



## **PARISH MAGAZINE**

**APRIL 2020**

The April 2020 issue of the St. Michael's Parish magazine will not be produced in hard copy as a result of the current national crisis caused by the outbreak of the corona virus.

Below is a selection of items already submitted to the editor before the decision was taken not to publish a printed issue. The situation will be reviewed with regard to future issues of the magazine and regular contributors will be kept up to date.

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## **A year of hope and perseverance**

It's time to prepare for the church Annual Meetings, this was to be held after worship on Sunday 26 April in the WCC. So, as happens every year at this season, I've been taking stock and pondering what might be good to reflect on about our recent past, and prospects for the near future. I expect what I write here would have formed the basis of my Vicar's report at the APCM.

As I've looked back on the past 12 months, I've had to conclude that quite a lot of this last year has been rather demanding. A range of things have happened which have called on the time, energy, patience and hard work of a lot of us at St Michael's. You'll recall that in February 2019 we had a very nasty and up-setting break-in. The response of the parish in clearing up, supporting one another, praying and pulling together was phenomenal, and soon overcame the sense of invasion and desecration that had disturbed us. But, afterwards, a long process of restoration and mending was needed, taking ages to plan, consult, seek permissions and then effect the work. I'm grateful to Phil Smith and Rosemary Thomson for the tireless, and often tiring, work which they have been persevering with, to sort everything out. We are nearly there – just the stained-glass window to be replaced. So soon I hope we can wrap-up, finalise the financial cost, and move on from this draining saga. Perseverance will eventually pay off!

Dealing with the break in would have been enough to occupy our energies on the fabric of the church, but at the same time we have been dealing with repairs arising from the Quinquennial Inspection. And, simultaneously, we have been liaising with the bell-ringers in the development of their bells renovation scheme. The QI repairs were thankfully quite efficiently undertaken from last summer onwards, and we trust we now have a more raintight and solid building than we did in 2019! You may know that progress on the bells has not been so smooth – objections to the original scheme led to its redesign, to retain the old bell-frame in the tower, as well as introducing a new one. Permission for this revised scheme has now been obtained, through dogged perseverance, but the task of raising the money remains significant. More perseverance will be needed to see it through.

While the building often occupies our attention and energy, it's important to remember that sustaining the worship and Christian life of our community is really what we're here for. We've tried to persevere with this too. After Richard Carr's 14 years as Director of Music we are looking to find a new person to come and lead our music. Despite assiduous efforts from the team involved, our search is continuing. We'll persevere: and we're grateful to Jonathan Newsome, Nathan Collins and Richard for the work they are doing so our music in worship can carry on. A real encouragement to me has been the willingness of Parish and PCC to look to grow our ministry, and focus resources on the challenging and important area of ministry with children and families. A great deal of work was done to enable us to interview 2 candidates in January for a Families Minister post. Sadly, all involved agreed that it wasn't right to appoint at this time. That was a great disappointment, to be plain, but again the team is determined to persevere, and see what God has in store.

The year has seen many joys as well, and moments I would like to recall and celebrate include preparing and presenting four candidates for confirmation at different points of the year. We have welcomed other newcomers into our worship and fellowship, and seen some begin to contribute to our mission and life together in very positive and encouraging ways. We've celebrated the festivals, and reached out to schools and the community with powerful music and worship at Christmas and Easter. And this year we've done some new things: an encouraging Songs of Praise at Michaelmas where members of the church shared a favourite hymn and its place in their Christian journey. And a most enjoyable Harvest

Lunch with hearty fare and good company last October. There have been stirring choral evensongs and delicious parish brunches, and so much more. Every week I find there is some moment of encouragement: worship that inspires, moments of listening, care and concern, and opportunities to share the love and Gospel of Christ. A hug from a Tiny Tot or an offer of help make all the difference when challenges (like the current Coronavirus) seem to be all-consuming!

I'm helped in my perseverance, and encouraged in my joys, by all the people who serve so faithfully at St Michael's in so many ways. Their work – your work – will be noted and celebrated in the APCM documentation, and when we gather on 26 April. So I won't be exhaustive here, but simply record my thanks for all the humble, ongoing, often invisible labours that serve God and our brothers and sisters in sustaining our church life here. THANK YOU! I will just invite *your* thanks for the Wardens' team, PCC and committees, in all they do to pull everything together here. Much joy comes from our shared tasks. But perseverance is needed too. And particularly I want to note Rosemary Thomson's perseverance in serving as lone Churchwarden these past two years. Rosemary is ably supported by deputies, and now an expanded team of assistants. But despite our perseverance in seeking someone, no one has yet stepped up to join Rosemary as a fellow churchwarden. Please do give this some thought and prayer. I trust God has a plan for St Michael's, its organisation and ministry, in the medium-longer term, but it feels like it's taking a lot of perseverance at the moment to discern it. Please can you help in some way?

I've used the words 'perseverance' and 'persevere' rather often in this article, haven't I? Perhaps a bit too much. They're not words we're that fond of in our contemporary culture. We tend to imagine the ideal world would be one where our problems are small and easily overcome. Where solutions to our ills can be swiftly, completely and easily discerned. Where other people don't create obstacles to our (obviously sensible!) plans, so that what we decide meets no obstruction or delay. But God doesn't often let us live in such a world (in my experience, at least). Perhaps St Paul gives a clue as to why this might be, when he writes to the Romans:

*We boast in our hope of sharing the glory of God. And not only that, but we also boast in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not disappoint us, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit that has been given to us.*

Perseverance is one of God's schools for faith, hope, trust and love. Without it we would not know the need to be patient, humble and grateful, because everything would fall into our laps trivially and immediately, as though we were entitled to it. Perhaps you're currently persevering with situations in your life and family which are taxing and demanding. Perhaps one of the areas of church life I've described above is one in which you too are persevering. Perhaps your whole journey of faith is one that often calls you to persevere, and just keep sticking with Jesus and his church through thick and thin. If any of those situations is yours, take courage that God is working through your perseverance, and glory awaits at its end. Glory that will be even more deep because of all our patient waiting, all that we've endured, all that we've struggled to attain, and all the joys that have encouraged us along the way.

Derwyn.

## Country file – April 2020

Welcome dear friend to my garden, aglow with an array of beautiful spring flowers; watching our gardens spring to life after a long dull wet winter is pure joy and lifts one's spirit. The hedgerows and trees which are now tinged with delicate soft shades of greens whisper promises of warm sunny days ahead and gives life to the famous words of 'oh to be in England now that April's here ....and round the elm tree bold are in tiny leaf.'

The sounds and smells of the countryside are intoxicating and the melody of the dawn chorus is one of the most beautiful sounds in the world, but you do need to get up early to hear this, if you turn over and go back to sleep, you will miss it!

As always I have been blessed with an enormous variety of birds. Possibly like you, I frequently see long tailed tits around the garden; but recently I have had the joy of watching, at close range, a pair coming daily to the peanut feeders right outside my kitchen window.



Another excitement this year has been watching a pair of barn owls in my field. At the approach of dusk I have seen them flying low across the field. One sat for a long time on the old wooden cross that stands in the middle of the labyrinth, sadly due to poor light, I was unable to photograph it.

Barn owls feed mainly on small mammals such as voles, mice and shrews as well as small birds and insects. The barn owl's heart shaped face collects sounds in the same way as human ears, and has the most sensitive hearing of all creatures; the fact that it catches its prey by sound not sight, enables it to hunt at night. It is very silent in flight due to its extremely soft plumage.

A new project in the garden is almost complete, come with me and I will show you. This shed at one time looked after my late husband's numerous old document files. After the statutory times of keeping records, seven years, I gradually transferred them to the bonfire. Over the winter my gardener has been busy dividing this area into two rooms, one for me to be used as another quiet day retreat space and one for him for his personal use. He has very kindly given me an electric log effect heater, table and light, which has made a very cosy retreat. You may remember that I have names for all the gazebos, this space will be known as Apple Tree Cottage, as it faces a lovely old Bramley apple tree.



My new puppy Kola, now six months old, wanted to write this article, but I told him that until he starts to behave himself, such privileges are off limit. He is very loving, but very possessive over food issues and I am currently waiting for his trainer to come and give me some advice.

God's blessing for a healthy, peaceful and happy Easter.

*June*

## Distribution of Church kneelers

Now that we have our beautiful pew cushions we have found it increasingly difficult to keep the kneelers neat and tidy in each pew. Many people these days seem to prefer to sit when praying and so we do not need to have so many kneelers placed at the end of each pew.



In 1990 my husband, Peter and I wished to celebrate our Silver Wedding by providing something positive for the Church. John Richardson, Vicar at the time, suggested that some colourful kneelers for the North and South aisle pews would be a welcome addition. Having begun to produce 25 with help from friends and family, we asked other parishioners for their input and we finally had 150. These made a wonderful display with many different designs and many were sewn in memory of loved ones. I well remember sewing the backings for many kneelers over a considerable amount of time!

They have served us well but are less used now and so it has been agreed that we will keep just one kneeler at the end of each pew throughout the Church and allow the others to be collected by those who made them all those years ago. The wardens will sort through them shortly so that if you wish to have one you may easily recognise your contribution, indeed, even if you were not involved then there may be one that draws your attention and we would be pleased for you to take it and make a small donation towards Church funds.

Many thanks. Rosemary and the Wardens team.



## **Holy Trinity Winter Night Shelter and Community Outreach.**

On 16<sup>th</sup> February Dave Perry operations Manager of the Winter Night Shelter gave a talk about the work done by himself and the team of volunteers.

The shelter which is a charity opened at the end of November and will stay open until the end of March, it can cater for 12-13 homeless guests, 2 of which can be women but at present there is only a curtain to separate the female sleeping area.

The shelter opens each night at 8p.m to provide a hot meal, company, recreation and a bed for the night, guests are offered showers, laundry facilities and breakfast before leaving at 7.30 a.m.

It opens again from 11-2p.m. to provide lunch and a drop- in service offering help on Mental Health, alcohol and drug dependency and health problems, it also offers advice on benefits, debt and housing through East Herts (Hertford) Homeless Co-ordinator Fleur O'Dell. Barber and chiroprapist services are also offered.

The guests can stay initially for 28 days but this can be extended. If there is room homeless young adults 16-25 can be housed at the OneYMCA.

There are over 100 volunteers at the shelter, who cover the 3 shifts each day, they have training in Safeguarding, 1<sup>st</sup> Aid, Food Handling and drug overdose treatment. Other volunteers collect food donations, do the laundry or cook meals.

The guests are shown love and acceptance but not everyone can be helped due to mental health problems or dependency on alcohol or drugs which can cause a lot of problems. The shelter enforces boundaries to protect the guests and volunteers but these are not accepted by all the guests.

Holy Trinity also provides Community Outreach in the form of a Community Meal on Wednesday lunchtimes and Lunch Bunch meals for primary school children and their carers during the Summer holidays.

The Night Shelter also works closely with other organisations including the Food Bank, the Salvation Army and the One YMCA to share food and other resources.

The Charity has plans to extend the premises to be able to cater for female guests in a separate area. Electrical and plumbing work need to be funded and carried out at a cost of around £7,000.00 before a grant can applied for to convert the upper part of the shelter for female guests to stay in.

If you wish to support the Winter Night Shelter financially or if you wish to become a volunteer please get in touch with the Susan Self 01279 65167.

Jocelyn Guilhaumaud Charities Support Group



## St Michael's Mothers Union

Our MU AGM was held on Wednesday, March 11<sup>th</sup> and chaired by the Rev'd Derwyn Williams. I am pleased to say that all matters were unanimously agreed upon by members present. Afterwards, Derwyn's 'surprise' talk, once again challenged us on the subject of 'Proverbs', which were either to be from Shakespeare, the Bible or Anonymous. He then joined members for a chat over tea.

For 'Mothering Sunday', we have given a donation of £41, which will help to support our ongoing work in the UK and around the world, continuing the legacy of our Founder, Mary Sumner, through the next generation, as shown by two sisters, Rosa (aged 12) and Ella (aged 11), who, together with other children in their church, have formed the first 'Mini MU' and are seeking to promote this work and this gift will help them to spread our message.

Also, on this special day, Katherine Jenkins, on BBC1 'Songs of Praise', will be joining members of the MU at Worthing Hospital to hear about their work providing emergency maternity bags for new mums.

Heather Johns. Branch Leader.

