



PARISH NEWS

St Michael, St Albans with St Mary, Childwick Green



April 2019

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LETTER FROM THE VICARAGE:

*Believe it or not GOD HATES EASTER!
The Christian Church should not be keeping Easter.
It is not biblically commanded as a holy convocation.
Its observance comes from paganism.
IT IS NOT VALID!*

Thus began a whacky tract which I received through the post a few days ago. It had been sent anonymously in an envelope inscribed by an angry-looking hand from an apocalyptic-sounding organisation called Midnight Ministries. The leaflet had been printed in 2019 but its content, layout and even its font were redolent of a seventeenth-century rabble-rousing pamphlet.



I won't bore you with the details but the gist of the puritan's argument was that the Christian festival of Easter derives from a pagan Anglo-Saxon fertility cult celebrated in the month of April and therefore it should be avoided at all costs because of the corrosive effect of syncretism on true faith.

It is indeed true that the modern word 'Easter' has come down to us from a pre-Christian Anglo-Saxon festival. The Venerable Bede wrote in the early eighth century about 'Eostre' - but tells us virtually nothing about it. Some of the secular symbols of this time of year - I'm thinking here of bouncing bunnies and the endless eggs - resonate with April as a month of springing new life. And there are obvious symbolic similarities with the themes of rebirth and restoration which Christians encounter in Jesus' resurrection. However, to leap from this to condemn the entire celebration of Easter is to lay an axe at the trunk of the most important feast in the calendar and the greatest of Christian claims.

I wonder if it would help my anonymous correspondent to recall that in many countries Easter is not known by a pagan Germanic name but by derivatives from the Jewish feast of Passover: French *Pâques*, Spanish *Pascua*, Italian *Pasqua*, Welsh *Pasg*. The



honest truth is that we are all syncretists really. Christianity has always sought to present timeless Truths in accessible metaphors. The gospel writers called them parables. We need simple stories and crisp ideas if we are going to perceive the depths of God's love for us. Indeed, Jesus himself might be said to be a syncretist: he lived his thirty-plus years on earth as a faithful Jew, re-presenting his spiritual heritage in tandem with his personal sense of mission and self-identification as God's Son. The Last Supper which he celebrated with his friends on the night before he died was a Jewish Passover Feast. And his earliest followers interpreted his 'passing-over' from death to life through the lens of God's salvation of the ancient Jews from slavery in Egypt: just as Yahweh led the Hebrews through sure death in the waters of the Red Sea to freedom in the Promised Land, so Jesus' resurrection points to the freedom and life which Christians receive through faith. I will not be taking the advice of the pamphleteer, and look forward to celebrating this greatest of stories with you between 14 and 21 April.

As ever,

Kenneth

EASTER EGG COMPETITION

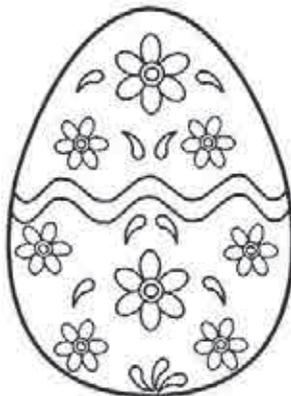
Huge thanks to everyone who took up the artistic challenge and entered our Easter Egg Competition. The Judges have been very impressed by the range and abilities shown by everyone. Well done!

The wonderful winning Easter Egg picture on the front cover of this month's Parish News is by Lexi Harris (9 years old). Lexi used not only Spring decorative themes and colours, but added thoughtful messages which convey the Easter Story. The Judges felt this entry stood out for its unique combination of decoration and words.

Additionally special prizes will be given to Runner-up Amy Wells and Highly Commended for Andrew Gullick and Jessica Bedford all of whom, it was felt, showed imaginative and colourful creations.

All the entries which were submitted will be displayed at St. Michael's on **Easter Sunday (21st April)** where they will, we are sure, be enjoyed and admired by everyone. We hope that the winning entrants will be free to receive their prizes on the 21st after which everyone who submitted pictures will be able to take them home.

Lynn Ashmore



WEDDING OF ELIZABETH WARREN AND TERENCE LOWRY



Photos by Pauline Wiley

On Saturday 2 March, St Michael's Church was filled with friends and family of Liz and Terry. The choir was augmented by more friends and the guest organist played superbly. The choir sang *'I Was Glad'* by C H Parry at the entrance of the bride, and the whole service was full of love and affection. During the signing of the register, the choir sang *'The Lord bless you and keep you'* by John Rutter, and Widor's *Toccata* was played as bride and groom left the church. As usual, photos were taken outside and we are pleased to print one below. We wish Liz and Terry every happiness for their future life together.

Sandie North

BLESSING THE CROSS



At children's church we begin our morning with a service in the school hall when we celebrate our coming together to worship in hymns, prayers and the reading of the gospel. We use a table for the altar, with candles and a bible, but we were missing the vital item, the cross. We made a recent approach to Roy Brookes who was very quick to make us this beautiful cross which Kenneth blessed on Sunday 10 March. We would all like to thank Roy very much for his wonderful gift and will always treasure it.

The Children of St Michael's

HELPING AT CHILDREN'S CHURCH

In December, Joanna Tarvet and I were commissioned as youth leaders for the second year. Every Sunday we help Pauline and Jo run the children's church group, assisting with activities, games, discussions and many other areas. One area with which we are particularly involved is helping new or young members to settle and take part in that week's various activities. It's always rewarding to see the young members of the church engaged and excited whilst learning about worship at St Michael's.

Alex McJannet

For over two years now, Alex and I have been youth leaders for Children's Church. As well as this leadership role contributing towards our DofE awards, it has strengthened our connection with the St. Michael's community. Weekly we lead activities and interact with the younger members. It is lovely to watch their excitement when participating in crafts and worksheets. The idea that we can help lead a group that holds loving childhood memories for us both is simply humbling. Recently our role in the community has been furthered by our election as the youngest PCC members, a position we are both honoured to hold.

Jo Tarvet



Photos by Pauline Wiley

POEM OF THE MONTH 'IRIDESCENCE'

The ducks have returned to the garden for spring –
the drake's green head and a deep blue flash in a wing.
I feel the green of the satin dress I never touched
and hold its sheen against her auburn hair.
It was there I first absorbed iridescence,
blue, green, auburn, love, pain.

The ducks look up to the sky and then, as one,
take off again.

Alan George

Alan George is a member of Ver Poets which meet once a month in the Parish Centre. Alan and his wife, Brenda, have lived in St Michael's for over 45 years. All five of their children attended St Michael's JMI School

MY FAVOURITE HYMN 'FOR ALL THE SAINTS'

I first became familiar with this hymn many years ago when I was a member of the choir at All Saints Church Queensbury, a parish in North West London. It is a wonderful hymn of praise and for obvious reasons was sung there on many occasions. It was for me an uplifting and joyful experience, especially when we had a large congregation.

As the years went by, I found that the words of the hymn became increasingly meaningful as I learned a good deal more about many Saints worldwide and how their stories have enriched our lives.

(from earth's wide bounds from ocean's farthest coast)

The hymn prompts me also to recall my own personal 'saints', all those who over the years have been there for me in so many ways, and to whom I shall always be grateful.

(But lo! There breaks a yet more glorious day the Saints triumphant rise in bright array)

Jan Goodall



DIARY FOR MARCH

- 31 MOTHERING SUNDAY
- 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
- 9.30 a.m. All Age Communion and Admission to Communion (St Michael's)
- 6.00 p.m. Evensong (St Mary's)

DIARY FOR APRIL

- 2 9.45 a.m. Tiny Tots (Parish Centre)
- 8.00 p.m. Art in Lent Group (Parish Centre) - see article in February's PN
- 3 10.45 a.m. Art in Lent daytime Group (Parish Centre)
- 6 9.30 a.m.f Church cleaning and gardening in the churchyard
- *please come and lend a hand (St Michael's)*
- 7 PASSION SUNDAY
- 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
- 9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St Michael's)
- 6.00 p.m. Holy Communion (St Mary's)
- 9 8.00 p.m. Art in Lent Group (Parish Centre)
- 10 10.45 a.m. Art in Lent daytime Group (Parish Centre)
- 14 PALM SUNDAY
- 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
- 9.30 a.m. Donkey procession
Great for families - bring some greenery from home to wave as we walk from Prae Wood School (AL3 4HZ) to St Michael's church for
- 10.00 a.m. All Age Service
- 5.00 p.m. Plainsong Evensong (St Michael's)
Readings and music for Passiontide
- 6.00 p.m. Evensong (St Mary's)

Our Monday to Wednesday evening services will explore Easter traditions in other countries

- 15 MONDAY OF HOLY WEEK
8.00 p.m. Address and Compline: Holy Week in Belorussia (St Michael's)
- 16 TUESDAY OF HOLY WEEK
8.00 p.m. Address and Compline: Holy Week in Canada (St Michael's)
- 17 WEDNESDAY OF HOLY WEEK
10.00 a.m. Stations of the Cross (St Michael's)
10.30 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
8.00 p.m. Address and Compline: Holy Week in Slovakia (St Michael's)
- 18 MAUNDY THURSDAY: *reliving Jesus Last Supper*
8.00 p.m. Holy Communion and Watch (St Michael's)
- 19 GOOD FRIDAY: *remembering Jesus' death*
12-1 p.m. The Liturgy (St Michael's)
recalling the event of the cross
1-2 p.m. Words, music and stillness (St Michael's)
reflecting on the significance of the cross
1-2 p.m. Children's activities (Parish Centre)
If possible, please let us know you are coming:
pwiley@stmichaels.herts.sch.uk
- 2-2.30 p.m. Children's service (St Michael's)
we build the Easter garden together followed by hot cross buns
8.00 p.m. Compline (St Mary's)
- 20 HOLY SATURDAY
8.00 p.m. Easter Vigil (Cathedral)
come and support parish candidates being baptised and confirmed

- 21 EASTER DAY: *rejoicing in Jesus' Resurrection*
 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
 9.30 a.m. Festival Communion and Baptisms (St Michael's)
 followed by chocolate egg hunt!
 11.15 a.m. Festival Communion (St Mary's)
- 23 9.45 a.m. Tiny Tots (Parish Centre)
- 24 9.00 a.m. St Michael's School Easter Service (St Michael's)
-
- 28 SECOND SUNDAY OF EASTER
 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
 9.30 a.m. All Age Communion (St Michael's)
 10-11 a.m. **Annual Meeting** (St Michael's) – *see separate article*
 6.00 p.m. Evensong (St Mary's)
- 30 9.45 a.m. Tiny Tots (Parish Centre)

DIARY FOR MAY

- 5 THIRD SUNDAY OF EASTER
 8.00 a.m. Holy Communion (St Michael's)
 9.30 a.m. Parish Communion (St Michael's)
 6.00 p.m. Holy Communion (St Mary's)

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ANNUAL MEETING AND ELECTIONS

Each parish in England has an Annual Meeting (APCM). Ours will take place on Sunday 28 April. That morning there will be an all-age communion service in St Michael's beginning at 9.30 a.m. The APCM will then be held in church, beginning shortly after 10 a.m. and aiming to conclude by 11 a.m. We are very grateful that during this hour there will be provision for children in the Parish Centre. It is important to keep the APCM crisp because there are lots of elections. To help with this, should you wish to ask questions of the contributors to the Annual Report (available in advance online or in hard copy in each church) please submit questions in advance to me as chair. Strong coffee will be available in the Parish Centre after the meeting has finished!

A number of posts are elected at the APCM. Involvement is ownership, so do think about whether you would like to stand for office in 2019-20, especially if you have not done so before. The elected posts are:

Churchwarden

These are the senior non-clergy parish officers. The **two Churchwardens** serve a one-year term, renewable for up to six years. Churchwardens are involved in the smooth running of the Sunday 9.30 a.m. service, take a lead on maintenance issues at St Michael's and do a small amount of record keeping. The diocese provides a half-day training course for new churchwardens, plus other opportunities for those who need upskilling in specific areas. At a local level, St Michael's is blessed with a welter of former wardens who can help new wardens with anything they need to learn. We will be thanking Graham at the annual meeting for successfully completing a six-year term. The flip-side of this coin is that there is an extra responsibility on the parish to identify and appoint fresh leadership.

Parochial Church Councillor

The trustees of St Michael's and St Mary's form the Parochial Church Council (PCC). We have five posts to be elected for a three-year term.

The PCC meets six times a year. In the intervening months, most PCC members serve on a sub-committee.

- The Mission and Community Committee is our 'Foreign Office' – looking at how we engage those beyond the edge of our worshipping communities.
- The Pastoral and Worship Committee is our 'Home Office' – asking how we can strengthen our services, care and education of regulars.
- The Stewardship Committee is our 'Treasury' – making best use of our people, money and buildings.

Can you lend experience and interest to one of these areas?

Deanery Synod Representatives

We have three places on the Deanery Synod, elected for a three-year term.

These people represent St Michael and St Mary at the next 'level up' of Church government. Together they explore how we can be more missionally effective with the other Anglican churches in St Albans, Radlett, Aldenham, Shenley, London Colney, Colney Heath, and Frogmore. Although we are presently in the middle of a triennium, two of our places on Deanery Synod are vacant.

Stewards

Stewards assist the churchwardens with welcome and smooth running of our services. Stewards are elected *en bloc* at the annual meeting.

What do I do now?

To express an interest in any of these opportunities please sign one of the nomination forms available in both churches, or talk with me Steph or Graham for further information.

Kenneth Padley

WEDNESDAY MORNING SCHOOL SERVICE

I am often asked about what goes on during St Michael's Primary School Service in church on Wednesday mornings. The service is open to all and a number of parents join with pupils and staff at this collective worship. If you have yet to attend I'd love to welcome you when your work and other commitments allow.

The service begins at 9am and lasts about half an hour. It is usually led by me or Charles. The oldest pupils (Eagles class) are responsible for many roles such as handing out books, ringing the bell, operating the sound system, and reading a Bible passage. Most of the readings are taken from the Easy Reading Version of the Bible. I like this translation because it is accessible for children without being clunky.

There are usually two songs, one at the beginning and one at the end. Where possible the songs are linked to the reading and theme of the day. Week by week, the classes take it in turns to lead a prayer, often based on the school Values. These Values have sprung from Christian roots and are relevant for everyone, whatever our faith tradition or even if we have none.

The themes of the service follow a rolling cycle. Over a four-year period we work our way through the big stories in the Old Testament (Years 1 and 2), New Testament (Year 3), and reflect on the meaning of parts of the church building and major saints (Year 4). The rationale behind this structure is threefold. Religiously, it explains the basis for core Christian ideas. Morally, it asks questions about how we can relate well to one another. Culturally, it passes on many of the key stories which underpin the history and literature of Britain and many other countries.

Kenneth

ST MICHAEL'S COFE VA PRIMARY SCHOOL

To mark World Book Day, the children and staff of St Michael's came to school dressed as their favourite book character.

There was a fantastic array of costumes and the children had a great time guessing who everybody was dressed as.

A parade took place at the end of the morning when the children and staff from Top School walked through the village down to meet their peers at Lower School. This had the wonderful effect of turning the Lower School playground into a human story book!

CHURCH GUIDES

St Michael's is open around the year, but we know that it is even better if we can have volunteers on site to welcome and engage visitors. We're always keen for new helpers with this. Church Guides work in pairs and you will be briefed about anything you might need to know. Do you have an hour or two per month to help share this special place with others? To get involved or to ask any questions, please contact Sue on sue.dyson2@gmail.com or 01727 833524.

Thanks very much,

Kenneth

EASTER EGG COMPETITION

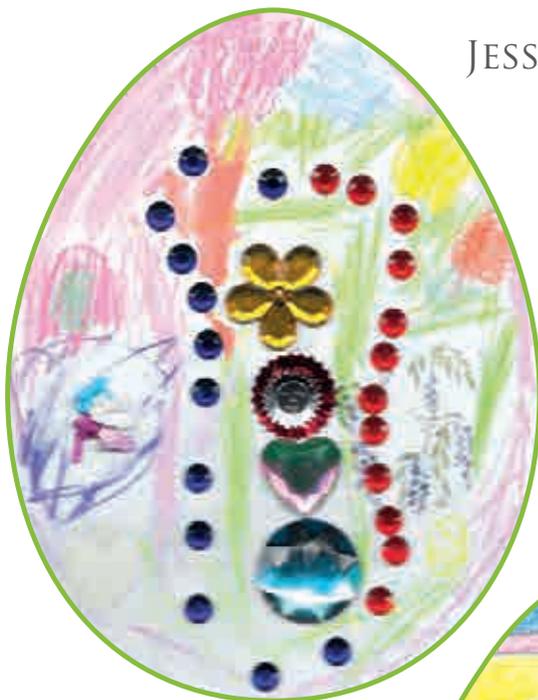
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Do all the good you can
By all the means you can
In all the ways you can
In all the places you can
At all the times you can
To all the people you can
As long as ever you can.

Although traditionally attributed to John Wesley,
there is no evidence that he actually said it.

ARTICLES FOR THE PARISH NEWS

The May edition of Parish News will focus on environmental/sustainability issues and the steps we can take to improve the world around us. If you would like to write an article - around 500 words in length - we would love to read it.

If you have an article or notice for the *Parish News*, the deadline for production for our March edition is **Saturday 13 April 2019**

Please send contributions to the magazine's editors

Sandie North – sandrich2@btinternet.com

Kerry Wells – jkwells79@yahoo.com

with a copy to **John Mole** – jdmole@hotmail.com

Or leave them for our attention at the Parish Office.

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