

# 4 WHAT'S ON IN ST. MICHAEL'S

## SERVICES IN FEBRUARY AND MARCH

St Michael's is a Church of England Church, and our main morning service is at 10.30 am. The first Sunday of the month is a shorter all age service, and on the other Sundays children leave for Sunday school after about 15 minutes. There is a crèche for under 3's. On the second and fourth Sunday of the month the service includes communion.

The evening service at 6.30pm is quieter and more reflective, with communion on the first and third Sundays of the month.

Book of Common Prayer Communion service is at 9am on the fourth Sunday of each month.

Raise the Praise on the third Sunday of the month at 5 pm, a half hour service designed for children under 8 and their families, which is followed by tea in the hall.

## LOOKING AHEAD

Church Away weekend at Ashburnham May 20-22nd – Deep in the beautiful Sussex countryside; a chance to relax, have fun, get to know each other and enjoy the countryside.

2011 Holiday Club 28-31st July for 4 – 11 year olds at St Michael's church.

## POEM - MOTHERING SUNDAY

**M**other's Day is the best  
**O**n their bed having a  
**r**est  
**T**ired Mothers but yet  
**H**appy  
**H**ugging all their children  
**w**ith a **big** grin on their face  
**E**very hour making cakes  
**R**emembering the day  
**I**n their living room hav-  
**ing** a snooze  
**N**aughty children watch-  
**ing** the news  
**G**etting themselves a cup  
**o**f tea

**S**aying Sunday is the best day  
**U**sually up early in the  
**m**orning making us  
**breakfast**  
**N**othing but trouble from  
**the children**  
**D**azzling all year!  
**A**ways lovely and kind  
**Y**et asleep tucked up  
**in bed**

By our junior Messenger Reporters: Ben Croucher aged 8 and Ethan Christie aged 6.

Mothering Sunday is on 3rd April when the children present all mothers, grandmothers, aunts and indeed all the ladies of the congregation with a small bunch of flowers at the all age morning service.

# St Michael & ALL ANGELS

## FROM THE REGISTERS

Funeral in December  
Barbara Baggett

Funerals in January  
Martin Symes  
Sheila O'Neill  
Margaret Miller

Funeral in February  
Joan Lowe

## ASK SEEK KNOCK

Why do we pray together? Because Jesus told us to. What do we expect when we pray together? Jesus says "ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you". Because prayer works.

The next prayer meeting will be on Thursday 3rd February at 8.15 – 9.30 p.m. in the Church Hall and then on Thursday 3rd March at the same time – you are welcome.

If you have any specific requests for prayer or would like someone to listen and pray with you, please do contact Sandy Christie, our Vicar on 020 8852 5287. All calls will be treated in the strictest confidence.

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# St Michael & ALL ANGELS

# THE MESSENGER

## A REVOLUTIONARY GUTSY FEMINIST

The Editor of the Messenger asked me to write this article because some of her friends have suggested that Christianity has led to women being oppressed or marginalised. I am pleased to be asked, because I believe the historical truth is quite the opposite. It is precisely the Christian influence on our culture that has led to women being seen as equals in modern western society, in a way that it is still rare in most cultures without a strong Christian heritage.

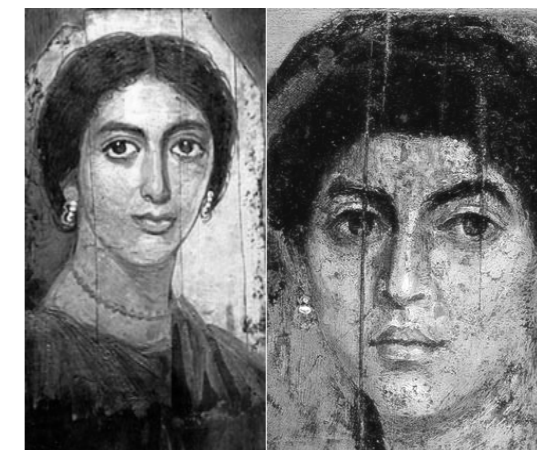
The Bible starts with a great statement of equality in Genesis 1: both male and female are made in God's image. Although the Old Testament sometimes reflects and sometimes challenges the patriarchal structures universal in ancient societies, when Jesus comes his approach can only be described as revolutionary, reflecting that fundamental equality of the sexes.

At a time when women were excluded from Biblical study, the gospels often record Jesus speaking to, teaching, and helping women publicly and openly. Jesus takes women seriously, and has some of his most profound spiritual conversations with them, including his longest recorded individual conversation, with the Samaritan women at the well.

Luke tells us the names of several women who followed Jesus and supported him financially, something unprecedented at the time. Women have a natural place in Jesus' teaching: the woman mixing yeast into dough represents God's kingdom, the one searching for a coin reflects God's search for the lost, and the determined widow demanding justice from a lazy judge shows we must be persistent in prayer. The writer Naomi Wolf (not a Christian) called Jesus 'a revolutionary gutsy feminist'.

Perhaps most surprising of all, all four gospels have women as the first witnesses of the resurrection, at a time when they were not allowed to give evidence in court. No-one would make that up. The only conclusion people could come to was that was how it had really happened, and therefore God had chosen them for that vital role.

It's not surprising that this new dignity and status made the early church very attractive to women. In Graeco-Roman culture female infanticide was common, and abortion often led to the death of the mother. Girls received little or no education, and under Athenian law a woman was classified as a child regardless of age, and therefore the legal property of some man all her life.



Depictions of early Christian women \*

The Princeton sociologist Rodney Stark in his book *The Rise of Christianity* suggests that its appeal to women was a key factor in its growth. They were recognised as equal to men, with the same spiritual destiny and equal rights in marriage. Christian prohibition of polygamy, divorce, infanticide and abortion contributed substantially to the well-being of women and produced a much higher birth rate in the Christian community.

Of course Christians, like everyone else, have made significant mistakes in the relations between the sexes down the centuries, and the debates still continue. But as the media report the ongoing divisions within the church over issues like women bishops, the real story, which you won't hear, is that only the rise in women's status brought by Christianity has led to the debate happening at all.

Sandy Christie

\*Pictures from [www.womeninthebible.net](http://www.womeninthebible.net)

## St Michael's: making time for the things that matter

St Michael & All Angels Church  
1 Pond Road  
London SE3 9JL  
[www.se3.org.uk](http://www.se3.org.uk)

Vicar  
Rev. Sandy Christie  
2 Pond Road  
London SE3 9JL  
020 8852 5287  
[ar.christie@virgin.net](mailto:ar.christie@virgin.net)

Administrator  
Marion Lane  
020 8852 1205  
[church@se3.org.uk](mailto:church@se3.org.uk)

Careforce Worker  
John Contreras  
020 8297 8997  
[youth@se3.org.uk](mailto:youth@se3.org.uk)

Editor  
Jane Bendall  
[editor@se3.org.uk](mailto:editor@se3.org.uk)  
Technical Support  
Leonie Macaulay

# 2

## A NEW TOMORROW

Afghanistan: unfamiliar, different, wild, high rolling plateaus, rushing rivers, mountainous, beautiful, empty, dangerous.....some of our perceptions from cosy Blackheath. On 9th January Francesca Stidston, a member of St Michael's congregation, flew to Afghanistan to take up a position with the Department of International Development; her remit to improve local services and support local government in the provinces of Helmand and Kandahar- daunting perhaps, but Francesca is remarkably calm and philosophical.

Why Afghanistan? She has been to many places in the course of her work, mostly on short assignments – taking in such countries as Bangladesh, Ghana, Pakistan and a very happy stay in Tanzania, as well as visiting Afghanistan before – she is not sure why herself, but it was the place where she felt a strong calling to return.

She will be based in the British Embassy compound with other people dedicated to improving living conditions in the country. Francesca will spend time in both Kandahar and Helmand Provinces finding a way of coordinating the local, very traditional, tribal system of councillors more closely with central government. Her remit will be to improve the most basic and fundamental of services; providing clean running water, improving health programmes in the villages and concentrating on education and schools; all based on the local community's priorities.

She will be part of the UK Government's effort to help bring basic services into areas which have recently been stabilised. Francesca has seen the British military at work and she feels these young people deserve back up and support. In other words she is "eager to do her bit".

We shall have an opportunity to keep in touch with Francesca throughout the year she is in Afghanistan. The rather unusual pattern of her work means that for six weeks there will be solid and continuous work. There is no remission, no days off, nowhere to go for rest and recuperation; night life for foreigners can hardly exist in Kabul!



Therefore after every intensive stint of duty Francesca will fly home for two weeks to see her family and hopefully to visit us in St Michael's so we shall have a chance to hear about her achievements and adventures. Her first return is scheduled for early March. In the meantime we wish her luck and God's speed.

# St Michael & ALL ANGELS

## WORLD FOCUS - CHURCH MISSION SOCIETY

CMS has been one of the major mission agencies contributing to the expansion of the Anglican Church and its social involvement across the world. And St Michael's has supported CMS since 1829, the year the Church was built.



Born in 1799, in the crucible of the campaign to abolish slavery, CMS has always had justice and evangelism at its heart.

For many years CMS' main focus was on sending missionaries overseas to preach, to teach and to heal. Today with Christian Churches established in so many nations CMS is a community of people engaged in sharing God's love in word and action in over thirty-five countries in Europe, Africa, Asia and South America.

For the last twenty years St Michael's has had a particular link with mission partners involved with working amongst those with drug addiction.

St Michael's link currently is with Alison Giblett who is living in Kiev in the Ukraine, a country where drug addiction is a serious problem. Alison is involved with local churches in training and supporting former drug addicts in rehabilitation centres across the country. We pray for her and give £2,000 a year in support of her work.

John Clark

# 3

## YOU'LL NEVER WALK ALONE

No, I'm not a Liverpool fan but as a Christian in business, that famous line resonates with me. The God who created me, promises to be with me through thick and thin. (Isaiah 41:10) Those running their own businesses know it's not an easy path and any support and encouragement along the way is invaluable.

"Yes, yes" you say, "That's all very well but not very practical is it?" The London Institute for Contemporary Christianity [www.licc.org.uk](http://www.licc.org.uk) runs courses and has vast resources offering practical ways to be a Christian in the workplace. But for a micro business in SE3 what does it mean?

Apart from the obvious - trading honestly, paying my share of tax, being honest and having integrity with my clients, there's the less obvious - tithing my

## FIRST AMONG EQUALS

How does the Church of England work? Being a Southwark Diocesan Synod representative over the past year has yielded partial insight as to how this Diocese, one of 44 in the Church of England, moves and has its being.

Some basic facts are that 300 parishes are represented at the Synod, a sort of Parliament, from Greater London, South of the Thames and North and East Surrey. That's a broad social mix representing various strands of Anglicanism.

Not many young people are represented and in spite of the fact that there are now many more ordinations of women priests over the past few years and also more women attend church than men, men tend to take the space and know how to use the system. It took me a while to grasp the way in; since questions need to be sent in advance and little open debate has occurred this year. There is always a mound of business to get through.

In March 2011, Bishop Christopher, our new bishop, will be enthroned to take on this challenging significant role; he said in November "there is room

# St Michael & ALL ANGELS



gross turnover and giving time joyfully. God calls us to be, rather than do. So I see it as my responsibility, as a Christian in business, to be the best and most I can be as Daphne; the rest will follow. Part of being me is keeping that connection with God as close as possible through praying, being prayed for, reading the Bible and involving myself in the Church community.

Daphne Clifton is an Executive Business Coach, Associate Speaker for the LICC and Vice-President of the SE London Chamber of Commerce



for even greater generosity and purpose in our dealings with each other"- Hooray.

I've asked questions on racism, our relationship with the media and how to pick up best practice from flourishing churches. A lively young Rev Dr Sharon Moughtin-Mumby has been appointed as Missions Theologian and inspired us to reflect on the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible; she stood out from rather more prosaic presenters by offering us exciting projects to undertake in 2011.

The Diocese is well run with an excellent website, but I don't yet feel integrated. The newcomers I met at our initial training are open, friendly and supportive and like me, are looking forward to seeing how we'll cope with the farrago over the ordination of women bishops and how Bishop Christopher can pull us further into the twenty first century.

Maggie Holland