<b>Sunday 14</b>	9.00am Breakfast Church 10.30am Parish Eucharist 6.30pm Choral Evensong
<b>Monday 15</b>	10.30am Bumps & Babies
<b>Tuesday 16</b>	11.00am Toddler Praise 7.30pm Bell ringing practice
<b>Wednesday 17</b>	12noon Midweek service 12.30pm -2.00pm Church open for private prayer 8.00pm PCC meeting
<b>Thursday 18</b>	7.30pm Choir practice

<b>Saturday 20</b>	10am -2pm Peal of bells
<b>Sunday 21</b>	10.30am All age Worship with Communion
<b>Monday 22</b>	10.30am Bumps & Babies 12noon Bereavement Group meet
<b>Tuesday 23</b>	11.00am Toddler Praise 7.30pm Bell ringing practice
<b>Wednesday 24</b>	12noon Midweek service 12.30-2.00pm Church open for private prayer 12.45pm Bible Reading Group
<b>Thursday 25</b>	2.15pm Fellowship 7.30pm Choir practice
<b>Sunday 28</b>	9.00am Breakfast Church 10.30am Parish Eucharist
<b>Monday 29</b>	10.30am Bumps & Babies
<b>Tuesday 30</b>	11.00am Toddler Praise 7.30pm Bell ringing practice
<b>Wednesday 31</b>	12noon Midweek service 12.30pm – 2.00pm Church open for private prayer 12.45pm Bible Reading Group 7.30pm HIA Friendship & Support meeting

**The Children's Chapel** is open daily for prayer and **Church is open for private prayer on Wednesdays** between 12.30pm and 2pm, consecrated bread is available for those who wish to receive.

To join Sunday worship online please visit our website [www.bromleyparishchurch.org](http://www.bromleyparishchurch.org) and follow the link on our homepage.

Updates to services and events are posted on our website [www.bromleyparishchurch.org](http://www.bromleyparishchurch.org)

2024

