



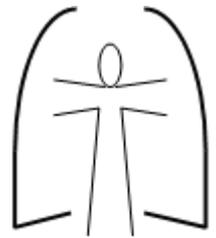
@stmikesmacclesfield



www.stmichaels-macclesfield.org.uk



Follow us on
Instagram



Open Door



ADVENT



The agony of waiting for our Advent Window reveal is nearly over. All will be revealed on **Saturday 5th December from 4pm**

Ed: It's worth the wait I promise

The Agony and the Glory of Waiting

We have all got so used to having immediate answers and responses; waiting seems to be a thing of the past. I read something recently on how to save money and it said to wait 30 days and if you still want it then, go ahead and buy it, but usually the urge goes and the item remains in the shop. Perhaps this waiting mullarkey is a way to reduce consumerism and save money!

In her book 'The Meaning is in the Waiting, the Spirit of Advent', Paula Gooder offers us a pertinent reflection about waiting.

Mary is someone whose whole life was shaped by waiting. We find in her an example of someone who had no choice but to wait: from the moment of our first encounter with her she was called into the way of waiting for Jesus' birth, for him during his life and most of all, for his death. Much of Mary's waiting was neither for something good promised by God, nor for something long expected, but for something she dreaded most. This form of waiting brings a new depth to waiting so far explored.

I may be being tempted to make too much of her final appearance waiting with the disciples for Pentecost in acts 1.14, but it seems to me that this was her first voluntary act of waiting. Jesus' life was now over. She was under no compulsion to wait for him any longer and yet we find her doing it anyway. This choice at a time when, for the first time, she could have made an entirely different choice gives us the merest hint that Mary had learnt a profound lesson about waiting during her lifetime so that she continued to do it even when she didn't have to.

Mary is a character about whom we know a great deal and very little, all at the same time. We know that events of enormous impact affected and shaped her life but we do not know what she made of them. How she related to these events remains unknown. We know that for a large portion of her life she was forced to wait but, again, we do not know how she coped with this. Was she someone who found depth and comprehension in her waiting, or irritation and frustration? Did the waiting enable her to see more clearly or less so? As so often with biblical characters, we are forced to accept how little we know or are going to know about them, so Mary is something of a mystery and will remain so. She stands, an often-silent figure in the Gospels, waiting for Jesus' birth and death, in great joy as well as in great suffering, and symbolizes for us the agony as well as the glory of waiting.

Sue

*extracted from Paula Gooder's book:
'The Meaning is in the Waiting, the Spirit of Advent'*



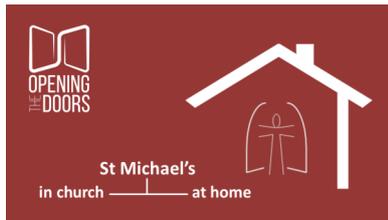
Attached to this newsletter (hard copy and pdf) is a document prepared by Lynne summarising issues discussed and decided upon by the Church Council since September.

Join us for

Sunday Worship

St Michael's Worship 6th December 2020
Second Sunday of Advent
**ONE merged service this week at 10am:
both from home and in church**

To join by Zoom click
on the image or use
Meeting ID:
939 7279 7379
Password: 01625



Service Leader: Lynne Spedding
Talk: Martin Stephens
Reading: Mark 1:1-8

Can't join us live either in church or on Zoom?

Watch the recording of our morning worship service on
Zoom at a time to suit you after Sunday lunchtime [here](#)

No Computer? No problem!

You can still join any of these Zoom meetings and services
with your landline phone

If phoning:

Dial 0330 088 5830.



When prompted, enter the Meeting ID
from any of these boxes followed by #
[For Sunday's service: 939 7279 7379]

When prompted, enter #



Email any [prayer requests](#) here:

Based on this week's lectionary readings:

Resources for adults and families: click [here](#) and
[here](#)

Resources for children: click [here](#)

(or printed with your hard copy newsletter)

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JOIN US ON Zoom

CONNECT WITH YOUR CHURCH FAMILY

Wednesday Morning Discussion
11.00am to 12 noon

Join Zoom meeting [here](#)

Meeting ID: 326 496 3258

Passcode: 01625



Coffee & Chat



*Apologies to those who had problems entering last
week. Please use the link here from now on. Tricia*



Monday House Group:

When? 7.30pm til 9pm Monday evenings

We meet up again Monday 11th January 2021. For
more information contact Martin [by email](#) or 01625
426110

Thursday Homegroup

We meet via Zoom at 7.30pm. During Advent we
shall be discussing an Advent study book. All are
welcome to join for Bible Study, prayer and
fellowship, including by phone. Please contact
David Mayers by [email](#) or phone 01625 420716 or
07963 802659.

Contemplative Prayer

9.10am to 9.40am Savage Chapel every Friday.

DONATIONS: Donating to the
church for general purposes
has been made simpler. Either
click on the blue Donate
button or scan the QR Code.



SCAN ME

Giving to the work and
worship of St Michael's

Click here to donate towards our church's
ministry





David and I took part in the Church Times Advent Retreat on Saturday. This was a lovely opportunity to stop and quietly reflect for a few hours, and refreshing way to start Advent (or to be strictly correct, to prepare ourselves for Advent, which is a time of preparation!). Four well-known Christian writers reflected on the theme of Advent, using poetry: Rachel Mann (talking about the poems of Christina Rossetti), Mark Oakley, Carys Walsh (reflecting on RS Thomas), and Malcolm Guite (his own poetry).

There was lovely worship from St Martins in the Fields to open and close the retreat. If you have appreciated their soprano soloists, it's worth listening just for that. (You can cut out the advertising for the Church Times.)

The retreat can now be accessed clicking on the image above:

Rachel Mayers

If you have been into the Market Place or to church you will have no doubt seen the beautiful display on the church railings. Peter Bradley has quietly and faithfully tended to this display since lockdown began replenishing with fresh flowers and changing the written messages regularly. Thank you Peter for this expression of God's love and hope from the church to the people of Macclesfield when our doors are closed.



Thank you

Christmas Card Exchange

As an Eco church working towards our silver accreditation, we try to encourage you all each Christmas to think of a way of reducing the amount of cards you write to save on paper and perhaps donate the money you would spend on cards and postage to a charity.

This year we are aware that there may be a need amongst us to send one another a Christmas message as we've not seen each other so often **BUT** we don't want any Covid germs to be licked onto envelopes!! So... David Mayers has come up with a clever idea...

Sue will be taking a break with the newsletter after Christmas Eve, so there will be newsletters on Friday 11th & 18th December and then a shorter one on Christmas Eve and then back to normal on 8th January. So, we will have a section in the newsletter for 18th December and Christmas Eve for people to send a personal message and perhaps a photograph to all readers. For anyone from our hard copy newsletter households wishing to send a message, please leave the message on the church answer machine (01625 4121984) by 5pm Wednesday 16th December. Please don't forget to give your name and speak clearly. For others please [email Sue](#) with your message and photo.



Mary and Joseph are making their way through our town. Follow us on Facebook to follow their journey. Photos to follow next week.

0800 804 8044

DailyHOPE

A free phone line of hymns, reflections and prayers

If you'd like to support children through the charity India Direct, please contact Paul Spedding as soon as possible as we are getting close to the final posting date for cards to arrive in time for Christmas. Tel 01625 614819.



Look for the Light

Last week I fell into conversation with a visitor to St Mike's about the presence of evil in the world. He was very angry and upset and referred to such things as the horseman of the apocalypse. He talked about conspiracy theories and a sinister movement to control all the people of the earth. He seemed to know quite a bit about the dark side of life, but this was making his life dark; he really did seem to be bound up in an unhappy and distressing state of mind.

I agreed with him that there is darkness in the world and even evil but that, as Christians, we don't concentrate on that, we concentrate on the message of Jesus. I suggested he stop reading Revelation and start to read the Gospels. I tried to get him to think of all the positive and hopeful things that have happened during this time – people helping each other, appreciation for the NHS and shop workers etc. I prayed with him.

For us, it is really important that, as Christians we spread the message of light, the message of love, the message of Comfort and Joy.

I have set up a little display in the Welcome Area which encourages us to focus on the light, not darkness. I have put an ambulance there as an example of seeing the light in the situation. If you can think of other items please feel free to add – I wanted to use the sign for the NHS but couldn't find one. Also, don't forget to write a postcard telling us what has brought you Comfort and Joy during this time.

Tricia Atherton

Let's focus on the light because:
'It is when a person walks at night that they stumble, for they have no light.' John 11.10

Don't fill your life and mind with darkness, instead...
'Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honourable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable. Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.'

Philippians 4:8

And because:
'The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it.'
John 1.5

And this:
'This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but people loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil.'

John 3.19

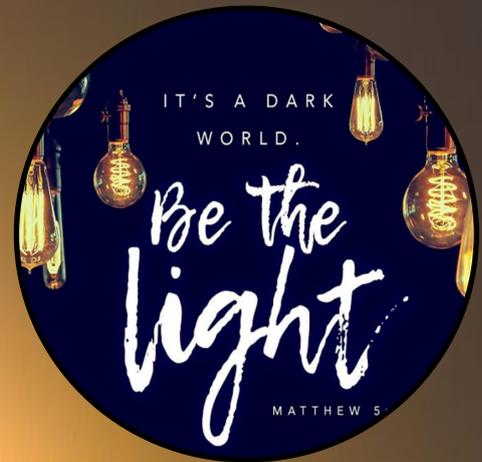
Oh dear, no wonder we are in a mess!

I wonder what the disciples felt when Jesus said this to them:

'You are the light of the world.'

Matthew 5.14

Focus on the Light



Government calls for individuals to respond to Faith Engagement Review

FAITH ENGAGEMENT REVIEW - CALL FOR EVIDENCE

On 10 October 2019 the Government announced that Colin Bloom had been appointed as the Faith Engagement Adviser at the Ministry for Housing Communities and Local Government (MHCLG). As Faith Engagement Adviser, Colin is leading a review into how best the Government should engage with faith groups in England. He will make recommendations to the Communities Secretary about how the government can best celebrate and support the contribution of faith groups, break down barriers and promote acceptance between faiths, and promote shared values while tackling cultures and practices that are harmful.

This Call for Evidence aims to collect views from the public and from experts in the subject; these views will help underpin this review's recommendations.

The last few months have been very challenging for places of worship and people of faith. The significant restrictions that have been put in place to control the spread of the virus have limited people's ability to worship, practice and celebrate their faith as they normally would. This review began before the Covid-19 pandemic, but it is timely as the recommendations may well come to strengthen how government engages with faith groups during the Covid-19 recovery phase and beyond.

The call for evidence will pose a series of questions around how those of all faiths, or none, perceive the Government's engagement with faith organisations. Because the review is specifically about faith and religion, priority will be given to responses that fit within those parameters. However, space is given for respondents to share their views in a way that they feel is appropriate.

Colin Bloom's initial proposal is to structure the review around four main sections.

- The first section asks the question, "Are faith groups, places of worship and people of faith a force for good in society?"
- The second section explores the extent to which Government and its agencies have sufficient faith literacy and considers the partnership between faith groups and the State.
- The third section looks at some aspects where harm might be caused through religious or faith-based practices and a review of the Government's role in tackling them.
- The fourth and final section will be a set of recommendations for the Government to consider and respond to.

Respondents should feel free to make use of a range of sources, reports, case studies, surveys or even personal anecdotes to underpin their points where a general response is requested.

If you find any of the issues covered within the call for evidence upsetting and require support please consider contacting a support helpline.

- Samaritans 116 123
- CALM for men Spm – midnight 0800 58 58 58
- Rhapsy Sam to midnight 0800 068 41 41 or text 07860 039967
- Childline 0800 1111
- Forced Marriage Unit 020 7008 0151

The Bishop of London, Sarah Mullally, has welcomed the opportunity for people nationally to respond to an independent review on Government engagement with faith communities, which will help to shape relationships now and in the future.

The review, which predates the Covid-19 pandemic, will nonetheless inform how government engages with faith groups during the Covid-19 recovery phase and beyond.

Sarah Mullally, who leads the Church of England's Recovery Group, said: "Faith is at the heart of so many of our communities, across the length and breadth of the country.

"This welcome consultation from the Government is an opportunity to demonstrate and explore how faith enriches and empowers our lives and our relationships with one another.

"I believe it can play a fundamental role in building a stronger, more tolerant society for the future.

"I would urge as many people as possible to get involved by responding to the consultation, ensuring that the voices of our faith communities are heard."

This consultation will last until 11 December 2020. More information is [here](#)

Click above image to take the survey (15-20 mins)



Christmas Jumper Day Sunday Worship: 13th December 2020

To help celebrate Christmas Jumper Day (11th December) we are encouraging you to wear your Christmas jumper for our Sunday Worship Service on 13th December. Save the Children are one of the main charities being supported by this initiative, so please consider making them a minimum donation of £2.00 in return for wearing your jumper. You may also like to donate to the Children's Society, as many other charities are running this idea too.



OPEN for Private Prayer
Monday to Saturday

11am to 1pm

Still here for you...

A huge thank you to David & Sheena Smith who have prepared the beautiful Advent wreath this year and decorated the window ledges along the north aisle.

Thank you also to Chris Wightman for ordering our tree and to Judith and her team of helpers: Matt Lewis and the Radmall family who moved the tree into position and have decorated it.

Over the course of the next few weeks members of the Flower Team will be decorating the church as they usually do at this time of year, although decorations will be more scaled down this year, which is fitting for how we all find ourselves this year. Thank you to everyone on the Flower Team.

Anne Kite





Help Our Scout & Guide Group

Our Macclesfield Parish Church Scout and Guide groups are holding a Virtual Balloon Race. As their next exciting 'Raise the Roof' fundraiser.

A virtual race works in the same way as a helium balloon race, but they fly around their own webpage rather than in the atmosphere.

Each balloon costs £3. You can choose your own colour/design and even add your own message to put on the tag.

On Thursday 24th December 2020 all the balloons will be 'released' and left to fly over the snowy mountains. Every hour each balloon travels between 1km and 20km. At the end of the race on Thursday 31st December 2020 the balloon which has travelled the farthest wins their choice of 'top prize' with additional prizes available for 2nd, 3rd, and 4th place.

Once the race has started you can track your balloons on our own race page: <https://www.balloonrace.com/MPCSG>

To buy your balloons please click the 'buy a balloon' button on our race page [here](#) and select to buy single or multiple balloons. Payment is made online via paypal. The deadline to buy a balloon is Tuesday 22nd December.

Thank you for your support and good luck!

Mike Brown

Group Scout Leader and member of our church

At Home in Advent Book co-ordinated by Sallie

We shall be meeting on Mondays by Zoom at 7pm:-

7th December	14th December	21st December
28th December	4th January 2021	

To join click [here](#)

Meeting ID: 915 3448 5480 Passcode: Advent

The book is split into 5 sections. The idea is, for those who wish to be part of the group, to discuss one section each week. According to the dates we will not have read the complete section. This does not matter, just share from what you have read - "What has struck you this week?" When I last spoke with Emily at the Hope Centre there were still a few copies left for anyone interested who doesn't have the book. *Sallie*

Sunday 13th December
9am- 9.45am
Christingle

The Children's Society welcomes you to its first ever National Christingle Service in partnership with the Church of England. This will be streamed on the Church of England's website, Facebook and YouTube channels

Register your interest to receive information on how to watch online [here](#), join in with Christingle making and download the Order of Service.

DONATE NOW

Click on the image to donate online OR

Call 0300 303 7000 and they can securely take your payment.

OR Send a cheque payable to The Children's Society to:

Freepost RSYH-HEEE-XZEG, The Children's Society
50 Banner Street, London, EC1Y 8ST



Advent in church: there will be further opportunities to reflect on Advent and Christmas during the "Church Open" hours of 11am – 1pm each day (except Sunday).

We will be sharing a poem, some music, a picture, a prayer and a brief reflection for each of the four weeks of Advent; based on the themes suggested in the Roots materials:

Waiting in the Dark
What Happens in the Wilderness
The mystery of the Messiah
God's Ridiculous Plan

Christmas issue of
Chester Diocesan News
is now out.

Hard copy attached for
offline readers or click
on image to view.

Chester
Diocesan News



#EverydayFaith across the Diocese of Chester | December 2020

Comfort and Joy



Archdeacon Ian Bishop Pg 2

Comfort and Joy Christmas campaign Pg 4

Planning for Christmas Pg 6

Other Books:

The Art of Advent : [Martin Stephens](#)

Into the Heart of Advent: [David Mayers](#)

Haphazard by Starlight: [Tricia Atherton](#)



The Tale of Two Advent Sundays

Advent Sunday Reflection

Advent Sunday 2019: one million people processing, wordlessly processing through the streets of Aksum, dressed in their pristine white wraps over their Sunday best. Women with amazing hairdos with intricate braids. All heading for the church of Maryam Zion and the open square beside it, and returning equally peacefully. One million people, tightly packed, and I didn't feel at all threatened. Obviously devout and intent of purpose, celebrating the supposed presence of the Ark of the Covenant, although I must admit we didn't quite work out what the worship was about (well it was in Tigrayan!). The night before, on our journey towards the town, we had passed countless pilgrims walking from surrounding villages towards the city, many barefoot, others in sandals. There was no room "at the inn" and many slept overnight on the street, or just timed their journey to arrive in time for the procession. Not quite the Advent Sunday I am used to, but very moving nonetheless.

Ethiopia was a country of hope: it had recovered from the famine and civil war of the 1990's and was developing its tourist industry, training many young graduates as guides and organisers who were enthusiastically sharing their beautiful country with us, and an increasing number of others. The economy was beginning to thrive.

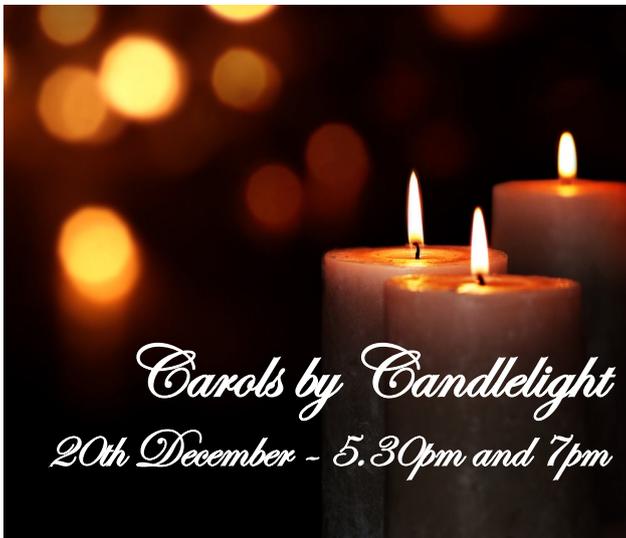
You will recall that this time last year David and Rachel Mayers were just returning from their trip to Ethiopia. They had planned an evening back in March to share their photos and experiences of their trip but Covid meant this evening was sadly cancelled.

Advent Sunday 2020: The tourist industry suddenly collapsed with the threat and arrival of COVID-19. One of our guides told us that he had had no option but to join the army as the only way to support his family. There was a lethal epidemic of measles. A record-breaking plague of locusts descended, devastating harvests for subsistence farmers. How much more can the country take? In Tigray (Northern Ethiopia) soldiers from a regional force (TPLF) have turned against the army; power and phone lines have been cut; thousands of refugees are flooding to the border with Sudan; the regional capital, Mekele, is under siege and there are fears of ethnic cleansing and rumours of massacre.

Was there a festival this year? It would hardly be socially-distanced! Will they feel the pain at being deprived of their festival as we are facing the limitation of ours?

When life feels dark for us, remember that even our darkness is brightness compared to this. Thinking of this brings home the darkness of our world, of human failing and natural dangers. Christ came that we might all be redeemed from this and will come again to redeem the world. May Jesus come to the people of Tigray in their pain and distress, so that they can look forward in hope. Please pray for the people of Ethiopia, that God will work in that beautiful country and peace and harmony will return.

Rachel Mayers



Booking Arrangements for these Services

Over Christmas we will be having a Crib Service and Carols By Candlelight. Both of these are usually very popular but this year, due to the constraints of social distancing, we will be unable to accommodate the size of congregation we would normally have. Therefore, it will be necessary for people to book in advance if they wish to attend these services. Here's how the booking will work ..

The Carols By Candlelight service will be shorter than in previous years with no congregation carols. The service will last about 45 minutes and will be run twice on Sunday 20th December, firstly at 5:30pm then again at 7:00pm. The Crib Service will be at 4:00pm on Christmas Eve, Thursday 24th Dec.

If you wish to attend any of these three events, then you need to reserve your place using an online booking service set up especially for this purpose. Booking is free but limited. You do not need to book if you are participating in the service either as a choir member at Carols By Candlelight or as a band member at the Crib Service. You do not need to book if you are on duty as a steward. Everyone else needs to book their place.

These links will be on the website in the next few days and on Facebook and feel free to share these with others you know.

If you don't have access to the internet then get someone else to book for you, or contact the church office on 01625 421984

and leave a message on the answerphone if out-of-hours. Be assured this will be checked for messages on Saturday.

When you book you can reserve up to five seats for members of your own family or social bubble. You will be asked to enter your name, email address and mobile phone number. This data will be retained for NHS Track & Trace purposes. You should see confirmation of your booking on screen and also receive a confirmation email to the email address you provided.

When you come to the service you don't need to bring anything with you .. we will have a door list with the names of everyone who has booked and the number of seats they have reserved.

All attendees will get a reminder email a few days before the service. If people book and then have to cancel they will be able to do so and we'll have a waiting list to replace any such cancellations.

Hope that's all fairly clear. Really sorry that we have to constrain numbers in this way but I'm sure you all fully understand. Any problems please contact me at paul@lowerbeechfarm.co.uk or on 07879 446906.

Paul Simms

Book online from midday on Sunday 6th December by clicking on the service you wish to attend below

