

April 2019

THE MESSENGER



'The best place to find God is in a garden. You can dig for him there'

Our first glimpse of God happened in a garden in the Book of Genesis, the Garden of Eden and since then we and many others have tried to duplicate its beauty. The bible has many references to plants, the sower, the lilies of the field and the vine to name a few. The seed in the sower is the word of God and those, who follow Him no matter what, stick with it until there is a harvest.

Gardening requires hard work, but like faith, continues and will flourish. Jesus knelt in the Garden of Gethsemane as he prepared to face the cross. The first person to see him after the resurrection, Mary, thought he was the gardener. When he called her name, she realised that he had overcome death. We as Christians, can rise from the dead and go to eternal life with God our Father. There is a joy in new life and a sense of hope. Jesus's resurrection from the dead is the foundation of our Christian faith. It is God's assurance to us that we will never die and never be ultimately defeated. Our spiritual gardens will bloom when we live out our faith in the middle of our messy lives. Come to St Michael & All Angels on Easter Sunday and hear more about the Easter story and how the Resurrection offers hope to us all.

Maggie Holland

You might say that Easter began in a garden and as many gardeners will tell you, planting out a garden of any sort is most certainly an act of optimism. When you sow a seed, you put hope in the ground.

We're fortunate at St Michael's to have a large garden area surrounding our church and over the last few years we've been gradually replanting and replacing old shrubs and plants with newer varieties. We have recently been working to improve much of the rose garden at the front of the church. New roses have been planted to replace a number of those that were dying back. Luckily most of the old roses are still very vigorous and will continue to provide a glorious display of colour over the summer months and well into the autumn.

Many people, young and old, gain much pleasure from our gardens at St Michael's. They can excite and stimulate, comfort and soothe, appeal to the senses and emotions and are an exciting playground for our young. Come and sit in a shady spot under the trees on a hot summer's afternoon and you'll soon get some sense of the calm that nature can provide.

Gardening is a lot more than just taming nature; it offers the possibility of a long-lasting love affair. There's an old English proverb that says if you want to be happy for a year plant a garden and more recent research shows that gardening reduces stress and anxiety, can help you feel happier, healthier and more confident.

The renowned gardener and writer Beth Chatto said, "Garden with nature, not struggle against her". In the garden, as we watch the plants grow and bear fruit in their season it is not hard to believe that one day all creation will indeed be made whole, restored and renewed to become all that God intended it to be.

Tim Keeler

CHURCH SERVICES

St Michael's is a Church of England Church.

Our main morning service is at 10.30am. The first Sunday of the month is a shorter all age service, and on the other Sundays children leave for their own groups 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 is at 6.30pm and it is quieter and more reflective. Communion is celebrated on the first and third Sundays of the month.

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



From the registers

Baptisms

3rd February: Finn Rose

Funerals

18th March: Eileen Page



For The Diary

Christian Aid Week

12 May to 18 May

If you can help please get in touch with the church office

Workism is making Americans miserable

The title of this piece comes from an article which appeared in a US magazine, the "Atlantic," in February 2019. That in turn led to a discussion at St Michael's Men's Group when it met on 3 April - food, beer, and then lively discussion, with about twenty present. The economist JM Keynes predicted a 15-hour workweek in 1930, and that man's real problem would be how to occupy his leisure time. However, although the average work year has been shrinking, many well-educated people (here and in the US) are working harder than ever and are often intensely focussed on career success. "Economists did not foresee that work might evolve from a means of material production into a means of identity production; that while, for the working and middle classes work would remain a necessity, for the college-educated elite it would morph into a kind of religion, promising identity, transcendence, and community. Call it workism."

Some present were employed, some self-employed, some retired, but all understood the issue and realised it touched our lives. We identified certain factors at play: the increased pace of life since the Thatcher economic revolution of the 1980's, globalisation, the tremendous impact of communication technology, a much more affluent society, and the increased expectations of employers. While some people spoke of employers encouraging staff to go home at a sensible time, others were more demanding and less generous. We talked of the priority of our Christian walk, giving Christ the first part of our lives rather than the last, and the Bible's message that Sabbath rest is part of God's plan for our lives. We concluded by affirming the ideal of human flourishing, under God, being the way forward.

Stephen Hingston

Easter services

Maundy Thursday

18th April at 8pm

A quiet Communion service to prepare for Easter

Good Friday

19th April 10.30 am

Service of Witness at Whitefield Mount on the Heath
(procession from church at 10am)

2.00p.m. one-hour meditation

A valuable time to stop and reflect on the transforming power of the cross on the most important day of the year for Christians

Easter Sunday

21st April

9am Book of Common Prayer Communion

10.30am Communion Service

(followed by an Easter Egg Hunt in the garden)

NB: There will be no evening service



Why The Good Friday Service Of Witness Is Important

Churches Together in Blackheath (CTIB) is an organisation of nine-member churches and three associate churches in and around Blackheath. St Michael's is a member church and fully supportive of CTIB which brings together churches of different Christian denominations – Anglican, Non-Conformist and Catholic – with a variety of church culture from high church, low church, evangelical, Catholic, Methodist and the Society of Friends.

CTIB organises and concentrates on two major events in the year: the open air Good Friday Service of Witness on the Heath and the Christmas Eve procession in Blackheath Village. Last year the Good Friday Service of Witness attracted 300 people from a variety of backgrounds. Not just church people, but also people who had heard about the event; friends of friends, people who had just walked in and people who were not necessarily believers, but people who were curious and seeking. If any church is there “for the benefit of its non-members” then this is one such public occasion. Everyone is welcome.

I took over the coordination of the Good Friday Service of Witness in 2014.

At 10.30am people assemble on the Heath for the start of a one-hour service at Whitefield Mount. The service is easily spotted from nearby roads by a large 15 foot cross and a banner indicating the meeting place. The mound is where the famous 18th century evangelical preacher, George Whitefield, used to preach to large crowds who would gather to hear the word of God.

The service takes a familiar format each year with each church invited to read a Station of the Cross and give a two-minute talk about each Station. It is a time of instruction about the meaning of Good Friday but also

St Michael
& ALL ANGELS

reflection – what it means to you – from the Condemnation of Christ to Christ taken down from the Cross.

People can just turn up for the 10.30am start, but all the churches organise groups to meet at their local church and then walk (sometimes with a cross) to Whitefield Mount. Carrying a cross is significant because this makes the groups clearly visible from the roadside. This, for me, is the first importance of the service. It is a service of witness. I always think that one of the main criticisms from non-Christians is that they believe there is so much disunity among churches. But this is when all the churches come together in perfect harmony, confirming that there is in fact unity and a common central belief.

Secondly, the walk from the local church is a pilgrimage. Just like Chaucer's pilgrimage to Canterbury and many people choose to do the walk in silence. In our busy lives there are people speaking and shouting at us from all directions. A silent walk is different. It is a chance to withdraw from the cares of this world which crowd out God. It can be a very calming and enriching experience.

Thirdly, the service instructs us about the real meaning of Good Friday and brings into focus the significance of Jesus on the Cross.

Finally, it is a wonderful way to begin the Easter weekend. Whether you go back home for lunch, off to the pub, travelling out of town or just doing nothing, you have already availed yourself of a potentially life-enhancing event.

So, for all these reasons; for the sake of church unity, to be a witness (especially to the onlooker), to take part in a pilgrimage, to bring the true meaning of Easter into focus – it's simply a great way to begin the Easter celebration. I would encourage everyone to come – whatever their spiritual viewpoint and whatever the weather.

Bruce Pearce

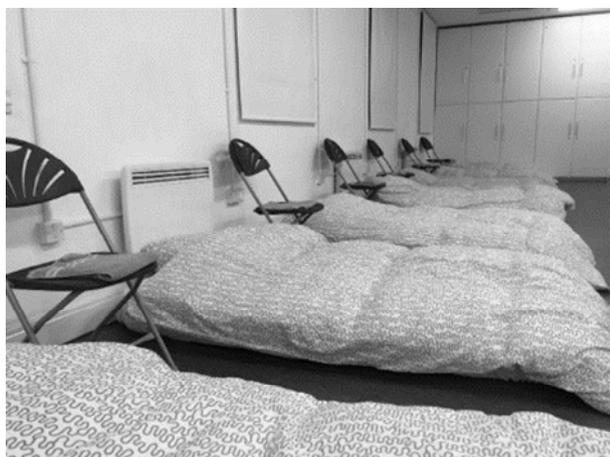
The Good Friday Service of Witness is at 10.30am on 19th April at Whitefield Mount on the Heath

The Winter Night Shelter

After having successfully provided shelter, warmth and food to over 55 homeless people for a grand total of 112 nights, the Greenwich Winter Night Shelter (GWNS) has now drawn to a close. We were lucky enough at OneSpace, Kidbrooke to have over 40 volunteers who gave their time and energy to the shelter. I was also particularly touched by people and businesses in the local community who helped by donating clothes, utensils, scarves and hats from their knitting clubs, and food.

We are indebted to Kathryn, the manager of OneSpace, who went above and beyond to make sure everything at the venue ran smoothly. Also, a massive thank you to The Jasmine restaurant in Bexleyheath who provided us with a monthly Indian meal! It's great to see churches and the community working together for such a worthy cause.

While the prime focus of the night shelter was to provide a safe environment for homeless people to take respite from the cold, it was also a blessing for all of our volunteers, some of whom particularly benefited from a distraction from personal lives or work. I had the sense that there was a real sense of family at the shelter and love and support were shared between volunteers and guests.



This year saw a rise in female guests, non-UK nationals and, perhaps most alarmingly, people with full-time paid employment. The past 5 months have served as a wake-up call that with the roll out of universal credit, austerity, and increasing rent prices, charities such as GWNS are simply fundamental, as the state is not meeting the needs of the homeless.

While the Greenwich Winter Night Shelter is now over, there are many other local initiatives such as the 999 Club in Deptford which work tirelessly all year round to find more permanent living solutions for the homeless. If you would be interested in volunteering, do get in touch with them.

Finally, I would like to say a huge thank you to our volunteers. Without your energy, enthusiasm and dedication, the night shelter could not have worked. As one volunteer says: "I really enjoyed being a volunteer at Onespace, meeting new people, the variety of tasks and the rewards of compassion & helping others. It was great to see how a community can work together to make a difference. I learnt a lot about homelessness and the difficulties faced by clients." The email address for people to get in touch is gwnsprojectmgr@gmail.com.

Katy Risdell Smith

Food Bank

Easter is on its way and it a sobering thought that there is so much need. Demand locally has risen by 20% in the last year, as indeed it has over the whole country. There is a basket at the back of the church for donations. Thank you

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

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