

A newsletter brought to you during Covid-19

Church Together Apart



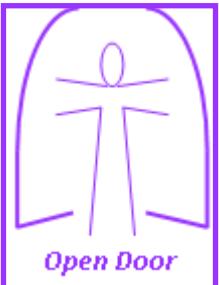
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First Sunday of Lent

Choosing to Hope in God

*Why are you downcast, O my soul, why so disquieted within me?
... hope in God, for I shall again praise Him, my help and my God.*

Psalm 42

I have done this painting very recently to try to illustrate these words. My sense is that many people have felt, and are still feeling 'downcast' (including me) from time to time. In some ways this start of Lent is different from previous years. Personally I don't feel like 'giving up something' because there are so many of the ordinary pleasures of life that we have all had to give up already. The ones I'm missing the most, are going to a café for a cuppa and cake, visiting galleries and museums, meals with people, Cinemac,

visits to parents, visits to children, trips to other towns just to browse, and of course Church fellowship and singing. Your list may be similar or very different.

But ... we **do** have Hope. We do know deep down that God is for us - not against us. Our effort of the will to trust Him will be rewarded. We will have Easter. Whether or not it is how we want it to be, it will still be Easter and Jesus will still be 'Risen from the dead'. So I will choose to mark Lent.

I need preparation time for most things. I like to give time to getting ready - not to be rushed into things. So Easter needs preparation time for the soul. I choose to follow a book – this year it's going to be 'The Art of Lent' (no surprises there!) which will be fascinating. I hope you enjoy the books you choose, and they give something fresh for you at this time. In whatever way you mark Lent – and maybe this year it's not so much the 'giving up something' but more 'choosing to Hope in God' – may it be a time of blessing for you.

Catherine Stephens

From 17th February (Ash Wednesday) until 3rd April (Holy Saturday), a team of volunteers will lead Night Prayer on Zoom from 8.30pm. Do consider joining them if you can. Afterwards many people will quietly leave, though some may wish to stay on for a brief catch-up with others, but the meeting will close automatically just after 9pm - so definitely no late-night chat!

To join Night Prayer on Zoom, please use this link:

Topic: Night Prayer

Time: starts 8.30pm, everyday

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us04web.zoom.us/j/75676947476?pwd=R2twT2pQbTFzUGR5bk1reDZoVXdaZz09>

Meeting ID: 756 7694 7476

Passcode: compline

Please join a minute or two before 8.30pm for a prompt start. Your microphone will be muted on arrival; please keep it so until after Night Prayer.

May you sense God's loving presence this Lent.

The Lord be with you.

Mark Stephens

Are YOU giving up or taking up something this Lent? Do let the editorial team know!

Daily Compline throughout Lent



Young People at St Michael's

St Michael's Youth Group - by Duncan Munro

My brother Connor and I enjoy being part of St Michael's Youth Group that meets up on a Sunday evening, 6-7.30pm. It is run by Jonny, James and Catherine and is a great opportunity to meet up with friends.



We do all sorts of activities including games, bible topics and have very interesting discussions about life, the universe....everything really! Sometimes we go on walks which we really enjoy and it's a great chance for teenagers to get fresh air, exercise and vitamin D!

The Youth Group isn't overly religious. Everyone is welcome no matter what their beliefs are. The activities we do are mainly for fun and we always have a laugh no matter what we are doing, which is especially important at the moment as young people are struggling with the isolation caused by this current situation.

Every so often the Youth Group organises and leads a church service. We do readings, sing songs and play musical instruments. It is also a chance for us to present something to the church community from a young person's point of view, which is something not many people get to hear. Having this opportunity to express our opinions or concerns about the future can really make a difference.

The next Youth Service is Sunday 21st March.

The current situation means that we can't meet at the church as normal and, like everyone else, we have had to adapt. We currently meet via Zoom once a fortnight and still manage to have interesting discussions and play fun games, sometimes charging about the house trying to find things for a scavenger hunt or dressing up!

We are always happy to welcome new members to the Youth Group as we feel it is important for young people to have a place and a say in the church. Please feel free to contact me or one of the leaders if you want to know more. I look forward to seeing you there!

St Michael's Service
with the Youth Group
on 21st March 2021



Guides & Pancakes

Because of lockdown, scout and guide groups have not been able to meet in person for a while. To counter this problem, our guides group (2nd Macclesfield Guides) have been arranging meetings on zoom. Our guide leaders welcomed us as new members of the group on zoom and have arranged a variety of different things for us to do.

We have been doing fun activities such as drawing and online puzzles. Our favourite meetings are when we do escape rooms because we enjoy logic challenges and things of that nature. One of the escape rooms we did recently was incredibly fun to do and was entertaining but also good because we needed to interact with each other to solve it. This has also been an amazing opportunity to talk to friends that we would not be able to see otherwise.

Two of our friends from school joined over the lockdown period, along with us. Our friends from school had never met anyone in the group before so it was nice introducing them. We also enjoy having them around because they were the first people from our school (other than us) to join the guides group.

Megan and Isobel Radmall (age nearly 11)

The activities we take part in are fun because we get to interact with the other girls the same way we would in the hut. Some other things we enjoy are baking and art because we love creativity. We enjoyed the two baking sessions we did because we like to see the imagination that we have and to learn some new recipes. On Tuesday, we made pancakes because we all wanted to do it for our last week before the half term holidays. We loved making them and we gave some to our parents and brother.

It's wonderful to hear from our young people! Ed.

Imagining the Future

Your views matter!

We would like to invite input on the 4 questions in the table on the right from the wider congregation. Please send your views using [this link](#).

Those without internet can provide their reflections by way of letter, either by post or by handing them to the person delivering their newsletter. Please mark the envelope 'Imagining the Future'. Ed.

Emerging from Lockdown

The Church Council met on Tuesday, 16th Feb . Martin Stephens led a discussion session on how St Michael's might emerge from the pandemic.

The discussion centred around 4 questions:

What have we gained, but are happy to lose at the end of lockdown?	What have we gained and want to keep?
What have we lost and don't want back?	What have we lost and do want to have back?

Goodbye to the Devine family



The Devine family at the baptism of Dawn and Andy's grandson, William (son of Rebecca).

We say goodbye to Dawn and Andy Devine who are soon to leave Macclesfield and move to a new home in Guisborough, North Yorkshire. Dawn now works at Alder Hey but will be able to continue doing video clinics remotely, and Andy works from home so geographical location is not important for either of them anymore.

Daughters Rebecca and Lucy were members of the choir for many years, Andy has long been a reserve organist and for a while he led the church band, and Dawn has assisted on committees and in church life generally, being a pastoral visitor, helping with serving coffee, etc.

We are very grateful for all their contributions to our church family and wish them all the very best for their new life in Yorkshire.

Musical Talent at St Michael's

Henry Strutt is singing as a Lay Clerk with the New College Oxford Choir, through to the end of July this year.

They are singing as a reduced, socially distanced, choir (just seven male voices) and hold two streamed services each week.

Sunday Choral Evensong which starts at 5:45pm.

Tuesday Sung Compline which starts at 9:00pm.

For a musical treat, go to the Choir's youtube channel following [this link](#)



Our Director of Music, **Karen**, on the other hand, seems to have turned her back on church music and choir robes and is pursuing an alternative musical career with Arthur. Follow [this link](#): for some fun entertainment.

Prayer for the Nation

The Archbishops of Canterbury and York are inviting the nation to join them in prayer every evening at 6.00pm throughout February.

Here is the prayer for the week beginning 22nd February:

Lord Jesus Christ,
in these dark and difficult days, we turn our hearts to you.
In ages past, you have delivered our nation from disaster.
Do it again, we pray.
Give wisdom beyond human wisdom to our leaders,
Give strength beyond human strength to the NHS and all our frontline workers.

Give comfort beyond human comfort to the elderly and all who grieve.

Lord Jesus Christ,
in these dark and difficult days,
turn your face towards us,
have mercy upon us,
and heal our land, we pray.

Amen.

Home Communion Ministry

How many of us have missed Holy Communion? Most of us I would imagine. At present, along with many other activities this is not possible. Apart from the fact that we are not allowed to go to church or meet in groups, the risk of sharing bread and wine in the transmission of Covid-19 is one that should not be taken lightly.

So what is Holy Communion? Also known as The Eucharist or The Lord's Supper, it is sharing a meal together as friends, remembering in the bread, Christ's body broken for us, and in the wine, His blood, shed for our sins.

"While they were eating, Jesus took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and gave it to his disciples, saying, "Take and eat; this is my body." Then he took a cup, and when he had given thanks, he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you. This is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins. (Matt 26:26-28.)"

Why do we share in it? In sharing Communion we are entering a covenant with God, an agreement and promise. Together as the Church, the body of Christ on earth, we are symbolically mingling Christ's body and blood with our own. As Christians we are called to live as Christ did, to the best of our ability. For me, and many of us, part of this is sharing as a church family in Communion. It is part of prayer. Paul says, *"Because there is one bread, we who are many are one body, for we all partake of the one bread (1 Cor 10:17)." Along with God and our sisters and brothers in Christ we are giving thanks and proclaiming His death and resurrection. His sacrifice means that we can live. It is a blessing to share together in Holy Communion.*

The bible does not say how often we should take Communion. "Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes (1 Cor 11:25-26)." But it does say how we should be when we do. "Whoever, therefore, eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty concerning the body and blood of the Lord. Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup (1 Cor 11:27)." We should examine our hearts in prayer.

Home Communion is a ministry that is precious to both those who receive and those who give. Usually, on a monthly basis, we take the Sacraments, the bread and wine which have been consecrated (made sacred) during the Thursday Morning Communion service, to those who are unable to attend church but wish to share in Holy Communion. At present they all live alone (this is not a prerequisite) and this visit, for some, is one of the few they have. The time sharing, not just Communion, but in life and prayer is special.

So what are we doing now? While we are unable to visit we are telephoning, usually on a Thursday afternoon, "visiting" day. Communion, with a small "c", is an act of sharing, and this we do through conversation, sharing in life and prayer. We speak each month and to a few weekly, continuing to be a church family.

The current pandemic has changed the life of many people. If you, or someone you know, are unable to return to church once we are allowed to share Communion and wish to have Home Communion, please let me know. Even if you want to speak with someone on a regular basis in the meantime, let me know. We can start to make that contact now so that we can get to know each other better.

Sallie on behalf of the Home Communion Team



Martin Stephens
(Rector)



Sallie Bancroft



Michael Wootton



Peter Johnston



Alison and Pete
McKenzie



Rachel Mayers



Is this you?

St Michael's Clergy PA & Church Administrator

(Or do you know someone who might like to consider this?)

We are looking for a Clergy PA & Administrator to support the Rector, and the congregation of St Michael's.

Tasks include:

- To manage Life Events (baptisms, weddings and funerals) for churches in the team;
- To be the primary contact for St Michael's Church community, including civic and Town Centre functions;
- To coordinate appropriate methods of communication, in accord with the Church's vision, ministry and mission, for members of St Michael's and the wider public;
- To provide PA support for the ministry of the Rector of St Michael's and administration of the congregation.

The role is for 20 hours per week and has flexibility to negotiate working from home and working days.

For a full role description and application form please contact Rachel Mayers by email rachel.mayers@btinternet.com

We are also looking for volunteers:

- First Aiders

We need more people with an up to date First Aid qualification. Do you have one? Would you be willing to renew an expired one or take up training for the first time? For the right person, we would be able to help with the cost.

- Health and Safety Officer

Is Health and Safety your thing? It would be great if someone could take on this responsibility for our church building. On its own it's not too great a task, but it is a role that is best done by a designated, trained person. Again, we can arrange the training.

- Communication

Our strategy, begun at the Vision Day on 29th Feb 2020, is developing: we now need to develop a communication plan.

Is communication your thing? or – do you know someone with these skills who might help us out for a short time?

For all these volunteer opportunities please contact Rachel as above

Take Note



Contractors in St Michaels w/c 22 February

For those people, who need to go into church this coming week, please be aware that there will be contractors there all week, conducting a full electrical check.

Hospital visit

Please let Martin know if a church or family member is admitted to Macclesfield or another hospital. Although in current circumstance he can't visit personally he can usually arrange for a Chaplain to do so. Even if the Chaplain can't get to the bedside they can call at the nurses' station and share resources to be taken to the patient.

How to contact the Office

We no longer have Sue in the office, so several volunteers will be trying to keep most office functions going. Please would you be careful to use the correct email address for the purpose of your message.

- For the **newsletter**: stmikesnotices@gmail.com
- For **bookings, building maintenance**: office@stmichaels-macclesfield.org.uk
- For **service details, rotas, anything else**: clergypa@maccteam.org.uk

These email addresses will be accessed at least once per week, but not every day, so don't expect an instant response.

The office phone will also be accessed at least once each week.