



LET US PRAY

**St Michael & All Angels, Macclesfield
Advent & Christmas
December 2020**

“Pray in the Spirit on all occasions.”
(Ephesians 6:18, NIV)

“Prayer is not a technique. It’s not ‘If you press the right buttons in the right order then God answers’. That’s not how it works!

Prayer is about breaking open our hearts in front of God, so everything in us is open and transparent to God.”

++Justin Welby, Archbishop of Canterbury

This leaflet is to assist us with praying together as a church community. Please use these texts in your own worship and private prayer.

You don't have to know any particular prayers to pray. In fact, fixed texts can sometimes get in the way! However, the ones included here may help you. We hope you find it useful.

Season of ‘TODAY’ - every day!

Offer today as a day in which to encounter God afresh

Christ as a light: illumine and guide me; Christ as a shield: o’ershadow me.

Christ under me: Christ over me; Christ beside me: on my left and my right.

This day be within: and without me; Lowly and meek: yet all-powerful.

Be in the heart of each to whom I speak: in the mouth of each who speaks unto me.

This day be within: and without me; Lowly and meek: yet all-powerful.

Christ as a light: Christ as a shield; Christ beside me: on my left and my right.

from the Northumbria Community

Season of Advent from 29th Nov to 24th Dec

This year St Michael’s is far less busy as a venue than in previous years.

Pray for the schools, charities and community organisations whose planned activities and annual celebrations have been affected by the pandemic.

Thank God for the authors of the four books we've suggested for Advent.

Pray for our church members using this season for reading & reflection, pondering & preparation. Pray that God would meet with them as they share the Advent journey with others.

Dear Jesus, in this year, when everything’s been all topsy-turvy, help us during Advent to hear Your voice, and focus on what’s really important.

As we prepare to celebrate Christmas, will you prepare us to meet with you?

Season of Christmas from 25th Dec to 5th Jan

A strange season of celebration this year! The same ‘reason for the season’ - the birth of Jesus - but everything so different.

Together with churches across England we pray for the Comfort and Joy of God to surround and touch the lives of our community and our nation. For some this is a time of deep anxiety; for others there’s the sharp sting of separation, and sorrow grieving over loved ones no longer here.

God of comfort and joy, may we know Your presence with us today.

Bring Your gentle, joyful love to others this Christmas. Especially I pray for N and N. Be present to them, and give them peace, now and always.
Amen.

Our Church's mission and worship at this time of year

For extended periods this past year our church buildings having been closed for public worship; the general public may think we've shut up shop (how prophetic that image was at our Vision Day in February!)

Pray that our engagement with members of the public – through individual conversations, postings on Facebook of our Posada characters travelling around town, the Advent Window Trail, and more – not only 'keep the rumour of God' alive but increase curiosity.

Pray for Karen and the choir as they prepare for worship through our Carols by Candlelight services (20th Dec), and the team producing a Crib service for Christmas Eve. (*Note: these will be ticket-only events but free.*)

Our Church School – Bollinbrook Primary

Lynne Le Marinel (Head), Jenny Chadwick (Deputy) and the staff team have been **absolutely amazing** this past year – not only managing to keep the school open at every possible opportunity but supporting pupils and families throughout the difficulties.

Thank God for the staff team, and pray for the whole school community. Particularly pray that as the children are supported to make sense of this past year the account of the birth of Jesus would speak to them of finding God in the midst of the 'mess' of the stable, and in the midst of the mess of our lives too.

Our Town

Businesses have had such a hard time of it. Linda Butler knows. As she organises the 'Messy Sheep trail' (see below) she chats to shop owners and business managers and hears of their angst and worries.

The Christmas story includes business owners (inn-keepers) who are snowed under with work, and shepherds who are enduring more dangerous conditions in the hills. God, in Jesus, came to such as them.

'Do not be afraid' are frequent words from God; pray these over our town's various businesses, including retail and hospitality.

Messy Sheep trail: sheep looking for Jesus are lost around town and children are invited to look for them (copies of the trail available from St Michael's and the Visitor Information Centre).

Our church's ministry

During the winter, churches work together across Macclesfield to host a night shelter every weekend in the town for homeless people. This year the arrangements will be different because of the pandemic, with a single venue being used throughout (the former Revolution Bar/Majestic cinema).

Give thanks for the large team of volunteers who enable this to happen, and pray for those people who are in need of the shelter – that they would encounter the love of God through the care and compassion shown.

*God of compassion, your love for humanity was revealed in Jesus,
whose earthly life began in the poverty of a stable
and ended in the pain and isolation of the cross:*

we hold before you those who are homeless and cold.

*Draw near and comfort them in spirit, and bless those who work to
provide them with shelter, food and friendship. In Jesus' name, Amen.*

Pray too for other organisations working with vulnerable people, including Reach Out and Recover (ROAR), Just Drop In (Just Drop In), Space for Autism, Cre8 Project Grow, Cheshire Streetwise ... and more.

Our Church life

Thank God for the community of St Michael's, and for the individuals of it. You won't be able to name everyone, but please think about and pray for the various groupings of it (*older/younger, online/offline, long-standing/newbies, 9.30am/11am/6.30pm, Sunday/weekday, etc, etc*). Please pray for a strengthening sense of belonging together, and for a deepening faith, even as we can't all meet together.

Pray for the work of our pastoral co-ordinators and Home Communion team as they make phone contact with some of the more isolated members of St Michael's.

Lord we believe that we are ordinary people made extraordinary through your vision and power. Take our insecurities and feelings of inadequacy and give us the courage to see ourselves and others as you see us, with gifts and potential to transform your world and build your Kingdom. Amen.