

St Michael's, Bishops Itchington
Annual Reports 2019 - 2020



*Worshipping God
Making new disciples
Transforming Communities*

Church Wardens Report 2018

God has continued to bless St. Michael's in so many ways; the church is continuing to grow and it is such a blessing to see so many children enjoying Explorers and to watch them thrive. The church building is still developing, and God has blessed us so that we can meet the needs of the church, both spiritual and physical. It is also a great blessing that as our finances increase, we are again able to increase our giving to our chosen charities; CORD, Crosslinks, African Pastors, The Well and Helping Hands – a lovely mix of local and international mission. As a church we reach out to the community of Bishop's Itchington where we live so that we can be the living word of God in our village.

Our Church life continues to be centred on the three aims: Worshipping God, Making New Disciples and Transforming Communities. The three themes are a simple statement of the purpose of the church and are the themes for the Diocese. The two sections of the report 'Building the Church' and 'The Church Building', review some of the work of the church to fulfil those aims.

Building the Church

It is a strength of St. Michael's that we have a leadership team that brings different nuances and flavours to our worship and builds on the gifts and strengths of members of the church, reading, intercessions, music, preaching and leading. A huge thank you to everyone, without your efforts and support St Michael's would not be as blessed as it is. Thank you Martin for planning and guiding the themes and services – no easy task.

Our children are precious in God's sight so thank you to the team that each week lead Explorers, Scramblers and Quality Time. (Not just the children enjoy QT!) Thank you also to the people who go in each week to act as helper/chaperone(s) for Explorers.

Thank you, Phyllis, for your work supporting the 9 o'clock service, a special time of quiet reflection.

We have had some lovely visiting speakers; on Mothering Sunday it was a delight, as always, to welcome and hear Steve Tash preach. On Father's Day, Ben Williamson from Crosslinks, did a very interesting Q&A session about his work with the theological college and the church in

Johannesburg he is helping to Pastor. In July Lianne Kirkman from Helping Hands gave a very inspiring testimony and talk about the work Helping Hands does with the homeless. Chris, who was homeless but is now working at Helping Hands and has given his life to Jesus gave a moving testimony of how his life has turned around. It was very poignant for me as I used to chat to Chris and give him food and drink whenever I saw him outside Leamington station. When he “disappeared” I thought he had passed away, so to meet him was pure joy!

In April Bryn Haworth entertained us all at St Nicholas Church with his blues and slide guitar – he is involved with prison ministry and we sing some of his songs in church - like “What kind of love is this?”

We had a training evening in May when John Daly, a local Dementia Champion, discussed helping churches to be dementia aware and dementia friendly.

In June there was a Deanery family cream tea where Claire Maxim, the new CEO of the Arthur Rank Centre, was introduced.

In July as part of Making New Disciples, Brad Jerzak gave a presentation on “The Gospel in Chairs” which was very thought provoking. In case you missed it you can watch it on You Tube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7FKhHScgUQ>

Unfortunately, our Church Picnic at Dave and Barbara’s was washed out and blown away and had to be cancelled – but that seems to be the theme of this year’s weather doesn’t it?

In October, 13 ladies from our congregation had a day trip to Solihull where we attended the Midlands Women’s Convention, a day of worship, prayer and workshops on The Lord Our Rock based on Hannah’s Prayer in 1 Samuel 2 and David’s Prayer in 2 Samuel 22. I think everyone found it enjoyable and inspiring.

We rounded off the year with a concert by International singer and evangelist Philippa Hanna – there was a bit of a hiccup when Philippa woke up on 31st January – the day of our concert - with no voice! We got there in the end and Hanna gave us a fantastic evening on 13th March. It was definitely worth waiting for.

The strength of St. Michael’s is the whole church! The body of Christ in Bishop’s Itchington; time and again we see the community that is the church pull together and deliver something amazing.

Thank you to all the church members together with the WI who Yarn Bombed knitted Christmas angels which were left all over the village for people to collect. They were an amazing success with people in the village being very moved by the generous gesture. Not forgetting the residents of Knightcote who got a personal angel delivery from Moira and Sarah. As a church we continue to support our slightly wider community with the Foodbank; thank you to Liz and Clive for all the hard work they put into organising the Foodbank and thank you to all the church members who act as volunteers to go out to the heart of our community delivering food and comfort to those in need. A more obvious presence is when we stand in Tesco's entrance for three days asking for Foodbank donations, I am always amazed at the people's kindness and generosity.

Christmas and Easter are times when the village comes to us to celebrate. At Easter time we had our times of Reflection leading up to the Passion Play on Good Friday, when we acted out Jesus triumphant entry into Jerusalem and the following days to his crucifixion. It was a fun but very moving experience to act out the Passion as a congregation.

We issued forth into the village at Christmas to serve everyone with the mince pies that have been donated by yourselves. As usual we were eating mince pies all month, in fact well into January! Thank you for your generous donations. Thank you, Janet, for the beautiful Christmas decorations, the Christmas trees were fantastic. Our church is always warm and welcoming, but it is extra special when it puts on its glitter and tinsel for Christmas.

Thank you to all the volunteers who help in many ways with Messy Church; this is a great outreach and it is wonderful to see new faces in church that first came to Messy Church.

The Men's Breakfast is on the second Saturday of each month, if you would like to go along speak to Clive Purser or Dave Pink for more information. Thank you, Clive and Dave. The Retired Men's Walking Group meet up every few weeks to go for a ramble and a pub lunch. If you are interested speak to Graham Dickson

Thank you to Carol Clarke, our Safeguarding Officer, who has been tussling on our behalf to draft a Safeguarding Policy, arrange for DBS checks as required and get us all up to speed with the necessary training – no easy feat as we have all been a bit reluctant to engage with this tricky subject.

St. Michael's is a lovely family that is trying to reach and support the village we live in with the message of God's love and salvation, I think you should all be very proud of this year's efforts and let's look forward together to another year of; Worshipping God, Making New Disciples and Transforming our Community.

The Church Building

We have witnessed many people who have been willing to help with the upkeep of our church. The building requires constant maintenance to make it watertight, warm and welcoming. Thank you to all those who have given up their time to attend the workday and help complete all the routine maintenance which is required to be carried out each year.

There has been no major development of the church during the last 12 months, but the crèche has been carpeted, and we are still in dialogue with the Diocese relating to the request to allow us to install underfloor heating. This is becoming protracted, as it appears that St Michael's are the first church to submit such a request. Once all the technical information has been agreed, we will proceed with a faculty for the work to be undertaken. Additional ways of heating are being investigated to work alongside the underfloor heating.

The Chancel floor tiles have undergone restoration owing to the fading of their colour. A contractor was recommended to us to allow cleaning and resealing of the floor area to take place. Upon inspection, the terra-cotta tiles themselves were found to be in good condition, and the tiles only required this minimal work to be carried out. The work required for restoration was thought to be outside the scope of the Building Group, and an outside contractor was hired. This work has been completed to our satisfaction. Thank you to those people who organised this work.

Future Work To Be Carried Out

During our internal Health & Safety inspection, it was brought to the attention of the PCC that various tiles in the porch area are showing signs of deterioration and require to be replaced or repaired. A decision will have to be made to either replace the offending tiles or replace the entire porch floor with a suitable non slip flooring. This may require another faculty and be offered to tender by an outside contractor.

Following monies raised from the giving day, it is the intention of the PCC to modernise the toilet area and the baby changing facility. This area has not been refurbished since the completion of the hall in the early 1980s, so it has been agreed to upgrade it. No decision has yet been reached on the exact work to be carried out, but volunteers from the Building Group have come forward to perform this work. This is a big project and is thought that the commencement of this work will be in the summer months.

The Quiet Room has remained unfinished, but work has been completed on the damaged ceiling. A contractor is being sourced to construct cupboards to house the foldable tables, and further thought is being given to the storage of the sectioned staging. A faculty may be required, depending upon the design of the cupboards.

After many years of thought and prayer, a decision has been made to submit a faculty to reposition the wooden rood screen, which separates the main body of the church from the chancel area. This structure was erected in 1940 and is not part of the original design of the church. The repositioning of the screen would allow the church to be opened out and in its new position, would create a boundary to the Quiet Room. The work involved would see the screen turn through 90 degrees, which would still allow the structure to be part of our church's history. The present unused pulpit would be removed, but a more mobile unit can be purchased if deemed necessary in the future. The present pulpit is fighting a battle with woodworm, of which the woodworm appears to be winning. This work can only be carried out when a comprehensive dialogue with the Diocesan Advisory Committee has taken place, and a faculty has been granted. It is thought that this will take place over many months of negotiation. Many thanks to the group of people who regularly give up so much of their time and effort in the upkeep and improvement of St Michael's. Without their unhesitating commitment, St Michael's would not be in the position it is today. Their commitment has also allowed work to be performed, which otherwise would not have been deemed possible due to the financial cost of hiring outside contractors. Thank you once again all concerned.

Jim Beeston
Heather Boyd

PCC Report

This report will be sent out separately.

Electoral Roll

There are 85 People on the Electoral Roll as at 01th April 2020.

Throughout the year we have lost people who no longer live in the village but happily have gained more people than we have lost.

A copy of the full Electoral Roll as at 01st April 2020 will be displayed on the notice board at the back of the church.

Val Bryant, Electoral Roll Officer

Safeguarding

In 2019 we, at St Michael's, aimed to maintain a caring environment that welcomes all to join us as we grow in the grace we share in Jesus. We try to do this in a loving way as we remain aware and responsible for our congregation and the parish it supports.

Our aim is to be aware, to listen and to know how to respond when a member of our church family or parish needs our help and support. The diocese provides a 24 hour helpline. This is a reassuring tool, as it makes it very easy for us to seek advice or involve them at a very early stage should the need arise.

We have signed up to the 'Dashboard' this year. This is an online system that highlights problem areas we need to address as a church. It works on a traffic light system and every aspect of our ministry is individually 'scored'. Green: we are doing everything required by the Church of England and the diocese; orange: we have non urgent matters to attend to; and red: something needs to happen fast. In the main we are marginally more in the green than orange. A lot of the time that is out of our control as there are no training courses available in our area. One outstanding training session in any segment means that aspect of our

worship remains orange. Martin, Jim, Heather and Ian also have access to the 'Dashboard'.

Carol Clarke, the Safeguarding Adviser at the Diocese retired at the end of 2019. Her replacement, Sarah Price, started at the beginning of February.

Earlier in the year we reassessed the cover for Sunday School. While everyone was very happy and impressed by the support given to the children as they left the service for their own age appropriate learning, unfortunately this was not in line with C of E guidelines. We needed two adults with the group, and when we asked for volunteers, we were overwhelmed by the help offered. The vast number of volunteers means no one is asked to help more than twice a year, and the general feeling among those who do help, is that they have a very enjoyable morning.

All assisting helpers who had not previously been DBS checked have now been checked, and all have completed either the online basic awareness course or have worked through a printout of a variation of the power point presentation that is the basis of that course.

DBS clearance was applied for, and granted for 10 people during 2019.

In 2019, 16 members of the congregation have completed the C0, Basic Awareness Course and a further four have completed the C1, Foundation Course. 4 people also attended the C2, Lay Leadership Course. We have a number of people waiting for both C1 and C2 training but the total lack of courses available in the Southam Deanery is causing a problem. We are currently looking for ways to overcome this problem. The Lay Leadership course is aimed at those who lead groups.

I would like to thank everyone for their co-operation and support throughout last year, especially Martin and Jim.

Carol Clarke, Parish Safeguarding Officer

Deanery Synod Report

The Southam Deanery consists of churches from; Bishop's Itchington, Radford Semele, Southam, Ufton, Long Itchington & Marton, The Bridges Group (Napton, Stockton, Lower Shuckburgh, Wormleighton, Priors Marston, Priors Hardwick), the Offchurch Group (Wappenbury, Weston under Wetherley, Hunningham, Offchurch), Ladbroke and Harbury.

Deanery Finances

Our deanery was able to continue to pay for our clergy and, in addition, has been able to contribute about £6,000 to the Diocesan Support Fund. This was maintaining the improvement we had achieved as a deanery over the past few years when, previously, we had been receiving financial assistance from the Support Fund. However, the overall picture is that the diocese would find itself short of about £140K for payments to the clergy. The invited speaker at the Support Fund Meeting had asked the deaneries to look at the situation from the point of view of generosity rather than of giving.

Hope '19

"The Gospel in Chairs" Is a film which was shown at Harbury Village Hall. This modelled an excellent example of evangelism.

Massive Messy Church - John Hardwick, a specialist in children's work, music and mission was invited to head up this event. He also attended a couple of the deanery schools during his visit.

"Spiritual Parenting" was a training event run by Andy Castle from Thrive. Research had found that for a young person to grow up and own a faith of their own, they would need to have the support of at least 5 Christian adults. We were encouraged to explore how the local churches could be involved in this.



Diocesan Synod

In September Brian Pratt, Margo Grant and Heather Boyd were all re-elected to the Diocesan Synod to represent Southam Deanery.

A highlight was a presentation by Karen Gaymond, Diocesan Ambassador for the Children's Society.

Karen introduced her presentation with some astonishingly high statistics regarding children (up to age 18) in need, within the Diocese. The categories included: those at various kinds of risk; those in poverty; and refugees. The Society sends annually a statement of the statistics to all MPs seeking their attention and action. Compared with more urban areas, numbers in the Southam deanery are relatively small.

As well as supporting change at an individual level through its direct programmes of work, The Children's Society aims to effect systemic change by influencing legislation and government practice, and a positive shift in public attitudes towards children and young people.

The Children's Society's strategy explores the complex challenges in young people's lives by focusing on three areas: risk, resilience and resources.

- Risk: The threats and dangers to a young person's safety which could include neglect and abuse, exploitation and violence.

- Resilience: A young person's capacity to respond to adversity at any given time which could include mental health or trauma.

- Resources: The resources available to meet a young person's needs which could include family support, money or social support.

Currently much support is being given by way of lobbying Parliament especially in the House of Lords, led by Bishop Libby Lane.

St Michael's supports the work of the Children's Society through our prayers and financially with our Christingle service.

Registration of marriages

The Archbishops' Faculty Office is currently preparing proposals to implement a directive from the Government that all marriages should be registered at the Register Office, including those whose weddings take place in a church setting. This would mean that before a church wedding, the appropriate form would have to be collected from the Register Office, taken for signing at the church, and then returned to the Register Office, where the Marriage Certificate would be issued. There is, so far, no proposed date when these regulations would come into force.

The Reading of Banns of Marriage will remain as part of the preliminaries for a wedding for the time being.

Proposals for new Deanery Plans

Together with two other deaneries, we have been chosen to pilot a scheme to draw up extensive plans for the medium to long term future. Martin and Barry have met with Steve Davenport (Operations Manager for the Diocese) and Archdeacon Sue Field. This matter will be pursued through the Deanery Chapter and the Mission Group.

New Strategy for allocation of the Deanery Share

This was a move to 're-brand' the Parish Share. Currently the Share was seen as representing the cost of the clergy in use in the parish, but the change would be to consider it as a contribution to the diocese in payment for clergy services provided. The costings would be either for a full-time or a part-time priest. Our deanery had been asked to pilot the scheme.

Martin Green continues to do a sterling job as Area Dean and Chairman of Deanery synod.

Heather Boyd, Deanery Synod Rep

Senior Citizens Service

This little service is a real treat. We meet on a Tuesday afternoon once a month, dovetailed in with the village Darby and Joan meetings, to enjoy a short time of worship together and cups of tea and cake. This year, we have again been delighted to welcome some new people to the group, and we manage to sing through some favourite hymns, have a little Bible reflection, and some prayers.

I am so grateful to those who provide the refreshments each month, and those who come so faithfully – it is open to all, so if anyone fancies joining us, please look for the dates in Scene and Tiddler.

Martin Green



Explorers (Primary school age)

The Explorers group is ever-changing – week by week, we never know how many children will attend or what the range of ages will be. However, the Scripture Union resource books we are using (Mosaic) have been very helpful in suggesting a good range of activities which we can usually tailor to suit the needs of the children. We always use a Bible story as the basis of the session and we introduce that either by telling the story with one of the Bible picture books, or sometimes we act it out and occasionally we've used a laptop or ipad to show the story in animated form. There is generally some kind of activity to reflect the main message of the story, something to make or draw, or a game to play; and we have our prayertime. We try to show the congregation what we have been thinking about and/or making but some of the children are less keen on this! It's fantastic that Zoe Rycroft has recently expressed an interest in helping to lead this group.

We are very grateful to the team of church members who support us by being on a rota of helpers. This initiative began as a response to the Diocesan Safeguarding policy, which may not sound like the best of starts, however the feedback from those who have come out to be with the Explorers has shown how inspiring this has been. As a leader, it's very encouraging to have an extra pair of hands to call on, especially given that we have such a diverse group of ages. We hope that those who join us are also encouraged by the learning that goes on within each session. It isn't all about felt tips and glue sticks – although most enjoy that bit!

Recently, the team has begun to discuss how we can develop to provide a more age appropriate session for the upper age group – we have one or two older ones in year 5 and 6, but the majority are in the lower primary age range. Please help us as we pray about how best to lead the group so that all of the children are disciplined according to their need.

B has recently been in touch with the leader of the youth group which meets in Harbury (this turned out to be Ann Clucas who some of our congregation will remember). We are excited by the prospect of teaming up with this local group for the benefit of our youngsters as they move up to Secondary School.

Louise Green

Scramblers (Pre-schoolers)

The Scramblers (pre-schoolers) and their “minders” are enjoying the improved environment in the Playroom. The new carpet is a great help in keeping in the warmth and providing a comfortable surface to sit or kneel on. Parents continue to supervise their little ones in an informal way. Often a story is read, using one of the many on the bookshelf provided and the loudspeaker is usually switched on so that people can have half an ear open to what is being said in the main church. There are also a lot of supportive conversations which take place while the children play. It’s a privilege to have such a space in our building and it’s good that it is used so much.

Louise Green

CHiLL (Upper Secondary school age)

Chill continues to meet in Radford Semele vicarage, drawing youngsters from here, Southam, and Radford ... it's always a lively time, with activities, bible exploration, and lots of chat - sometimes extra cakes provided which are always welcome!

Chill is there to help support our youngsters as they grow through life-changing decisions and exams, with faith at its heart, and it's hopefully a helpful part of their launch into the next stage of their lives, as well as praying for those recently moved to University. Please keep them in your prayers.

Martin Green

Tuesday Evening “The Story” Bible Study Group

The Tuesday evening group continues to meet in the church hall on Tuesdays except when there is a PCC meeting.

In the last year we have seen our group number rise to a regular 12. Our evenings start with tea or coffee, biscuits and sometimes, if we are lucky, cake. We are a sociable lot and it provides an opportunity for a catch up over the previous week. Then onto structured or semi structured discussions and learning from the bible as we consider the practical application in today's world.

At the time of our last report we had started to look at 13 standalone studies entitled Discovering Genuine Christianity which we went on to complete. Following this, we have studied various Psalms, the book of John and in recent months and going forward we are following a study guide on the book of Isaiah, the subtitle of which is 'Trusting God in troubled times'. This is a challenging study and we are roughly half way through.

There is opportunity for those who feel they would like to lead a meeting to do so. We end each meeting in prayer.

As in the previous year, our last meeting before Christmas we held a nice social evening with a good spread of a shared meal.

Ian Flanders

Wednesday Morning Ladies Bible Study

The Wednesday Ladies Bible Study group has continued to meet throughout the year. We meet between 11am and 1pm, usually in the home of Karin Castle. We have enjoyed studying a variety of Christian material and eating cake!

Over the year we have read a number of Dr Helen Roseveare's excellent books based on her life and experiences as a medical Missionary in The Congo. We all found them very humbling and challenging.

In total contrast we read "Dealing with Dawkins" which led to some fascinating discussions. Most of what Dawkins proposes we found at

loggerheads with our Christian beliefs! We began to wonder if he has ever read a Bible as some of his arguments did not stand up to scrutiny. More recently we completed a four session online study on the book of Nehemiah. This was recorded at "Word Alive." The exposition by Reverend Mike Cain was excellent and all learnt a great deal. We were particularly excited by the parallels in the book of Nehemiah with Jesus. We are shortly to be commencing our next study on the book of Esther. We welcome new ladies to join us. Please contact Lorraine or Moira for further details.

Moira Dickson

Wednesday Evening Housegroup

We try to meet every week on a Wednesday evening, but occasionally circumstances prevent us from doing so, to look at a Bible passage together, understand what it means, and then see how the principles apply to our own lives or perhaps to think through an issue with a biblical mind together.

We started the year working through 1 & 2 Thessalonians and now have started on James. Boy has it been a fun journey! We have learnt so much and been mightily challenged through the journey

The whole process has made us realise just how far short of God's standards we manage to live. That said one of our favourite sayings is to embrace the fact that we are 'work in progress' until Christ calls us home and finishes off the job of changing us.

As a group of 9 we have enjoyed learning and praying together and talking through various issues that affect our daily lives and seeing how the Bible provides answers to our very real questions, as God reveals himself through his word, also seeing God answer our regular prayers in marvellous ways. Do join us if you would like to come on this journey of discovery with us, you would be more than welcome.

Clive Purser

Wednesday Evening Housegroup

We continue to meet together to share food, talk about issues for prayer and to study God's Word. There are now twelve of us in the group and we are grateful to Ed and Zoe who host us at their house each week.

Although we are often referred to as the 'Table-talk' house group we haven't used that format for some time but study the Bible either through 'Theme- based' studies or by studying a particular book in the Bible. We then discuss how what we have learnt guides us in our lives.

This year we have studied selected Psalms on the themes of Love and Work, the Book of James, the story of Abraham and the Christmas story in Luke. We are currently studying (and enjoying) Mark's Gospel. Occasionally we just meet to share a meal together in fellowship.

David Pink

Coffee Morning Group

We still have a good attendance at our coffee mornings, generally 8-15 ladies. We have two ladies who come from Radford each month. We would like more ladies to join us if they have the time, especially if they are new to the village.

We spend the morning drinking coffee or tea, catching up on our families welfare, while eating cakes or scones made by Helen Goad or me (Phyllis). We share in the happy events that happen in our lives and also the sad ones.

When we have had our fill of coffee and cake, we pray after a reading from the Bible, using a book Martin gave me. We pray for all who we know who need healing or are stressed in any way. We end our prayers by thanking God for the good things in our lives and the beauty of our surroundings.

Phyllis Taylor

Men Out Enjoying Themselves



We have continued to meet in the village Community Café on the second Saturday of the month. Numbers vary but there are usually 16-18 of us to share breakfast and to put the world to rights. We are grateful to Spence Faulkner who cooks us a full English breakfast every month and Olivia and Katie Whatcott who serve us and provide us with tea and coffee. If you would like to be added to the mailing list for breakfast let one of us know.

David Pink & Clive Purser

Crafty Cuppa

It's been another good year for us, with so many raffle prizes being donated we are having to rethink our storage box. We are very grateful that we have so many prizes, without them we would be at a loss. We thought, last month, we would be down on attendance but we had all our usual regulars who come from Harbury, Southam, Kineton, Leamington Spa and Whitnash – these are only the ones I know of! At Christmas Crafty Cuppa, in November, we had a Tombola and were able to raise over £100 from that stall. We are hoping to have another one soon.

In February, we were able to welcome Air Ambulance fundraiser Barbara and her husband and to present them with a cheque for £2,200. Barbara had worked for many years for the Air Ambulance and has raised thousands of pounds. She has booked a table for her Air Ambulance wares for November and we look forward to seeing her again then.

Phyllis Taylor

St Michael's Bellringers

Our band has made great progress this year particularly with the addition of two ringers who are now ringing regularly for Sunday service.

We continue to practice every Thursday from 7.15-8.45pm. Our abilities as a band continue to improve and we are now competent in Grandsire Doubles.

Wedding ringing continued to decline in 2019 and there were also fewer visiting bands.

We are proud to be an audible sign of the church and the presence of God in Bishops Itchington and we always remember that when we ring, we ring to the Praise and Glory of God.

I would like to thank Steve and Ian for their work on the bells as steeple-keepers. I would also like to thank Gervald for his support and clock winding services.

Thank you also to all our ringers who have made such wonderful progress over the year and keep the bells ringing in Bishops Itchington.



"Alright, who's the ringleader?"

At our AGM on 30 January, the following officers were re-elected

Tower Captain – Sue Roderick

Vice Tower Captain – Gervald Frykman

Secretary – Gervald Frykman

Treasurer – Christina Lee

Steeple Keepers – Ian Flanders and Steve Roderick

Sue Roderick, Tower Captain

St Michael's Cleaning Crew

This year has been a great year for our gallant band of volunteers who are on the cleaning rota. Our numbers had been beginning to reduce which meant that our stalwart team were beginning to find it a bit of a strain to clean church so often. After a heartfelt call from Louise we have been blessed by an additional 11 helpers joining the team which means that instead of cleaning every five weeks or so we are now each cleaning about every 12 weeks.

Our brave gang of cleaners has been there whatever the weather; believe me it is very cold in our church in the winter when there is no heating on – but it does make you bustle about with extra speed just to keep your hands warm!

During the work day in October we had a “deep clean” of the church when we climber up ladders to brush the cobwebs off the tops of the columns, windows and the rood screen, it really does make an enormous difference to how bright the church looks. Louise and Harry took an iron to the carpet to remove the wax on the carpet at the front of church. All ages are welcome to help – and Harry was a huge help as was Joseph with his duster who was the right height to dust under the pulpit!

A big heartfelt “Thank You” to all our cleaners who do this as part of their worship, supports our worship and makes the church building welcoming to our visitors.

We are always looking for more helpers so if you feel this is something you could do and you would like to join us in cleaning the church, even if you just want to be cover for when others can't make it, come and have a chat, you will be very welcome.



Heather Boyd

Messy Church

In 2019, we had three main sessions of Messy church, in March – the Good Samaritan; June – on the Churchyard with games and telling the story of the prophet Samuel choosing David to be King; and October – the miracle of the feeding of the 5000. We also provided a craft table at the School Fayres in the summer and at Christmas. We ended the year running a craft session at the Blue Butterfly as part of the village Christmas Lights switch-on. This is proving to be a popular addition to that occasion.



So far, in 2020 we have run a session on the Lord's Prayer.

Those on the team who were able to come, met recently and talked about the future of Messy Church at St Michael's and one option we discussed is to experiment with a Breakfast Messy Church, perhaps on a fifth Sunday. These occur four times every year, which is a manageable number for us. We would start with breakfast, perhaps at 9.00am, move on to craft and games, then a worship time at our usual service time of 10.30am which would be in a style similar to Quality Time, finally refreshments and home. Those at the meeting thought it would be good to try one out and see how it goes. It could be that it fits better with family routines to meet earlier in the day.

The other big idea was to have a session where the dads take a lead role and the mums take the children round. We are so blessed at St Michael's with a number of keen fathers – whether they will prove as keen when they hear this idea is yet to be tried! We have an excellent Messy Church ideas book with the title "Extreme Crafts" which is full of imaginative challenges!

While those ideas are mulled over, we will continue with Messy in its current form.

Louise Green on behalf of the Messy Church Team

Foodbank 2019

Just over 5 years ago we started serving our village and others around through outreach by supplying food to those who need it. Every client is chosen by Social Services and we are simply asked to provide the food taking the burden of that responsibility away from us as untrained individuals. The life stories of folks continue to challenge those of us who are more fortunate and you get an inkling of what some people put up with on a daily basis.

We have seen how so many folks struggle to make ends meet, cried with some, prayed for them all and prayed with some of them as well. Yes there have been the odd occasion when a client has been referred to us that frankly thinks it is their right to have food given to them and not showed any emotion or gratitude for that matter.

But we simply ask ourselves why do we do it? Is it to get self gratification and praise or is there a deeper purpose of showing God's love to others. Is it about us or is it simply obeying the Lord's word to help feed the hungry? To be active as Christians in the very place we call home, to give back a bit of dignity to those who have lost it in the regular everyday experience we call life, for what ever reason.

Yes there have been times when we have seen God mightily at work in those we have met on our journey. Times when those going into places have been scared, desperately sad, and even miffed at the priorities of some who can't feed themselves because of priorities that we do not recognise. But who is our gospel message of the love of God for if it isn't those in need who do not know our Lord.

Is managing a foodbank or being a volunteer taking food into homes easy? No it is not, it can be very inconvenient, awkward, time consuming, costly, and sometimes heartrending. But name anything in the Christian life that simply runs without hassle! It is not about us but about what the Lord asks us to do and you quickly discover He is no man's debtor. So what can we all do to support this work? Pray, get involved, give, donate food, or just be interested enough to ask one of us how is it all going.

Thanks for your interest in reading this.

Clive Purser

Tiddler

Jane and I continue to enjoy working together on the Tiddler. We try to meet a couple of weeks before the Tiddler deadline just to run through possible themes and items to include. We are always keen to advertise any events of interest which offer people opportunities to deepen their faith. The Bible quiz continues to be popular and we have also tried to include a fun Bible related activity such as a wordsearch or spot the difference, alongside our more in-depth reflections and prayers. We are always glad to hear from members of the congregation with items they would like us to include. Please send anything you feel would be of interest to others.

Jane Southam and Louise Green

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this document and we should also mention the many other ways that people help to make St Michael's a welcoming and open environment – the flower team, the welcome team, the refreshments team and, more informally, the friendliness and care which is offered so naturally by so many.

*Let nothing be done through selfish
ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of
mind let each esteem others better
than himself. Let each of you look out
not only for his own interests, but also
for the interests of others. Let this
mind be in you which was also in
Christ Jesus*

Philippians 2:3-5