

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

Raise the Praise is on the third Sunday of the month at 5 pm, a half hour service designed for children under 10 and their families, which is followed by tea in the hall.

LENT COURSE

This year's course will consist of a series of weekly lectures. The course runs on Monday evenings at 8 o'clock from 27th Feb to 26th March. Each week we will be joined by a specialist in their field speaking on topics from Wealth and Capitalism through International Development to Assisted Dying.

Speakers include Rachel Carnegie, the Archbishop of Canterbury's Secretary for International Development, Peter Saunders, the Chair of the Christian Medical Fellowship and Richard Godden, Partner at Linklaters LLP.

BIBLE READING

I wonder how many of your New Year's resolutions have evaporated? Reading your Bible daily, may have been one such casualty. Christians read the Bible as it is the principal way in which God speaks to us. There's something for everyone: great stories, love songs, poetry and of course, Jesus appears throughout the Bible with his time on earth recorded in the New Testament.

But reading the Bible can seem a daunting prospect. Two years ago I set out to read it from cover to cover. I used a Bible set-out in chronological order and read it most days. I now enjoy reading the Bible through every year, using a different format. It takes around 20 minutes a day and yes, I miss some days! There's no doubting I feel more confident navigating my way around the Bible and my relationship with and understanding of God and his love for the world is growing. If you don't like reading, you can listen on-line. Think about your normal reading pattern and apply that to how you read the Bible. Would you prefer a daily devotional/ ticking boxes or following a particular theme? Google will help you find a reading style that suits – and there are thousands, but if you'd prefer to talk about it, feel able to contact me on 020 8473 0261.

Daphne Clifton

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FROM THE REGISTERS

Thanksgivings
8th January: Georgia Hamilton

Baptisms
8th January: Lochlan Kirk

Weddings
23rd December: David Wood and Kristin Garland

Funerals in January
13th January: Joyce Hornsby
26th January: Donald Whitehall

JOIN THE WALK

Our first church walk of 2012 is planned for Saturday 3rd March. It's a modest 5½ mile circular stroll through some pretty countryside in the vicinity of Hadlow and West Peckham. Although fairly flat, unfortunately the walk isn't really suitable for those with pushchairs or for small children. Lunch after the walk will be at a suitable hostelry in Hadlow. Please meet beforehand at the church at 9.15am ready to depart by 9.30am sharp!

If you need any further information please email Tim Keeler at tim.keeler@btinternet.com

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THE MESSENGER

WHAT IS A CHURCH?

It's a simple question, but it gives us some surprising answers. First, the church is not really a building. The original word in the New Testament just means a meeting. It is even used of a rioting mob which gathered together to stone the apostle Paul. The early English Bible translator William Tyndale always translated it as 'congregation', and only in the King James Version was this changed to 'church'. That led to confusion about whether it meant the building or the people, but for the first few hundred years Christians didn't have any special buildings, and the church always meant the people.

7 days a week

If the church is the people not the building, then everything we do together is church, and the people of God are still the church when they are out in the world doing their normal activities. Therefore Christians worship God in everything we do, in the sense of honouring him and seeking to give him glory. As George Herbert said in a famous hymn, 'seven whole days, not one in seven, I will praise thee.' The test of whether our faith is real is not the quality of our singing on Sundays, but whether it changes how we live on the other six days of the week. As someone also said, the church's budget is a better measure of its worship than its choir.

Where can I find God?

Understanding the church as God's people also helps us with the most important question of all - 'where can I find God?' On one level the answer to that is everywhere and anywhere, because God made the whole world and everything in it. But a more helpful answer is that you'll find him among his people. Jesus said 'where two or three come together in my name, there I am with them.' The church is a good place to go if you are looking for God, not because there is any special magic about the building, but because the Lord is at work where his people are gathered. That's why people regularly come away from church feeling they have met with God, in a way they would not have done on their own.

What's the building for?

Where does that leave the building? We are very privileged at St Michael's to have a beautiful late-Georgian building, which has been handed down to us and which we hope to hand on to those who come after. We want both to preserve its heritage and history, and to make it a suitable place for everyone to use flexibly in the 21st century. This includes for weddings, funerals, schools, choirs, and our own congregation, including the 40 to 50 children who come each Sunday morning.

Who pays for it?

Needless to say this isn't cheap. It is a very expensive building to heat, insure, maintain, repair, and protect against burglary. Contrary to most people's understanding, we don't receive any money from outside to do this. It all needs to be raised from our own congregation and parish. The building is a great asset for our congregation and everyone around, but the real church is the people, and it is among his people that you'll find God.

Sandy Christie



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

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BEING ON THE CHURCH COUNCIL (PCC)

My experience of PCC began at St Margaret's Church when I was a mere 28 years old, new to Motherhood and keen to have something to do, outside the house! I was already helping to run the Sunday School but was surprised to be invited to join the PCC and had no real idea what it was about, but I did know that most of those on the PCC were somewhat older than me, it was actually quite daunting.

At the first few meetings I said very little and just tried to get to grips with the workings and etiquette. It didn't take long and soon I was contributing and joining sub-committees, including the restoration project. I learnt a great deal about the workings of the church; the finance, the politics and the people.

When I moved to St Michael's I was soon involved with the children and asked to join the PCC, which I did for a couple of years and then had a break.

Now, nearly twenty years on, because I am Safeguarding Officer I am again on PCC.

The Church Council has given me a greater sense of ownership, of responsibility and of belonging to the church. It is a rewarding, interesting role which has many strands. I think it is incredibly important to have as wide a range of people of all ages on the Church Council, so that as many view points as possible are represented. It certainly is no longer time consuming, as we have reduced to six meetings a year, and each meeting has a main discussion point, as well as set items which need to be discussed.

I would certainly recommend finding out more and if you are interested in the fundamental running of the church, being on the Church Council is really worthwhile.

Fran Botley



Some members of the PCC - Photo by Tim Keeler

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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

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WHAT DO CHURCH WARDENS DO?

What do church wardens do? It depends whom you ask: according to my predecessor at another church, "go to one swearing-in service at the Cathedral, and listen whenever the vicar complains"; according to the Archdeacon at that service (actually very enjoyable), provide leadership, example and encouragement, and take responsibility; according to the Bishop, be my eyes and ears in the parish; according to the law, be the trustee of church moveables, plus various bureaucratic functions.

In truth, there is no formula – it depends on the church concerned.

THE CHURCH HALL

What goes on in St Michael's Halls? All sorts of people, young and old use our church halls...

We have lots of Term Time Groups coming in to use the halls:

- Monday: Twins Club; Diddy Dance; Perform Drama; Self Defence.
- Tuesday: Baby Sensory; Baby Ballet; Pilates; NCT.
- Wednesday: Pilates; Cubs.
- Thursday: Mums & Toddlers.
- Friday: Toddler Theatre; Beavers; Scouts.
- Saturday: Perform; Sing & Sign.

Full contact details are available on the Church Hall notice boards.

Brenda and I attend the PCC meetings (we are automatically members), and meet the clergy regularly in between to discuss practical problems.

Our formal responsibilities are almost irrelevant: maintaining order in services and adjudicating on seating disputes are not often needed at St Michael's; keeping up the terrier (property list), getting insurance, guarding the registers and so on are delegated to the Church Secretary (for whose wonderful efficiency we regularly thank God); the upkeep of the building is looked after by the Fabric Committee.

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Sandy invented the job of Service Coordinator to remove and rotate the logistics (as opposed to content) of services: previous church wardens had to attend twice every Sunday and do that heavy task every time.

This leaves us free to do our bit, which is to keep our eyes and ears open, and to be visible and known: we are there so someone who has an issue to raise has somewhere to take it. Some we can fix, some we have to pass on; either way, being church warden is a great privilege and pleasure.

Jonathan Causer

First Steps Nursery are on site each weekday and now run an excellent After School Club and a Holiday Club for 5-11 yr olds.

Our Occasional Users include Blood Donors and various Residence Groups plus every school holiday Arty Party run Arts & Craft day workshops for 5-11yr olds.

Our halls are available for hire on Saturday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons for Children's Parties. Note that because we have close neighbours we do not hire out on Saturday evenings for parties, wedding receptions etc or at all on Sundays.

Naturally we also have our own church activities too: weekly Friday Coffee Shop (1.30-4pm); fortnightly Sports Club (Wed 5pm); social events (Quiz Nights; International Food Evening; Fairs etc); our monthly 11 O'Clock Club (talk followed by lunch on the first Wednesday of each month); prayer meetings; Friday Mums' Bible Group; PCC; youth activities like Friday Youth Café (7.30-9pm) and Food & Faith (Sun eve); and of course, our annual Holiday Club (note 2012 dates: 26th-29th July).

Any Questions? Call Marion Lane, Church Administrator 8852 1205