

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

## SERVICES IN APRIL AND MAY

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 primary school children and their families, which is followed by tea in the hall.

## EASTER SERVICES

21st April 8pm - Maundy Thursday Communion service

22nd April 10:30am - Good Friday Churches Together service at Whitefield's Mount on the Heath  
2-3pm - Service of Reflection

24th April Easter Day

9 a.m. Book of Common Prayer Communion

10.30 a.m. Communion Service

## POEM - EVE

As she reached up  
to take the fruit  
from the tree

did the leaves  
brushing her wrist  
feel like fingertips

and after she had bitten

did she understand the bruise  
on the other side  
of the apple

its wound now resting  
against the palm  
of her hand?

Lorraine Mariner,  
from *Furniture* (Picador, 2009)

## FIRST STEPS NURSERY EXPANDS

Starting in September this well established and highly rated nursery situated in St Michael's Church grounds, is expanding to provide an Out Of School Club "Next Steps" for 4-11 year olds during term time and school holidays. Ofsted registered with professionally trained and dedicated staff, it will provide: homework support; sports; art; language classes; games; cooking and more. Contact Carrol Powell 07734 916170

# St Michael & ALL ANGELS

## FROM THE REGISTERS

Baptism - 27<sup>th</sup> March  
Isabel Brand

Weddings  
2<sup>nd</sup> April  
Jim Cotton and Kim Barker

23<sup>rd</sup> April  
Eva Pringle Kanga & Gary Carr

Funeral - 8<sup>th</sup> March  
Lorraine Perry

## 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 Thurs. 7th April at 8.15 - 9.30 p.m. in the Church Hall and then on Thursday 5th May 2011 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

## THE OBERAMMERGAU PASSION PLAY

Every ten years since 1634 the southern German village of Oberammergau stages a Passion Play as they promised they would if they were spared from the bubonic plague. 2010 was the 41st year and I was lucky enough to see the play last summer and spend a night in the village; it was an amazing and very moving experience.

The auditorium seats over 4700 people and the play, which runs for 5 months, is performed in two halves lasting in total 5 hours. 2250 villagers, including children, are involved as actors, singers, musicians and technicians; they participate together with horses, donkeys, sheep, camels and other animals. Other villagers run restaurants hotels etc. In total 5300 are involved. Participants must have been born in Oberammergau or lived there for 20 years and although they all have other occupations, for almost a year they rehearse and prepare for this. For last year's play the main cast members had travelled to Israel to gain a closer insight and anti-Semitic aspects of the play were eliminated.

One is summoned to the huge theatre with its open stage set within the surrounding landscape by brass fanfares and throughout the play there is music. Although this is over two hundred years old it was supplemented last year by new compositions. The music, which is both orchestral and choral, is absolutely beautiful. The choral works are sung by the large choir that moves in from the sides of the stage.

The play covers the last week of Jesus's life starting with his triumphal entry into Jerusalem with crowds of adults and children greeting him and then takes one through to the last supper, the betrayal in Gethsemane, the trial and appeal to the crowds, the procession of the cross to Calvary and the Crucifixion. An angel dressed as a disciple appears during the last supper and follows Jesus to the end. He appears to Mary beside the empty tomb and then finally Jesus appears to the disciples after which the stage empties and all that is left is a bowl of flame. By this time night has fallen and all is dark beyond the stage.

The crowd scenes were amazing and there was a complete contrast between these, with huge numbers of people in colourful costumes and the animals and the more intimate ones such as the last supper. The scene where the crowd call for the release of Barabbas and for Jesus to be crucified was scarily realistic. It made me think of mobs the world over and brought home the modern day relevance of these events. In addition to the scenes on the main stage there were throughout a series of Old Testament tableaux shown in the curtained central area of the main stage. To some extent these alleviate the growing horror of the main story but nothing can reduce the powerful impact of the crucifixion and resurrection and at the end one files out in silence feeling drained of all emotion.

By Rosemary Guest



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

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## ON THE GRAPEVINE



If you haven't already met John Jairo ContrerasToro we would like to introduce the newest member of the St Michaels team. John has come to work for a year under the auspices of Careforce as our children's and young people's team leader.

John is one of seven children; from a Pentecostal family who live in a peaceful suburb of a small town called Barranca in Colombia. He was working in the oil industry with a secure career ahead of him when he felt that God was asking him to take up a totally different, very demanding calling. John therefore abandoned his career and went to study theology in Medellin Seminary. During his four years there, as part of his course, he worked for the Open Arms charity dealing with street children as well as deprived children from poor families. He also attended a second church where the congregation were more prosperous. He felt "blessed to have lived that experience" concluding that whatever their background, children are children the world over!

Where next? Where God takes him - John is grounded, determined and has a burning belief that the very challenging and hard life-changing decision he has made will lead him on his journey of faith. He is also a charming and interesting man with a delightful smile; a great asset to St Michael's!

## GREENWICH MEN TIME

The St Michael's Men's group continues to meet regularly, between 20 and 30 men attend each event.

Recent activities have included:

- A darts match against St Nicholas Church. From the St Michael's point of view the highlight was the food and company as we only managed second place in a hard fought match.
- A group of us formed a scratch choir to sing an arrangement of the First Noel and the Pachebel Canon at the Carol Service. Under the able tutelage of Jonathan 'Gareth Malone' Croucher the performance was very well received.
- More recently we hosted Rob Ryan, a pioneer curate who has been developing new expressions of church around Rochester Cathedral for the last 4 years. His stories of ministry in the local Wetherspoon pub were fascinating and challenging. He then led us in an 'alt worship' reflection.
- A development this year has been the formation of 'catering teams', which have set about organising the food and refreshments for each event with vigour and skill.

A large thank you to all who have contributed to making the group such a success, and a warm welcome awaits any men who would like to join us at future events. If you would like to find out more contact Hugh Ridsdill-Smith or Bill Lowe via the church office for further details.

# St Michael & ALL ANGELS

## CHRISTIANS IN POLITICS?

St Michael's supports various Christian charities and the two-hundred year-old Bible Society is one of them. Why? The Bible changes people's lives, puts our thoughts in touch with God's thoughts and gives us directions as to the way we should live.



But, is the Bible really relevant to say, politics? Can it influence for good our own Houses of Parliament in 2011? Well the Bible Society thinks it can and employs Dave Landrum, a full time Parliamentary Officer to show MPs or those who work in the Palace of Westminster the value of and need for the Bible's wisdom in politics. Dave is focused upon raising the profile of the Bible as a point of reference in politics. With the permission of the Speaker, he works with 'Christians in Parliament', the official, all-party Group for the Christian community in the Palace of Westminster. He helps politicians develop and sustain a biblical worldview in their work by remembering that faith and politics are firmly linked.

"Each session of the House of Commons starts with prayer", said Dave, "bishops sit in the House of Lords and a verse from Psalm 127 - 'Unless the Lord builds the house, its builders labour in vain' - is even inscribed on the floor of Central Lobby. The Bible influences politics because the Lord is very clearly interested in government."

By Pete Moss

# 3

## LENT

Lent is a period of forty days (not counting Sundays) between Shrove Tuesday and the Saturday before Easter Sunday. It is a season for reflection and preparation leading to the commemoration of Jesus' crucifixion on Good Friday before the celebration of His resurrection on Easter Day. Sundays (commemorating Jesus' resurrection) are days of celebration for Christians and so are not included.

In the early Church Lent was the time when new Christians who were to be baptised on Easter eve were taught about the Christian faith. Those who had already been baptised used the 40 days to reflect on the commitments they had made and re-affirmed them on Easter Day.

Forty is a significant number in the Bible. Jesus fasted in the wilderness for forty days preparing for his public ministry. It is this example of abstinence to attend to his soul that provides the pattern for some Christians abstaining from some foods (such as meat and fish, fats, eggs, and milky foods) and giving time to prayer.

The word 'Lent' derives from an old English word

## WALKING THE WAY

*Many members of St Michael's congregation are taking part in Walking the Way a Lent course exploring different experiences of the Christian faith. Some members of the congregation are approaching Lent in other ways in the lead up to the great Easter celebration:*

"For the last few years, I've given up Google for Lent. I think that Google and other search engines are marvellous, and can be extremely helpful and informative. But I can also spend hours engrossed in the internet to no particular purpose. So over Lent, although I may still occasionally use Google for getting specific information, I won't use it for surfing."  
- David Hawkett

"I plan to visit someone on a regular basis over Lent, the person I have in mind does not have many visitors. I have meant to do this for some time and now is a good time to start in a gentle way and perhaps develop the idea of offering company and friendship over the next year."  
- David Seddon

# St Michael & ALL ANGELS

meaning 'lengthen' for it is observed in spring when the days get longer.

Shrove Tuesday is the day before Lent starts. It gets its name from the ritual of shricing that Christians used to undergo in the past. In shricing, a person confesses their sins to the priest and receives absolution for them.

So that no food was wasted, families would have a feast and eat the foods that wouldn't last the forty days of Lent without going off. The need to eat up the fats gave rise to the French name Mardi Gras ('fat Tuesday'). Pancakes became associated with Shrove Tuesday as they were a dish that could use up all the eggs, fats and milk in the house with just the addition of flour.

Ash Wednesday marks the beginning of Lent for Western Christian churches. It's a day of penitence to clean the soul before the Lent fast. Roman Catholic, some Anglican, and some other churches hold special services at which worshippers foreheads are marked with ashes as a symbol of death and sorrow for sin.

By John Clark

"This Lent I intend to fast on at least one of the traditional days either Ash Wednesday or Good Friday. Why should anyone fast? Well, all the holy men of the Bible have done it including Jesus so therefore we have to think there is something in it. Fasting is denial, humbling yourself before God and showing obedience - so it is showing God that you are taking him very seriously."  
- Bruce Pearce

Tim Keeler is giving up alcohol for Lent: "Self-denial, fasting and sacrifice during Lent are important. You might say that if I can give alcohol up that easily then the self denial element is pretty small, but Lent is also a time for reflection and for prayer and so for me the act of self denial is just one part of a package that brings one closer to Jesus and reminds us of his great sacrifice for our benefit."