

THE PARISH MAGAZINE

March 2024

*Help us to use
these days of
Lent to grow in
wisdom and
prayer*

Lenten Collect

**The United Benefice of
St Michael Lichfield, with St John, Wall**

£1

| | |
|---|---|
| <p>Rector: Revd Dr Abbie Walsh Tel:: 07395 500745 Email: rev.abbie.walsh@gmail.com DAY OFF—FRIDAY</p> | <p>Associate Minister (SSM Part-time): The Revd. Ruth Bull 01543 252123 dkbrlcb@hotmail.com</p> |
| <p>Assistant Minister (PTO) Revd Linda Collins lindakcollins56@gmail.com</p> <p>Assistant Minister (PTO) Revd Kareen Lowther kareenlowther@hotmail.com</p> | <p>Assistant Minister (PTO) The Revd. Jeyan Anketell 7 Wissage Lane, LICHFIELD, Staffs, WS13 6DQ Tel: 01543 268897 Email: jeyan.anketell@ntlworld.com</p> |
| <p>Assistant Minister (PTO) The Revd. Helen Barton 1 Seckham Road, Lichfield WS13 7AN. Tel: 01543 257692 Email: helen@the-bartons.com</p> | <p>Assistant Minister (PTO) The Revd. Stephen Barton 1 Seckham Road, Lichfield WS13 7AN. Tel: 01543 257692 Email: stephen@the-bartons.com</p> |
| <p>Assistant Minister (PTO) The Revd Christine Polhill Tel: 01543 674474 christine@reflectiongardens.org.uk</p> | <p>Assistant Minister (PTO) The Revd Brian Rostill Tel: 01543 254067 brianrostill@gmail.com</p> |
| <p>Reader: Trevor James 36 Heritage Court, LICHFIELD, Staffs, WS14 9ST Tel: 01543 258434</p> | <p>Reader: Alan Toplis Streethay Lodge, Streethay, LICHFIELD, Staffs, WS13 8LR Tel: 01543 414651 E-mail: alan.toplis@toplis.co.uk</p> |
| <p>United Benefice Office St Michael's Church, Church St, LICHFIELD, Staffs, WS13 6ED Mon, Tues, Wed & Fri CLOSED Thursdays 9.00 am to 12.00 noon. Tel: 01543 262211 E-mail: office@stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk</p> | <p>SAFEGUARDING CO-ORDINATOR FOR ST MICHAEL & ST JOHN Maureen Brand 01543 264880 For advice about safeguarding or to raise a concern please contact Maureen.</p> |
| <p>St Michael's Church Church Street, Lichfield, Staffordshire, WS13 6ED</p> | <p>St John's Church Green Lane, Wall, Staffordshire, WS14 0AS</p> |

REFLECTION

Dear Friends,

This year for Lent I am reading a book called *The Last Week*. It is obviously about Holy Week, the most important week in the Christian Year. It is by Borg and Crossan, who as well as being theologians are also social scientists, particularly for the early Christian period and Jesus' time on earth. They put a different perspective on the biblical story I am so familiar with. So, for example, they talk of the systems that people lived by and are still around. The domination system, where power is held by force of some kind, and by a few. Israel under Roman rule was caught by the domination system of Rome where power was held by violence. The Temple in Jerusalem was also a place where power was held by a powerful few, over the many. Jesus however, talks of God's kingdom, all his parables and teaching and actions underline the peaceful nature of this kingdom, where we are as family, no-one having too much or too little, enough food for everyone, and genuine love for each other predominates. Talking and loving action rather than violent force is the hallmark of this kingdom.

So here's an interesting perspective on Palm Sunday with Jesus riding a donkey to the Temple, and many people waving palm branches, laying coats in the road, cheering and hailing him as king, Messiah. There's a secrecy about getting the donkey and clearly some pre-arrangements. A bit like organising a rally perhaps, or a demonstration. Jesus rides in from the Mount of Olives, to the east of Jerusalem. At the same time, riding in from Tiberius, west of Jerusalem, comes Pilate with a great procession of Roman soldiers on foot and on horseback, weapons visible. It is the Jewish Passover, when the population of Jerusalem increases from around 45,000 to around 200,000 as Jews come from all over to celebrate Passover and pay the Temple tax. Both Jesus'

procession, and his action in the temple where he overturns the tables of the money changers, and demands it be a house of prayer, challenge the domination systems in Israel then.

Rome and the Temple authorities combine to 'deal' with Jesus swiftly. There is no king but Ceasar, and crucifixion, a cruel public death, was reserved for revolutionaries as a demonstration of power and as a deterrent to everyone else.

There are plenty of domination systems still in society now. It's an effective way of preserving wealth and consolidating resources. We have done a lot of work as a society on the way men and women relate and have a greater equality now, but there is still a long way to go, or two women a week would not be murdered by a male family member. This year I celebrate 30 years as a priest in the C of E, and 40 years in ministry as I was made a deaconess in Sept. 1984. We now have women as priests and bishops. I thought by now, most of the provisions for those who do not want to receive women's ministry would be very small. That was the promise in 1993 when the provisions were made. However, in this diocese there is plenty of evidence this is not so. We even have a diocese within the diocese for those who will not receive women's ministry from the catholic point of view. There is no debate on the issues, we kind of co-habit in a fractured way.

Jesus and the early church had a more equal view of women than was customary in their day. Women followers fund the movement, they stay with Jesus, at a distance, during the crucifixion. It was the women who are the first to go to the tomb on Easter day and tell of the mind-numbing, amazing news of Jesus' resurrection.

I invite you to live the whole drama of Holy week this year, a culmination of the prayer and discipline of lent, in conjunction with all that is going on here and world-wide. Then contrast it with Jesus' manifesto of God's kingdom, the short version of which is the prayer he taught us.

Your friend in Christ

Chris Polhill

Snowdrops at St Michael's



With many thanks to Maureen Brand

Regular Services and Worship in the Benefice

Regular Services at St Michael's

Sundays

8:00am Holy Communion

10:00am Holy Communion

1st Sunday

10:00am Family Praise

Wednesdays

9.30am Holy Communion

Thursdays

9.30am Morning Prayer

Regular Services at St John's

Sundays

10am Holy Communion

Baptism @ 11.30am

3rd Sunday of the month

Other Services at St Michael's

Sundays

1st Monday 10.00am

First Steps

2nd Sunday 4:30pm

Messy Church

3rd Sunday 6:00pm

Choral Evensong

Last Sunday 12:30pm

Holy Baptism

Music in the Benefice

St Michael's Church

Wednesdays

6.00pm Junior Choir Rehearsal

7:00pm Senior Choir Rehearsal
(except on the Weds before 1st Sunday)

Friday before 1st Sunday

6:30pm Music Group & Senior
Choir Rehearsal

Baptism Preparation

First Saturday 10:30am

at St Michael's

Bells Practice

Every Thurs 7:30pm, St Michael's

CHILDREN'S SERVICES & ACTIVITIES

Family Praise

Sunday

3rd March

10am St Michael's



First Steps

Monday 4th March

10am—11.30am

St Michael's

Come and join us at our ...

MESSY CHURCH

for craft, story, song and food on

GOOD FRIDAY 29TH MARCH

2—3.30 pm -

A Walk through the Stories of Holy Week

in St Michael's Church Ages 0-11 yrs. All Welcome.

Timings as normal on Sunday 14th April: 4.30—5.15 pm



Deadlines!

For April 2024 Magazine: Deadline is

SUNDAY 17th March

Please send articles to the Parish Office

office@stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk

Pew Sheet:

every Thursday

7:30am

Contact

Parish Office



DIOCESE OF LICHFIELD

New Vicar for Whittington, Weeford and Hints

After a vacancy period of some three years, I am delighted to pass on the news that the Revd Ashley Hines will become the new Vicar of Whittington with Weeford and Hints. Exact timings are yet to be agreed, but Ashley should arrive during the middle of this year. Ashley is currently Team Vicar in the Great



Yarmouth Team Ministry. Following her ordination in 2015, Ashley served as a hospital chaplain in Burton-on-Trent, and as a curate in Fradley before moving to Great Yarmouth, so our region is very familiar to her. We very much look forward to Ashley joining us later this year, though we also bear in mind her clergy colleagues and parishioners in Great Yarmouth who will be sad to lose her. We pray for their search for a new incumbent which will now begin. More details regarding Ashley's arrival in our parishes will be shared in due course.

Simon Donnan, Lay Chair St Giles PCC

A Different Reflection from Chris Polhill

There are many different images of the cross, from different cultures and different experiences. The image of Jesus in St. Michaels altar window is very European for example. Here are four, **which speaks to you?**

From an African
culture



Angry Christ from Phillipines,
where people are disappeared



From a passive
Asian culture



Christa, Toronto



The Crucifixion

By John Stainer

Sunday 17th March 2024 at 7pm

St. Michael's Lichfield

Joseph Sneddon (tenor)

Peter Hawksworth (bass)

Thomas Adams (bass)

The Crucifixion: A Meditation on the Sacred Passion of the Holy Redeemer

is an oratorio for full choir and organ composed in 1887 by **John Stainer**, with text by WJ Sparrow Simpson. It relates the Biblical narrative of the Passion and Crucifixion of Jesus and features solos for tenor and bass. Stainer intended the piece to be sung by parish church choirs and included five hymns for the congregation to sing alongside the choir. The best known of these is “All for Jesus, all for Jesus”



When the piece is performed in churches, it is normal for it to be preceded by prayer and finished with a blessing. That will be the case when it takes place at St Michael's Church on **Sunday March 17th at 7—8pm.**

St Michael's Choir will be augmented by singers from St Chad's, Lichfield and St John, Wall.

Dementia Friendly Songs of Praise at Lichfield Cathedral

Our next dementia friendly service is on **Tuesday 23 April at 10.45am**. We will be joined by Tony Christie and by the Cathedral choristers. This service will be recorded for broadcast as BBC Songs of Praise at the start of Dementia Action Week. We are keen for anyone impacted in any way by dementia to join us.

Contact Canon David Primrose (email david.primrose@lichfield-cathedral.org) if you would like to come yourself or if you would like an invitation to pass on to any-one else who might be

The Gospel according to St John

Sunday 24th March at St Michael's Church, Lichfield

In partnership with St John's, St Chad's, Christ Church and St John's Hospital

Join us as we gather to hear the whole of St John's Gospel, with food and fellowship and by candlelight, as in the days of the early Church.

5pm food, 6pm start

Approximate finish 9.30pm

In the beginning was the word...

On Palm Sunday evening (24th March) at St Michael's we'll be reading the whole of St John's Gospel together, gathered with others from St John, Wall, Christ Church, St Chad's and St John's Hospital. We'll start with **food and fellowship at 5pm**, start **reading at 6pm** and with a coffee break we'll be **finished around 9.30pm** - come for as little or as long as you like. We'll read partly by candlelight, in the tradition of the early Church who gathered together in secret to hear the Good News. Please let the Rector know if you'd be willing to read a chapter, bake a cake, or bring a batch of soup in a big pot or slow cooker.

Large print copies of the magazine are available on request to the Parish Office

St Michael's Church Easter Flowers

**We will be decorating the church for Easter on
Saturday March 30th from 9.30am
and would welcome all who would like to help.**

If you wish to make a donation in memory of a loved one, please put the money, the name of the person and your message into a blue Gift Aid envelope and mark it Easter Flowers.

Many thanks

Anne Lingwood

The Children's Society

**A reminder to everyone with a home box that March is
our annual month for the collection, counting and
sending off of our contributions.**

Sonia Doidge and I are happy to receive boxes, cash and cheques (made out to The Children's Society) from the end of February and throughout March.

I will be at the 8:00am services, and Sonia will be at the 10:00 am services.

There is always information about the work of the Children's Society on the notice board at the back of St Michael's church.

Many thanks

Maureen Duff

Churches Together in Lichfield

Good Friday 29th March 2024

We gather at the cross together in unity to give testimony to the love of Christ for the whole world.

Walk of Witness

The route is as follows:-

1. Meet outside Whittington Pharmacy, 13B Main Street, Whittington WS14 9JU to depart at 8.15 am. and walk along Darnford Lane into Lichfield, arriving at **Boley Park Shopping Centre for the first service of praise and worship at 9.15 am.**
2. Walk along Roman Way, Boley Lane, Sturgeons Hill, Rotten Row, and across the A5127 to arrive at Backcester Lane (**top of the Three Spires Shopping Centre**) for the **second service of praise and worship at 10.00 am.**
3. Walk along Bakers Lane to Bore Street and gather outside the Guildhall for the third service of praise and worship.
4. Walk along Bore Street to the junction with Bird Street for the fourth service of praise and worship.
5. Walk along Bird Street and Market Street to the junction with Breadmarket Street (outside Doctor Johnson's birthplace) for the fifth service of praise and worship.

6. The walk is then completed by walking along Conduit Street and Tamworth Street to the **Methodist Church, where there will be the final service of praise and worship followed by refreshments.** (The service usually starts at 11 am.)

All are welcome to walk either the whole route or just part of it.

The three usual joining points (unless you want to do the whole walk—recommended at least once, if you are able) are Boley Park Shopping Centre at 9.15 am, top of Three Spires at 10 am and the Methodist Church in Tamworth Street if you just want to attend the service and refreshments.

The orders of service for each of the services of praise can be found on the Churches Together in Lichfield website at :

<https://www.churchestogetherinlichfield.co.uk/2024-good-friday-walk-of-witness-order-of-service.php>

If you require a hard copy, please contact the Parish Office.

Ecumenical Service/Reflection

7.30 pm. in Lichfield Cathedral led by The Reverend Sharon Greensmith, Master of St. John's, Lichfield.

Over the years this ecumenical gathering in the Cathedral, as Good Friday comes to an end, has taken many forms. It may be a service, it may be a reflection, but it has always proved a fitting ending to a special day in the church year.

Everyone is welcome.

WALKING GROUP

WHITTINGTON HEATH GOLF COURSE AREA

Leader: Brian Homewood (01543 255909 for any questions)
Date: Saturday 23rd March 2024
Start: 10.30am

Meeting point: Darnford Moors Car Park (accessed from the end of Ryknild Street close to the Tamworth Road traffic lights.)

Walk Details: We will walk through Darnford Park, passing the preparations for the re-routed canal that will go under the A38. Darnford Lane and Marsh Lane will take us to Whittington Heath Golf Course. We shall negotiate the HS2 preparations to cross the golf course, to the Tamworth Road. There are two potential ways back from there. The longest being along the Heart of England Way. It is probable we shall skirt the Golf Course on a woodland path and finish by walking along pavement by Tamworth Road. which will take us back over the A38. Assume the distance is around 3 miles. There will be road walking without pavement on Darnford Lane and Marsh Lane.

Lunch By finishing before 12.30pm those who wish can go to the Mothers' Union Lent Lunch in St Michael's church. (see poster on page 23)

beneficewalkinggroup@gmail.com

01543 262211

Film Club

at St Michael's Church

FREE ADMISSION AND REFRESHMENTS

Doors open at 1.30pm

The Great Escaper

with Michael Caine and Glenda Jackson

Based on the true story of 89-year old Bernard Jordan, who escaped from his care home to attend the 70th Anniversary of the D-Day Landings in France

Monday 4th March 2.00pm start

Tea/Coffee and cake will be served

at the interval

All Welcome

Living (2022)

(It's Never Too Late To Start)

with Bill Nighy

Set in 1953 [London](#), it depicts a bureaucrat in the county Public Works department (played by [Bill Nighy](#)) facing a fatal illness.

Monday 8th April 2.00pm start



**SAINT MICHAEL'S CHURCHYARD
WORKING PARTY**

We will be meeting on

**SATURDAY 16th
March**

from 10.00 a.m. to 12.30p.m.

**Refreshments (Tea/Coffee/Cake) will be
provided
during the Mid-Morning Break**

*We will be meeting every third Saturday,
so the dates going forward will be*

April 20th

May 18th, June 15th,

July 20th, August 17th

For more information please contact
Brenda Liptrot. Email:
brendaliptrot@outlook.com

FELLOWSHIP MEETING

We warmly invite you to a
Fellowship Meeting to be held in
St Michael's Church
Thursday 21st March
2:30 to 3:30pm.

There will be a short
Communion Service before the
meeting, 1:30 to 2:00pm.

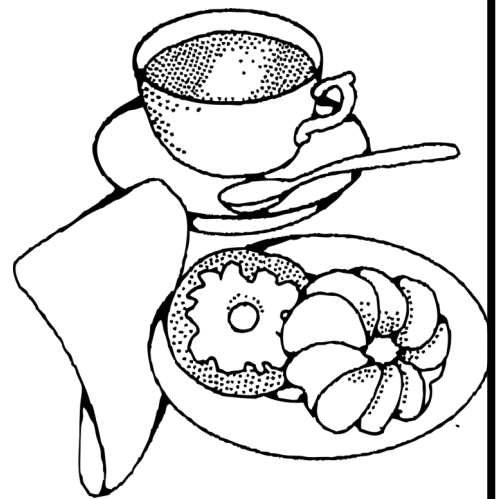
Anyone coming to the
Fellowship Meeting is invited
to join us

We hope you will come along
for a chat and a cuppa.

If you need transport please
contact Sue on 01543 415242 or
Brenda on 07980 011150.

Looking forward to seeing you on the 21st!

Sue and Brenda



Mothers' UNION

Christian care for families

Diocese of Lichfield

ST MICHAEL'S MOTHERS' UNION REPORT

Our February meeting concentrated on the MU Wave of Prayer, which links us with other branches throughout the world so that every day some groups will be praying for each other. Our link partners are in Uganda, Nigeria, India and South Sudan and readings described the work they do in their communities. Matthew, Chapter 6 teaches us how to pray by praising God, repenting of our sins, asking for the needs of others beside ourselves and yielding to God's will. We finished the service with the prayer written by our founder, Mary Sumner, "All this day, O Lord, let me touch as many lives as possible for thee; and every life I touch, do thou by thy spirit quicken, whether through the word I speak, the prayer I breathe, or the life I live. Amen." After the customary cuppa and biscuit, June enlisted helpers to prepare posies for Mothering Sunday and we made arrangements for the forthcoming Lent Lunch on March 23rd, so put the date in your diary. There will be a choice of soups, followed by tea and cake. How could you resist? Also in March, there will be a Meditation for Lent on the 11th and a Lady Day service on the 25th. *Betty Lyne*

THE POWER OF UNITY AND RECONCILIATION

Claudette Kigeme, Mothers' Union Provincial Coordinator of MU Burundi explains how Mothers' Union has been changing people's lives in Burundi for the last 20 years

It is with a huge sense of pride, delight, achievement and above all, thanks to God that we share the impact of our Mothers' Union

Burundi Literacy and Financial Education Programme over the last 20 years. I have been involved with this programme from the beginning and can genuinely say it has transformed the lives of so many people in communities across Burundi.

A profound impact

When the programme started, it targeted the most vulnerable people in the community, regardless of faith, sex, ethnic group or political party. It was clearly an inclusive programme made for community members, aiming at the empowerment of the most vulnerable, especially women. At the time, it was seen merely as a community development programme. No one would have thought it would produce the life-changing impact and spiritual empowerment that we are seeing today.

1,291 facilitators have been trained in multiple subjects, including participatory learning approaches, adult literacy training, business skills, savings and loans association formation, parenting skills, advocacy, peace building, trauma healing and effective communication. 165,416 participants have benefited directly from this training in 1,289 communities across Burundi. What is even more staggering is that 144,103 people are now accredited as literate according to our national standards of literacy! That is almost 3% of the entire literate Burundi population. It is phenomenal and shows how partnership working and investing long term in programmes can be so effective.

Changing attitudes

The programme started in 2000 when our country was facing conflict and socio-political problems. There was fear, hatred, suspicion and discrimination among people living in the same community. The idea of sitting together and working together did not seem possible for some people. Today, love, trust, unity and fellowship are the first characteristics of those community members.

What happened and how?

First, despite the anti-proselytization policy, people knew the identity of people serving them: Mothers' Union. They recognised the love and care for those in need without distinction, and they started to be aware of the love of God.

Second, those in the programme were mobilised to analyse their problems and find solutions themselves, using resources available to them. Some had never realised that their fellows constitute the most valuable resources for their blessing. Discovering that reality brought a huge transformation in their lives. They started to value each other and love each other. They understood the power of unity and reconciliation. They started to plan together and journey together, understanding that everyone has a role to play.

Third, they started to discover that God had given them different talents that could be used to transform their communities. Like Mandela said, 'Poverty is man made and poverty can be eradicated.' People discovered that if everyone brings his/her talents, their community improved. They started saving together, deepening trust, compassion and mutual care. Collaboration replaced discrimination.

Finally, when people became literate, the first material they started reading was the bible, which deepened their faith and transformed their lives. Women were no longer cheated at the markets and have started their own businesses, having their own agency in their family lives and their community. As well as personal transformation, many committed to become agents of change and join leadership positions.

Despite the transformational results, there is still more to be done. More communities to reach, more lives to be changed. But for now, let us rejoice and give thanks to God for all that has been achieved over the last 20 years through this life-changing programme.

'The programme is life-changing... we women have become the light of our families' MU leader, Diocese of Matana

'The programme is giving a voice to the voiceless' Female pastor

'My wife used to ask for permission to go and participate in the SLA and I would refuse. Whenever she asked for money for food and I did not have it, I would beat her. She decided to join without letting me know. Then I started seeing changes... she became cleaner...she started dressing better. Then she bought a goat and then a bicycle. I also decided to join. Our house was comparable to a chicken coop... we now have built a brick house with a tin roof.'
Male participant, Mukungu community, Diocese of Makamba

Mothers' Union also work with local communities to deliver this life-changing literacy programme in the DRC, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan and Sudan

MOTHERS' UNION

Please support our

LENT LUNCH

in St Michael's church

Saturday 23 March 12-2pm

Soup, roll, cake + drink £7

Knowle Lodge Open Garden

I have a newspaper cutting from The (Lichfield) Mercury going back to June 7th 2012. The article provides good publicity to the garden at Knowle Lodge in aid of Macmillan Nurses. St Johns Church, Wall has been supporting this event by providing refreshments for as long as Kate Cooper the owner of the garden has been supporting this scheme. The garden is open with the Yellow Book Garden Scheme.



The National Garden Scheme opens privately owned **gardens in** England, Northern **Ireland**, Wales and the Channel Islands on selected dates for charity. It was founded in 1927. The scheme has **raised £67** million since it began and normally opens over 3,500 gardens a year.

Originally the admission fees raised money for district nurses, although the creation of the National Health Scheme in 1948 changed the nature of the support required. In 1980, The National Garden Scheme Charitable Trust was launched as an independent charity with

Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother as patron. The current patron is King Charles.

The impact of COVID -19 was the only time I remember Knowle Lodge was not able to be opened.

Knowle Lodge Garden is open early in the year to show off the beautiful display of daffodils. Visitors from surrounding areas are glad to have an opportunity to take advantage of this early opening date to view a garden in springtime.

Knowle Lodge Open Garden is open on Sunday 24th March and Sunday 12th May 1-5pm. *Hilary Barker*

Growing Old Gracefully

This is the transcript of a sermon preached by the Revd Stephen Barton at St Michael's on Candlemas.

For some time now, I've had the sense that the world is passing me by. Take car parks. I used to be quite confident parking the car and slotting the required coins into the parking meter. But these days it's not so simple. You'll probably need your credit card. You may have to key in your vehicle registration number. And, for electric car owners, you may need your mobile phone so that you can access the relevant App. Hospital car parks are especially notorious—as if they want you to have a heart attack before reaching the front door! Or take phones. I've never been very good with phones, probably because we didn't have one in the house when I was growing up. But then came mobiles and, of course, mobile phones aren't just phones. They're mini-computers so sophisticated that it's taking me years to learn how to use properly!

What all this boils down to for me is that I'm starting to feel old. The world is changing faster than ever before and I'm struggling to keep up. And in any case, I'm now into my seventies, and that's got me thinking!

So I want to talk about *growing old from a Christian point of view*: that's to say, *growing old in Christ*. Modern society invests lots of time and money in trying to *postpone* the ageing process—but also to capitalize on it. Think of our *values*. The measure of beauty and vitality is the person of unblemished complexion, youthful appearance and sexual allure. Typically, it's women more than men who bear the burden. On this scale of values, ageing is *a problem to be solved*. Symptomatic is the fact that, whereas, in times past, the elderly were generally respected and accorded honourable social roles, these days, they are often placed apart in care homes—and not always for their good.

It's important, then, to talk about ageing, and doing so in the light of faith. I do so, because how we respond will say a lot about the scope and quality of our love, and about what it means to belong to each other as the *multi-generational* Body of Christ here in this benefice.

Perhaps the first thing to say about getting old is that *it's natural and inevitable*. Our bodies and minds start to wear out: eyesight weakens; hearing becomes an issue; breathing gets heavier; loo stops become more frequent; memory fades; and our sense of our mortality grows. Last year, I lost two of my closest friends, one, not yet seventy, the other, just seventy-five.

The ancients thought about these matters a lot. They reflected on our subjection to the passing of time, the various life-stages through which we pass, and the qualities of character, which allow

the burden of age to be borne with equanimity. In the Bible, various wisdom sayings express something similar: most famously, the Book of Ecclesiastes, according to which, growing old isn't something to be resisted. It just is what it is in time's unending cycle: 'For everything there is a season, and a time for every matter under heaven: a time to be born, and a time to die; a time to plant, and a time to pluck up what is planted'

Given then, that getting old is natural—built into our DNA—faith responds by saying that growing old is *an expression of divine providence*. It's part of the way God's creation works. Therefore, just as we respond to creation with thanksgiving and joy, so too should be our response to growing old. To have lived into old age is a privilege, after all, and we can receive it by faith *as a gift*.

Accepting such a view isn't necessarily an easy thing to do. Especially when our sprightly mind tells us one thing and our creaking body tells a different story, it's easy to live *in denial*, as if we'll go on forever, instead of facing up to the experience of increasing weakness, vulnerability and loss.

But Christian faith gives us the resources to accept what God has ordained. If we believe in the loving goodness of God in creation, if we believe that God is with us by His Spirit, and if we believe that our end is in God, then space is made for a kind of *conversion*. We can move in our hearts and minds from denial to acceptance, from fear to trust, and from grief to joy. I believe that acceptance, trust and joy are hallmarks of Christian life—something which becomes ever more important the older we get.

A second thing to say is that, in the providence of God, growing old is *still a matter of f growing!* Because ageing takes time, and

because time is a gift, growing old—while often hugely challenging—is an *opportunity* both for continuing growth and for ongoing contributions to the common good. It's not coincidental that in biblical times, old age was particularly associated both with divine blessing and with becoming wise, such that the *old* became community *elders*. Indeed, the Bible is full of stories of the special role played by venerable men and women.

Listen to what Paul says about Abraham:

He did not weaken in faith when he considered his own body, which was as good as dead (for he was about a hundred years old), or when he considered the barrenness of Sarah's womb. No distrust made him waver concerning the promise of God, but he grew strong in his faith as he gave glory to God, being fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised.' (Rom 4.19-21).

According to Paul, Abraham's age was not a problem. It was a time for his faith to grow and his horizons to expand by accepting God's call to do something new.

So, in biblical terms, getting old is far from being a particular problem; and it's not addressed as such. Rather, old age is taken for granted; and men and women of senior years, whose faith has been tested and whose wisdom has increased over time, play major roles in the story of salvation.

But here's a third thing about growing old. So far, I've talked mainly as if ageing is an *individual* matter. That's only part of the story. For age and ageing are *social* matters—evident especially in the way we tend to group people by age, or in the way we mark our life stages by celebrations which, if we reach one hundred, might even include a letter from the King! Ageing, here, is not just a matter of chronology: it's a *social practice*.

That's especially true for people of faith. You and I are not just individual bodies: we are the Body of Christ. So my living and ageing and dying is not just about me. It's about *you*. It's about *us*. You and I are growing old in Christ as members *together* of the Body of Christ.

The ramifications of this are far-reaching. For a start, it means that *our age doesn't matter in the way society performs age!* Who we are and how we are valued isn't dependent on how young or old we are, or whether we belong to Generation X or Y or Z, because our true identity and value derive from our *life in Christ*. If in society -at-large, age is played out in terms of a pecking order of power and recognition, in the Christian body, *age loses its determining significance*. What matters is our belonging to each other in the Body of Christ.

Let me finish with some practical implications. First, there should be *no place for prejudice* on the basis of age in the Church. Whereas ageism expresses division and exclusion, baptism—as a sacrament open equally to people of any age—signifies unity and inclusion, that God's grace in Christ is *not age-restricted*. It's important, then, to give that understanding positive expression by the respect we show to the elderly and by the attention we give to the wisdom which the years have bestowed upon them. Second, growing old isn't a condition and time of life of which we need be fearful, or about which we should feel shame. Like the changing of the seasons, the passing of one generation making way for another is how God's providence in creation works. Rather than fear, our calling is to faithfulness after the example of people like Abraham.

Of course, one kind of faithfulness is to know *when to let go*, when to relinquish roles and responsibilities so that others may play their part, or even if there's no obvious successor.

That takes humility and self-knowledge, a recognition that ‘I am not indispensable’—beautifully expressed by Simeon in the *Nunc Dimittis*: ‘Master, now you are dismissing your servant in peace, according to your word ...’ (Lk 2.29-31).

Third and finally, if we’re tempted to think that we’re no longer of any worth, we’re able to say, No! We are of *inestimable* worth because we are members together of the Body of Christ. Even if my mind is broken and I don’t know who I am any more—who I am is *given to me* in baptism and Eucharist and is sustained in the fellowship of the Church. It is you who tell and show me who I am and who I’m called to be. And it is I, by grace, who do so for you.

I haven’t spoken of death and dying because it’s too easy for reflection on growing old to allow feelings about death to dominate. Suffice it to say that the Christian story is one of *resurrection hope* grounded upon the faithfulness of God. This is how Paul puts things:

So we do not lose heart. Even though our outer nature is wasting away, our inner nature is being renewed day by day. For this slight momentary affliction is preparing us for an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure.’ (2 Cor 4. 16-17).

So, to the One in whom we live, move and have our being, *whatever our age*, be all honour and glory, now and forever. Amen.

**Distribution Day for the April magazine will be
Wednesday 27th March**



Staffordshire
Wildlife Trust

**LICHFIELD
WILDLIFE GROUP**



A talk by Jane Arnold

Tuesday 2 April 7:45 p.m.

Wade Street Church

Frog Lane, Lichfield WS13 6HL

Admission: £3.50 (under-16s free)

Under-18s must be accompanied by a responsible adult.

Contact (01543) 257812



www.facebook.com/lichfieldwildlifegroup



More views of St Michael's Churchyard
with thanks to Ted Green

From the Registers

| Baptisms | | |
|-----------------|-------------|------------------|
| St Michael's | 28 January | William Sargeant |
| St Michael's | 25 February | Frederick Duggan |

| Weddings | | |
|-----------------|--|--|
|-----------------|--|--|

| Funerals | | |
|-----------------|------------|------------------------|
| St Michael's | 9 January | Indiana Enis Croft |
| St Michael's | 22 January | Margaret Frances Storr |
| St John's | 23 January | Margaret Ann Kinson |
| St John's | 30 January | Aleen Perry |
| St John's | 1 February | Christine Miles |
| St John's | 9 February | Michael Phillips |

Bible Readings

Sunday 3rd March
3rd Sunday of Lent
[Purple]

Exodus 20. 1-17
John 2.13-22

Sunday 10th March
4th Sunday of Lent
Mothering Sunday
[Purple]

Exodus 2.1-10
John 19.25-27

Sunday 17th March
5th Sunday of Lent
Passion Sunday
[Purple]

Hebrews 5,5-10
John 12.20-33

Sunday 24th March
Palm Sunday
[Red]

Isaiah 50.4-9a
Mark 11,1-11

Thursday 28 March
Maundy Thursday
(White)

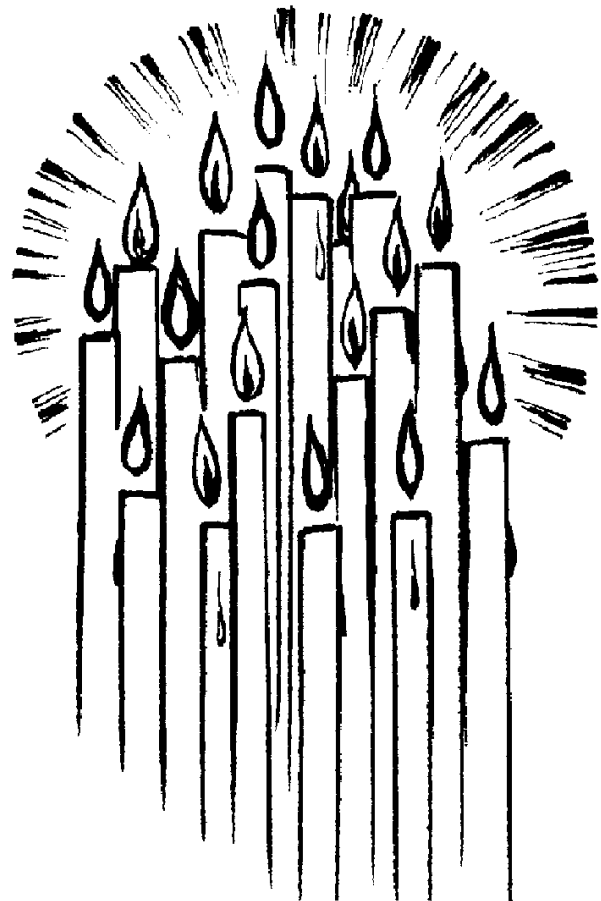
John 13.1-17

Friday 29 March
Good Friday
(Hanging Removed, Red for Liturgy)

John 18.1-end of 19

Sunday 31 March
Easter Sunday
(Gold or White)

Acts 10.34-43
John 20.1-18



St Michael's Rota March 2024

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Sunday 08.00 am | 3 March | 10 March | 17 March | 24 March | 31 March |
| Sidesperson | Brian Smith | Brian Smith | Brian Smith | Brian Smith | Brian Smith |

| | | | | | |
|----------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Sunday 10.00 am | 3 March | 10 March | 17 March | 24 March | 31 March |
| | Family Praise | Mothering Sunday | Family Communion | Palm Sunday | Easter Sunday |
| Sidespersons | Maureen Brand Mike Jones | Viv and Stephen Oliver | Judy and Mike Godfrey | Ted Green Audrey Dudley | Maureen Brand Enid Barry |
| Reader | | | | Ted Green | Angela Burgess |
| Servers | | Kay Martin Elizabeth Allen | Kay Martin | Kay Martin Elizabeth Salt | Kay Martin |
| Intercessor | | | | Trevor James | |
| Coffee | Anne Whatson Brenda Eley | Sonia Doidge Lesley Allen | June Frayn Betty Lyne | Judy Godfrey Angela Burgess | Elizabeth Allen Trish Jones |

| | | | | |
|--------------------|---|--|--|---|
| | 25 March Monday 7.00 pm Compline | 26 March Tuesday 7.00 pm Compline | 28 March Maundy Thursday 7.00 pm Commemoration of Last Supper | Easter Eve Vigil Saturday 30 March 6.00 pm |
| Sidesperson | Ted Green | Maureen Brand | Lyn and David Shiel | Maureen Brand |
| Reader | | | Nigel Oakley | |
| Server | | | Kay Martin Elizabeth Allen | Kay Martin Elizabeth Allen |
| Intercessor | | | Nigel Oakley | |

| | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Sunday 6.00 pm | 3 March | 10 March | 17 March | 24 March | 31 March |
| | No service | No service | Evensong | No service | |
| Sidesperson | | | Ray Allen | | |
| Reader | | | Margaret Freat | | |

FLOODLIGHTING

Sponsor St Michael's floodlights to mark a special occasion or remember a loved one! Your donation will brighten up the skies over Lichfield for the night.

Contact the United Benefice Office on 01543



MEMORIAL BOOK

Having the name of a loved one written in our Memorial Book is another way of remembering their life. The Book is kept in the case in the Prayer Corner and the pages are turned twice a week, so that names are visible through the glass on the date of their death. It costs £10 to insert a name. Please contact the Parish Office on 01543-262211 or stmichaellichfield@gmail.com if you would like an application form.

ADVERTISING IN THIS MAGAZINE

If you would like to advertise here, the prices per year are:

Full page £280

Half Page £150

Quarter Page £85

Eighth Page £50

Please contact the office

 01543 262211

 office@stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk

Titan roof care

A family run roofing business with over 30 years of experience.

- **GRP fibre glass flat roof**
 - **New roofs**
 - **Chimney repairs**
- **Fascias, soffits & guttering**
- **Roof repair & services**

No job too big, or too small

For a free quotation

Call Joseph

free phone 0800 696 5118 / 07378 857054

Email: josephfollows@gmail.com

CENTRAL GARAGE

(LICHFIELD) LTD

QUEEN STREET, LICHFIELD, STAFFORDSHIRE, WS13 6QD
info@centralgaragelichfield.co.uk

A family run business established for over 75 years.
We not only service your car, we can offer the following:

- **Quality Body Repair Work**
- **Engine Diagnostic Work**
- **MOT Testing Station**
- **Collection & Delivery Service**
- **Courtesy Cars**

FREE MINI VALET WITH EVERY SERVICE



01543 262826



HOME VISIT PHYSIOTHERAPY

For ALL your physiotherapy needs, including:

- Post-Operative Rehabilitation
- Neurological Rehabilitation, for conditions such as Stroke
- Improving mobility and fitness
- Relief from Musculoskeletal injuries, such as back and neck pain



T: 07884 281623

E: enquiries@threespiresphysiotherapy.co.uk
www.threespiresphysiotherapy.co.uk

P.J. NEVILLE MEMORIALS

Hand carved quality
memorials. Renewals.
Additional inscriptions.

House numbers.

Home visits and brochure at no
extra cost.

Willow Court, Tamworth
Road, Lichfield, Staffs.

WS14 9HD

Telephone and fax:

01543 263440

Our family would like to
help your family.

We are an independent, family
business from Lichfield.

At your service 24 hours.



House of Minster Funeral Home,
26 Tamworth Street, Lichfield, WS13 6JJ

enquiries@jukesfuneralservices.com

www.jukesfuneralservices.com

01543 415050

G. A. CANNELL MEMORIALS

(Lichfield)

**Memorials; House Names;
Renovations; Plaques**

Curborough Hall Farm, Watery
Lane, Lichfield WS13 8ES

Tel: (01543) 256395

Email:

info@cannellmemorials.com

Open: Mon-Thurs 9am - 3.30pm

Fri: 9am - 1.00pm

Saturday: By Appointment only

www.cannellmemorials.com

Who's Who

| | |
|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: center;">St Michaels PCC</p> <p>Churchwardens: Sue Jones 415242 Brenda Liptrot 07980 011150</p> <p>Assistant Wardens: June Frayn 264920 David Easton 255308 Stephen Oliver 258054.</p> <p>Treasurer: Viv Oliver 258054</p> <p>PCC Secretary: Veronica Morris</p> <p>Stewardship Recorder: Viv Oliver 258054</p> <p>Electoral Roll Officer: Mike Godfrey 264255</p> <p>Safeguarding: Maureen Brand 264880</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">St John's PCC</p> <p>Churchwardens: Pat Owen 410826 John Alsop 480240</p> <p>Assistant Churchwarden: Christine Higgs 410351 Linda Rubisch 481294</p> <p>Treasurer: Paul Wright 01543 483230</p> <p>PCC Secretary: Christine Higgs 410351</p> <p>Assistant Treasurer Linda Rubisch 481294</p> <p>PCC Lay Vice Chair: Christine Higgs 410351</p> <p>Electoral Roll: Angie King office@stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">St Michael's Church</p> <p>Vergers: Lynn Rock 252634 or 07765 312411</p> <p>Sacristan: Kay Martin 268318 kay.martin8@btinternet.com</p> <p>Sacristan Administrator: Maggie Easton 255308</p> <p>Organist and Choirmaster: Dudley Ray 07847 643373 dudleyrayuk@yahoo.co.uk</p> <p>Music Group: Richard Brooks 07918 906 350</p> <p>Pastoral Care: Revd Helen Barton 257692</p> <p>Flowers: Brenda Liptrot 07980 011150</p> <p>Junior Praise: Viv Oliver 258054</p> <p>Bell ringers: Gillian Eastwood 07568134115 Thursdays, 7:30pm to 8:55pm. gillieastwood@gmail.com</p> <p>Mothers Union: Elizabeth Allen 477171</p> | <p style="text-align: center;">St John's Church, Wall</p> <p>Vergers: Linda Rubisch 481294 Angie King office@stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk</p> <p>Safeguarding: Maureen Brand 264880</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Other Useful Numbers</p> <p>St Michael's School: 227425</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Parish Magazine</p> <p>Magazine Distributor: Steve Oliver 07872 673991 email: vivoliver@ntlworld.com</p> <p>Magazine Editor: Rowan Hawksworth 07436869891 Row.holt@outlook.com</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center;">Scouting and Guiding</p> <p>Group Scout Leader Carl Hall 07988 685378 chair@7thlichfield.org.uk</p> <p>Rainbows: Becky Bickley 07703 671568 Vicki Davies Friend 07970 549284 Hannah Heath 07854 824443</p> <p>Brownies: Julie Cragg 301098</p> <p>Guides: Lisa Webb 07900 164587</p> | |