

CHURCH NOTICES

29th March
5th Sunday of Lent

STAYING IN TOUCH

It is very sad that at such a difficult time we cannot meet together in church for fellowship and worship. **Both our churches are now closed for any visitors and for private prayer.** In every other crisis the church has been there and open for people to come to and be supported by others. We do not know how long this state of affairs will last and we need to make sure that we care for each other and our neighbours as much as we possibly can.

There is a real danger of loneliness and isolation. To help with this we are going to do a number of things including regular mailings and additions to the church website <https://www.stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk/>

The April Parish magazine was printed but the latest restrictions have mean that it cannot be distributed. Instead we have put the magazine on the website and emailed out to as many as we can. We are actively trying to match our email list with the distribution list for the magazine. In the meantime if you know anyone who would normally receive the magazine or you think would like it please pass it on to them via email.

If you are in any kind of need please let the Rector, Simon (☎ 253010) know. The office Phone is not currently being regularly monitored. The ministry team and others are continuing a ministry by telephone to keep in touch.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

At such a time it is very difficult to know what to do to give life some shape and also keep faith and prayer alive so as well as looking at the resources for prayer we have made available (see above) here are some practical suggestions.

1. Look out for your near neighbours. If you cannot visit them then ring them or put a note through their door asking them how they are and offering to help (if you can). You might also assure them of your prayers.
2. Stay in touch with family and friends using your preferred means of communication
3. It is the season of Lent and soon it will be Easter. There is still time to practice some of the essential Lenten disciplines: Bible reading and reflection, prayer, a bit of self- denial (though, at the moment, you may think enough is being denied!) and giving to charity. That last one is most important. Charities will be hard hit by not being able to collect money and yet the need will not have gone away and may well increase. So why not make a donation to your favourite charity? It could simply be the money you will be saving by not going out.
4. If you can, get out of the house and go for a walk regularly. St Michael's church is surrounded by a large churchyard which, at the moment, is full of daffodils and the bluebells are not far behind. As you walk, pray and reflect and give thanks to God for the gift of life and your blessings.

LENT STUDY COURSE FOR ST MICHAEL'S AND ST JOHN'S *Caring for God's World*

Though we have had to cancel the discussion groups all resources are now available on the website. <https://www.stmichaelmaryjohn.org.uk/lent-resources-2020.html>

VOLUNTEERING AND CHARITIES

LICHFIELD FOOD BANK. Thank you for your continuing support for Lichfield Foodbank. **Please continue to give items for the Food Bank.** There is likely to be greater demand than ever.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT. Support Staffordshire are looking for volunteers to provide help during the Coronavirus epidemic. If you would like to volunteer please go to <https://www.supportstaffordshire.org.uk/covid-19-support/coronavirus-community-support-effort>

IDEAS

Get Writing – Diana Baker

I never knew I was a budding writer until I found myself with time on my hands when I first came to Lichfield. Over the past six years, I have written seven novels, half written a further five and completed the history of the brickworks in Devon which my family managed for three generations. Writing your biography or recording your family history is a good way into writing and preserves your memories for future generations. All you need, is to be able to write or type with one, or in my case, two fingers. Lots of people keep a diary which will help as a resource, when writing history, as well as photographs. Alongside your own memories, there will be lots of family stories which have been passed on through the generations.

It can be difficult to know where to start and it might be best to “start at the very beginning” which we all know is “a very good place to start”. What are your earliest memories? Think about your family and the house or houses where you grew up. Describe the rooms and what took place there, the furniture, the stove or cooker and how meals were prepared and clothes washed. Think about your junior and secondary schools and what you studied, your classmates, the building, the teachers. It would not be practical or interesting to write everything down so, think about what or who was memorable and worth recording? Where did you grow up? What did the town or village look like? The church, the pub, the shops the sports grounds. Who were the local characters? What or who made the biggest impression on you? Recall a time when you were proud of something you achieved or embarrassed or when you got up to mischief or did something which really made you laugh. Just by asking those questions, you will have all thought of something or someone worth recording. Ask your family members or friends about what they remember to build up a bigger picture. From childhood, progress to your college or first job, where you worked and what you did, your wages and work colleagues. It’s not just worth recording this for your family, it’s worth recording it for social history. You may be the only person who holds those memories. I realised if I did not write the history of the brickworks in Devon, no one would, because apart from my sister and I, there was no one left to remember or record it.

If you have an idea for a story, then have a go. It helps to begin with a framework so you know what your plot is and how you want the story to start and conclude. I always find that is the easy part and filling in the middle takes more thought. You then need to create your characters, settings and timeframe, real or imaginary. Researching for a novel can be fascinating, rewarding and time consuming. I have found myself researching anything and everything from building dry stone walls to what theatre productions took place at the Minnack theatre in Cornwall, to what people ate in C18 Italy. I am now quite an expert in brick production too.

If a novel, biography or history do not interest you then try poetry. You don’t have to write about facts or memories or personal or social history. Poetry allows you to write about ideas and the abstract and rhythms and patterns and love and loss and spirituality. Reading a few poems first from different poets from across different centuries from George Herbert to Caroline Duffy, may help inspire you

Good luck.