

@stmikesmacclesfield



www.stmichaels-macclesfield.org.uk

## Looking back, and looking forward

"How was your Christmas?"

"Did you do anything special over New Year?"

I wonder how many times you were asked (or you asked!) either of these questions recently?



Looking at the TV & radio schedules for December, you'll find a multitude of 'reviews of the year'; programmes which remind us of what happened (in news and sport, in particular), but also who rose to prominence or fell from the celebrity spotlight during the previous 12 months.

If, together, we were to present something similar as a church, there'd be

- some common elements and activities as the obvious high points of 2024. *What do you think they would be?*
- some shared sadnesses, especially as we remember people no longer with us.
- And then the programme might wind up with a much wider array of 'and finally's, as individuals' preferences and levels of engagement affect what's brought to mind for them.

Such thoughts about looking back aren't for the sake of seeing last year through rose-tinted spectacles, reminiscing to hold out for a feel-good factor to counter the winter blues of mid-January – though such an emotional boost might be forthcoming. No, the benefit of reviewing the past is to help us see more clearly our future, and – whatever that might look like at the start of the year – how we might be prepared for it and, if we can, act differently for it to be better.

What's prompted such thinking for me (apart from the turn of the calendar to a new year) is the fact that, over a 48-hour period this week I have:

- welcomed Vivien Gisby as a new (additional) colleague within St Michael's – a preliminary for which was Vivien and I agreeing how she would serve in this voluntary capacity;
- taken part in a review of last year's Crib Service, asking how can we improve it for 2025?
- had an 'MDR' (Ministry Development Review) conversation with Bishop Sam, where I was reflecting on my calling to this parish and the Macclesfield Team and what support and/or adjustments would help me flourish going forwards;
- had a supervision session with Martin Bancroft, our Reader-in-training – reflecting with him about his progress-to-date, prior to his expected licensing (due later this year);
- met with Ruth Parker's family to make arrangements for her funeral (at 10am on 27<sup>th</sup> January in St Michael's) – a process that involves remembering her life and seeking to ensure the service is 'Ruth-shaped'.

Also, on Thursday, the Church Council will consider the areas of church life where St Michael's is most vulnerable, such that we might do something proactively about it/them.

Oh, and there's the joy of seeing contractors in the Nave, starting to install temporary lighting, ahead of ripping out and replacing the old lights. What a brighter 2025 we have ahead of us!

Seriously though, through all the above, I hope you can see how – by thinking and/or talking about something of the past, we are seeking to make adjustments and changes for the future to be better?

In personal terms, I hope you see how, by asking Vivien, Martin B or myself appropriate questions, we can identify what energises us – so let's apply those passions and strengths in the best way! – but also what's difficult or drains us? Do we need support and more opportunities to grow in these areas, or simply find other people and ways to minimise any negative impact of such aspects of the role?

So, for you, for 2025, have you thought about an MDR?

If you'd like some help to reflect on 'your ministry' then have a chat with a friend, with Vivien or with me.

*Mark*



*During Sunday evening's Choral Evensong, Vivien was formally welcomed by Bishop Sam as Associate Minister at St Michael's. Here she is with + Sam and Martin, standing appropriately in front of the 'Welcome' banner!*

## The Collect for the Second Sunday of Epiphany

Eternal Lord,  
our beginning and our end:  
bring us with the whole creation  
to your glory, hidden through past ages  
and made known  
in Jesus Christ our Lord.

## The Posada

A report on Mary and Joseph's journey to the Nativity, from Tricia Atherton

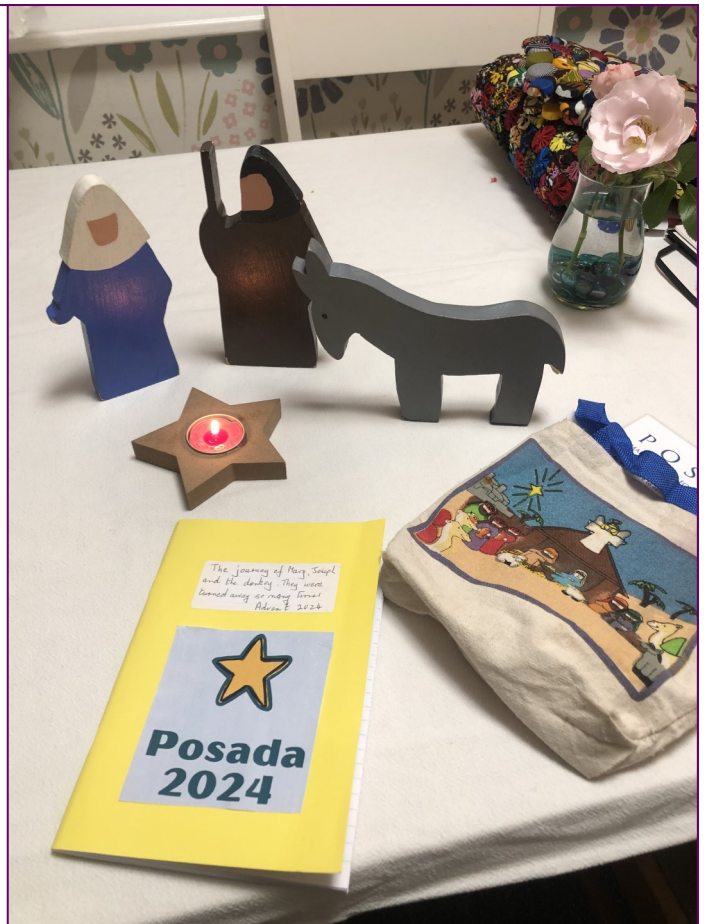
**The Posada Journal is available to read: please ask Tricia if you would like to do so.**

Thank you to all the kind folk who hosted Mary, Joseph and the donkey on their journey to the stable. They certainly had a very interesting time and met some very kind people. One of our hosts was interested in how far Mary and Joseph travelled from Nazareth to Bethlehem - the distance is approximately 90 miles. This year our Posada travelled a minimum mileage of 85.9 miles.

This year's journal is possibly the best ever! Here are some glimpses into their trip.

They were made welcome at so many activities and visits and by such a variety of people. What a lovely community to be part of!

- Start the Week
- Coffee morning at St Peter's
- Knitting club
- Faith Journey Group at St Albans
- Thursday morning Holy Communion at St Mikes
- Home Communion with our dear friend Marion
- The Angel Festival at All Saints'
- A big party and getting abandoned in the bad weather
- The Monday afternoon homegroup
- Home Communion visits to people who are sometimes in despair
- Safe places in quiet homes after some hustle and bustle when they realised that the prayer of hope is badly needed
- Singing in some of the pubs in town, they met some fun loving people
- Bollinbrook School and the Church Children's party at St Mikes which included a snowball fight – a completely new experience for them
- Sharing the Advent Calendar reflections
- Families being reunited for Christmas



They attended several Carol services including the Advent Carols, Christingle, Town Carol Service with the Silk Brass Band, the Nativity Service where they enjoyed a story with a difference, the beauty of the singing at the Carols by Candlelight, and eventually they arrived at the Crib Service where the baby was born! At last! They called him Jesus.

Here's a quote from one of the hosts, Rakesh:

**"I was wondering what sort of learning I would get from this years' experience of the Posada...** When we sat down for prayers before dinner I lit the candle. The wick was too small and it was more or less burnt. However, the light was burning, like a star in a faraway sky. You would have to look twice to see that it was still burning. Sonia started praying and I was wondering if the candle would last until we finished the prayer. Deep down inside, I was hoping that it would. Once we had finished I opened my eyes with more HOPE than ever to see the candle still burning. That's when I realised this is my learning – the same hope that

- Mary and Joseph had of the new-born
- The Jews had in the coming of the Messiah
- You and I have today and forever that Jesus Christ, the true Son of God, came to this earth for us"

Thankyou and Praise God in the Highest that God understands our needs and loves us. Let us continue this walk of faith together into 2025 – supporting and caring for each other and for those around us.

Tricia

## Amplified

Silent Disco at Calvary Church on Sunday 19<sup>th</sup> January 6.00 - 9.00pm

Katy Herrera, the Children and Youth Adviser for Chester Diocese will be visiting, so the event will be starting an hour earlier at 6:00 pm to have time for the Silent Disco afterwards, which will start after Amplified at about 7:40 pm.

For further information and to book, please visit:

<https://holytrinityhursfield.churchsuite.com/events/veobonjq>



## Graham's New Book

Graham Turner, Rector at St Mike's before Martin, has just had his latest book published.

It's called "Embarrassed" - apparently Graham found it difficult explaining his vocation to his non-Christian friends and often felt awkward around Christians. In this book he describes how he struggled to feel at ease in ordained ministry.

In case you can't easily read the blurb below, here's the first paragraph: 'Jesus was never the problem: following him was a no-brainer. But Graham found himself often ill-at-ease in church and around Christians. His story is one of honest embarrassment and makes for compelling reading.' *Andy Raine author and founder of the Northumbria Community*

You can order the book online - flyers are available in the Welcome Area at church.

Several members of St Mike's have read this book as part of the proofing process and can certainly recommend it.

## Electoral Roll – Important Information



The Electoral Roll is effectively the 'membership list' for the Church. Anyone aged 16+ who feels a sense of commitment to St Michael's can apply to be on the Electoral Roll. The person who updates and manages this for us is Lynn Brandwood.

Many of you will know that the electoral roll is updated each year. However, every 6th year we need to prepare a completely new electoral roll before the APCM.

This year is one such year.

### Electoral Roll



This means that everyone who is eligible and wants to be part of the electoral roll needs to complete a new form, even if you have done so before.

Next week we will be sending out emails and forms to all members of the congregation and to those who are currently on the electoral roll so they can be completed.

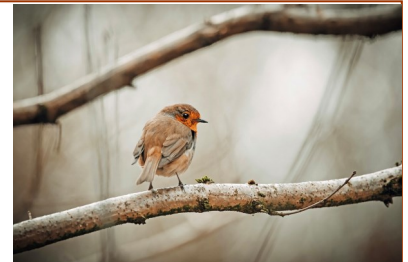
We will also have paper copies available in church. Look out for these please.

If you have any questions please email Lynn Brandwood at: [ER@stmichaels-macclesfield.org.uk](mailto:ER@stmichaels-macclesfield.org.uk) or speak to her at church.

## RSPB Big Garden Bird Watch:

24th-26th January

The Diocese is encouraging as many of us as possible to take part in the RSPB Bird Watch.



As we are an Eco-Church, we are mindful of nature and this is a great opportunity to take part in 'citizen science' and to improve our knowledge of wildlife locally and across the country.

It's free to take part and takes just one hour to watch either through the window or step outside.

Why not offer warm drinks to people and ask them to come and join you?

For more information, click [here](#)

## Prayer Vigil for Peace at St Alban's

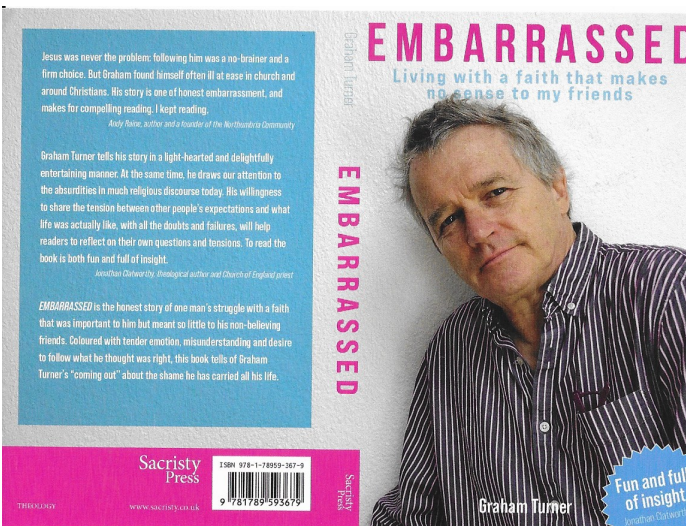
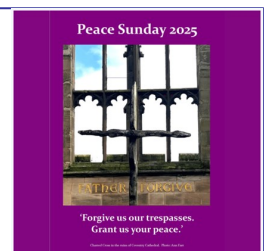
Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> January

8.00-9.00pm

One hour of reflection, Taizé chants, silence and prayer for Peace and Christian Unity.

In a world riven by war and violence it is important to pray for peace, and remind ourselves of the 'tapestry of hope' that also exists in the world

18<sup>th</sup> January is the eve of Peace Sunday for the Roman Catholic Church. It is also the first day of the WPCU (Week of Prayer for Christian Unity 18-25 January).



"Faith in our neck of the woods was a mixture of courage and arrogance, wisdom and naivety. This only became a problem just before I entered my teens. Then, I began to harbour a secret that has persisted my whole life—until now."

To be published: 15th January 2025





## Four Friends

At  
Macclesfield  
Library

## Painting

At  
Macclesfield  
Library

Catherine Stephens, Hilary Raymond  
Hilary Plymen and John Staveley  
An exhibition of paintings by four local artists.  
From the Monday 3<sup>rd</sup> to  
Saturday 15<sup>th</sup> February



### Four Friends Painting

Please see the above poster for information on a forthcoming art exhibition, featuring artists who belong to St Mike's Church Family / attend our Contemplative Prayer sessions.

### Ruth Parker: Funeral

Ruth's funeral will take place at St Michael's on Monday 27th January at 10.00, followed by the committal at the crematorium, with a wake at Sutton Hall afterwards.



### Film Evenings 2025

Please sign on the sheet on the notice-board in the Welcome Area if you intend to come along.

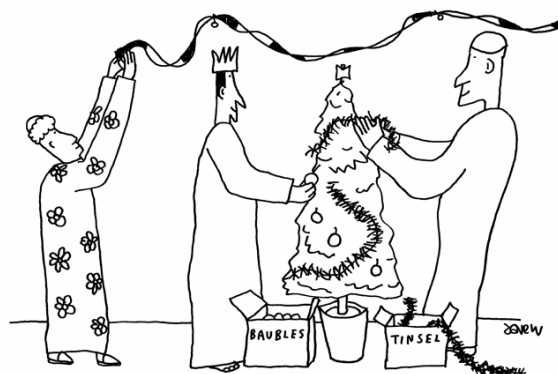


**Friday 24th January: 'One Life'** Starring Anthony Hopkins, Johnny Flynn and Helena Bonham-Carter. Even if you saw this at the cinema last year, it's *well* worth another viewing.

**Friday 7th February: 'Marvellous'** Starring Toby Jones. A funny and moving film.

**Friday 28th February** - by popular demand, **sing-along-a-Mama Mia!** (date now confirmed)

The evenings start at 6.30pm and include tea and cakes!



EPIPHANY: THE WISE MEN /  
TAKING DOWN THE CHRISTMAS DECORATIONS



### Choral Evensong - with a difference!

When Bishop Sam joined us for Choral Evensong on Sunday- a special service to welcome Vivien as Associate Minister at St Mike's - the choir looked distinctly unusual.

Gone were the usual choir-ropes and, instead, members were wrapped in scarves, coats and woolly hats. It was perishingly cold, as the boiler had packed up. Congregation and choir members alike valiantly withstood the challenging temperature and experienced a service to remember (for various reasons).

Welcome, Vivien!

### Epiphany

#### Meaning:

a revealing, a manifestation, a showing forth.

Bible readings for Epiphany, in which Jesus is 'manifested' as God's Chosen One:

- The visit of the Magi to the infant Jesus
- The baptism of Jesus
- The wedding at Cana (turning water into wine)
- Jesus preaches in the synagogue at the start of his ministry.

In the Eastern Orthodox Church, the Epiphany is called the **Theophany**, meaning the showing forth or manifestation of the deity (of God)

## Could you be an OWL?!

### Woo-hoo!

(No, not that sort - an Occasional Worship Leader!)

Since the Diocese launched this scheme, over 100 people have trained to become OWLs (Occasional Worship Leaders).

Dates for three more courses in 2025 are available, in different locations. The next 4-week course for those training to be OWLs starts in Daresbury on 4th February 2025.

The course is for those who find themselves leading worship on an occasional basis, (no more than once a month) and do not feel called to licensed or ordained ministry. The 4-week course in Leading Public Worship is part of the process of becoming a locally authorised Occasional Worship Leader. The course works for people who have been leading worship for years as well as people who are starting out.

*Nine at St Michael's undertook this training last year, and you will see them now leading services occasionally.*

*If you feel this is something you might be interested in, speak in the first place with Revd Martin. If you would like to chat about it to someone who has undertaken the training, our OWLs are Barbara, Catherine, Esther, Heike, Martin B., Paul Simms, Sallie, Sue and Tricia A.*

**For more information, click [here](#):**

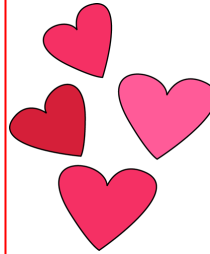


## Valentine's with a Difference

### Foodie Friday Friday 14th Feb.

A delicious, pay as you feel, three-course meal from surplus food

Angel  
at my Table



**EVERYONE is welcome.**

Those who can pay enable those who can't. God loves everyone.

Arrive at 6.00pm for a 6.30pm start

**Booking is essential via the café or the church office (01625 421984)**



### These hands

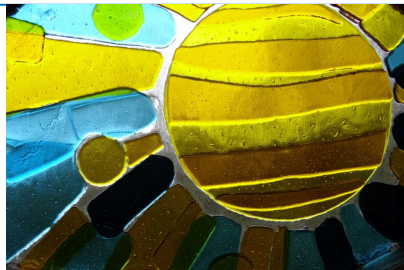
These hands are the hands of a carpenter  
The strong, skilful, careful hands  
Hands of compassion  
Of healing  
Of love

Copyright- Tricia Atherton

## Created to Create

### Foxhill Retreat

A visual arts-focused retreat for all with Tom Studman and Jo Whittall.



Created to Create

7th Mar, 4.00pm - 9th Mar, 2.00pm  
Foxhill, Tarvin Road, Frodsham WA6 6XB, UK

£250 per person ~ includes en-suite accommodation, meals and refreshments.

Immerse yourself in the transformative power of art and faith at a Visual Arts Retreat! Whether you're a seasoned artist or can barely manage stick figures, this inspiring weekend is designed for everyone.

Guided by Reverend Tom Studman and Jo Whittall, you'll explore how the creative process can become a sacred journey, revealing God's presence and compassion in beautifully intimate moments. Through a participatory art project and plenty of opportunities for independent artmaking, you'll connect with the Holy Spirit in fresh and meaningful ways. Uncover your creative character and encounter our Creator.

For more information and to book, click [here](#).

## ECO-tip

Recycle your Christmas trees! (only if you had a real tree, of course!).

East Cheshire Hospice will collect your tree this coming weekend 18th/19th January, and save you taking it to the tip in your car. The trees will be chipped and used as mulch by the council. Register your tree at <https://www.eastcheshirehospice.org.uk/support/echtrees/> - it's not too late!



Pictured are the two trees from church awaiting collection in the churchyard - but therein lies a mystery. The trees disappeared for a week: does anyone know where they were?

Join us for *Worship*



### Sunday Worship

19th January 2025

Third Sunday of Epiphany

#### 10:00am: Church Family Communion

Bible Reading: John 2:1-11

Leader and Celebrant: Revd Martin Stephens

Speaker: Revd Vivien Gisby

Please use the link below to stream this  
(and previous services) on YouTube

<https://www.youtube.com/@stmikesmacclesfield>

### Start the Week

Every Monday from 7.30am in church

Morning Prayer at 8.30 am in church and also on Facebook

<https://www.facebook.com/stmikesmacclesfield>

### Wednesday Morning Prayer Group

Alternate Wednesdays at 10:30 am in the Savage Chapel  
lasting 30-40 minutes.

**May be subject to change owing to the lighting work**  
**Next taking place on Wednesday 22nd January**

### Thursday Morning Worship 10:30am (35-40 mins)

Our midweek services follow the order from  
the Book of Common Prayer (traditional language) and  
alternate between Morning Prayer and Holy Communion

**23rd January: Morning Prayer**

**30th January: Holy Communion**

### Thursday Homegroup

Meeting for Bible study and prayer –  
Morning and Evening groups

Please contact Eve & David Budgett (431606)  
or David Mayers (420716) for more information



### Contemplative Prayer

For the duration of the lighting work, this will take place on  
**Saturdays, 9.20-9.50 in the Savage Chapel**, lasting half an  
hour. An opportunity for quiet prayer followed by a short chat.

### Compline/Night Prayer

Every Friday

Topic: Night Prayer | Time: 8.30 pm Join  
Zoom Meeting; [https://](https://us04web.zoom.us/j/75676947476?pwd=R2twT2pQbTFzUGR5bk1reDZ0VXdaZz09)

[us04web.zoom.us/j/75676947476?](https://us04web.zoom.us/j/75676947476?pwd=R2twT2pQbTFzUGR5bk1reDZ0VXdaZz09)  
[pwd=R2twT2pQbTFzUGR5bk1reDZ0VXdaZz09](https://us04web.zoom.us/j/75676947476?pwd=R2twT2pQbTFzUGR5bk1reDZ0VXdaZz09)

Meeting ID: 756 7694 7476

Passcode: compline



Most activities during the week at church should be  
unaffected by the lighting works, but please check if  
you are in doubt. However, **Contemplative Prayer**  
will take place on **Saturday** mornings rather than  
Friday (9.20-9.50 in the Savage Chapel).

### Share your Photos with St Mike's Church Family



If you have any photographs of recent  
activities you have been involved in which you would like  
including in the weekly bulletin/newsletter or in the Church  
Family News slot in Sunday services, please use this number  
to WhatsApp them to the relevant people:

+44 7579 820265

You can, of course, also email pictures and text to  
[stmikesnotices@gmail.com](mailto:stmikesnotices@gmail.com)

### How to contact the office...



Phone: Landline: 01625 421984

#### Email addresses:

- **Isobel** [clergypa@maccteam.org.uk](mailto:clergypa@maccteam.org.uk) for  
ministry issues
- **Elaine** [office@stmichaels-macclesfield.org.uk](mailto:office@stmichaels-macclesfield.org.uk)  
for bookings and building matters
- **Bulletin/Newsletter** [stmikesnotices@gmail.com](mailto:stmikesnotices@gmail.com)
- **Printing** [maccteamprinting@gmail.com](mailto:maccteamprinting@gmail.com)
- **Safeguarding** see box below

**Postal Address:** The Office, St Michael's Church, Market  
Place, Macclesfield, SK10 1DY

**Elaine's office hours** are usually Monday, Tuesday and  
**Thursday 9:30am – 1:30 pm**

**Isobel's Office hours** are usually Monday & Wednesday  
**9.00-3.00; and Thursday & Friday 9.00 - 1.00**

### Safeguarding Contact Information



If you have any safeguarding concerns,  
please contact the St Michael's  
Safeguarding Officer, Katie Wilcock:

Phone: 07438 807213

Email: [safeguarding@stmichaels-macclesfield.org.uk](mailto:safeguarding@stmichaels-macclesfield.org.uk)



### Donating to St Michael's is easy!

Scan this QR Code or use  
the **contactless donation**  
point in the Welcome  
Area



Email any prayer requests [here](#)

*(your request will be circulated  
confidentially to a limited group of people  
who will pray for you)*

