

The LINK

digital edition

March 2021



**The Parish Church of
St Michael Braintree
www.stmichaelsbtree.co.uk**



A worshipping community

Dear Friends,

At present, we continue to meet for worship, online, through “St Michael’s by Phone”, via Zoom video conferencing and in other ways. The Prime Minister has now outlined the Government’s roadmap for gradually coming out of the coronavirus lockdown, over the coming months. We will keep you updated about our plans, to start to return to the church building, as they become clearer.

In February, we tried some new things, holding some of our services on Zoom. We will be continuing with these, in particular:

- **Our Children’s & Families Services** will now all be on Zoom, starting at **9.45am each Sunday**.
- We are having another **Zoom Holy Communion on Sun 7th Mar, 6.30pm** – this will last around 30 minutes and will include an informal breaking of bread and a short Bible thought – be at home, with your own bread and wine, if you wish to.
- **All-Age Tonight – Sun 21st Mar, 6.30pm** – Rev Stephen Bailey will be speaking on Jesus’ saying, “I am the Gate” – how God protects and provides for us, to prepare us for the battles we face.

We are also continuing with a number of **Home Groups** and the **Discipleship Explored course** on Zoom, as well as the **Bible Reading Group** on Conferoo. Please see details in the Notice Sheet.

The **Women @ St Michael's Saturday School** will be on **Sat 20th Mar** – details are in the article inside this edition of the LINK magazine.

In this season of Lent, as we prepare to celebrate Easter, let us remember the example of Jesus. Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil for forty days and forty nights. As he faced each of the temptations, he responded to the tempter by quoting Scripture, starting with this,

“Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes from the mouth of God.” (Matthew 4:4)

For many of us, these are testing and challenging times. We hope for a brighter future, but things may be hard, for a variety of reasons. Let us learn from Jesus. Let us turn to God's word, daily. As the old song has it, *“Read your Bible, pray every day, if you want to grow.”* May I encourage you to try to read a bit of the Bible each day, and to face these days and these challenges in God's strength.

Wishing you every blessing,

Nigel

MISSION OF THE MONTH



Tearfund is a Christian charity called to follow Jesus wherever the need is greatest. It works tirelessly to help communities around the world escape the very worst effects of poverty and disaster. They work in over 50 countries alongside local churches and other locally-based organisations to bring whole-person transformation.

Tearfund helps communities find long-term solutions to hunger, drought and the lack of opportunity and esteem that keeps them trapped in poverty. By showing people the skills they have at their fingertips, Tearfund helps to unlock their God-given potential...with lifelong results.

When communities are empowered to overcome poverty that's precisely what they'll do. Tearfund's church-based partners help people access the material things they need to survive. But they don't stop there. They offer spiritual hope through God, loving the whole person.

Tearfund tackles the bigger systems that keep people in poverty. Corruption robs the poorest and gives to the richest. Poor farmers struggle to make a living because of environmental damage they didn't cause. So Tearfund mobilises churches at home and abroad to speak out for righteousness and justice.

As the pandemic slows down in the UK aided by the implementation of the vaccination programme, across the world it is accelerating in countries lacking the benefit of adequate or affordable vaccine supplies. Millions of lives are at stake as coronavirus hits refugee camps and war-torn countries like Yemen, Syria and South Sudan. Our prayers are urgently needed and Tearfund's extensive website www.tearfund.org gives helpful prayers pointers together with background information, not only in respect of coronavirus but on all Tearfund's work as they seek to follow Jesus where the need is greatest.

Don't miss hearing the Tearfund speaker at our Mission Sunday service later this month when we can be further informed, encouraged and challenged as we consider the issues faced by some worldwide church communities!

Miriam Clark

‘ONCE MORE – WITH FEELING!’

Once more let's visit Braintree's most famous adopted son – John Bunyan. As you know there is a school named after him; an attractive street bears his name, and his name was on a house at the end of Rayne Road opposite Barclay's Bank. But he was from Bedfordshire. How did he make the journey from Elstow in Bedfordshire almost 300 years ago? On foot, maybe because he was a 'tinker' – a mender of pots and pans-who most likely could not afford a horse.

WITH FEELING.

Bunyan attracted crowds when he preached. In his day, he proclaimed his message in barns and farmhouses across Beds, Herts and Essex. The intellectually brilliant and vicar of Coggeshall, John Owen, who was a contemporary of John Bunyan, wished he could preach like him.

John 6:37 was one Bunyan's favourite verses in the Bible (*'...whoever comes to me I will never cast out'*).

EXTRACT

Dane Ortland, in his book 'Gentle and Lowly', outlines parts of Bunyan's sermon preached on those words.

- 'whoever comes'. Ortland summarises Bunyan: 'we are not dragged kicking and screaming into Christ against our will. Divine grace is so radical that it reaches down and turns around our very desires'. We are set free to want to come to the attractive Jesus Christ.
- '...comes to me...'. Here's Ortland's summary of Bunyan. 'We do not come to a set of doctrines....to a church.... or even to the gospel. All these are vital. But most truly, we come to a person. To Christ himself.

- '...I will never cast out'. Bunyan knew people very well. He understands that we make excuses for coming to Christ. 'I am too bad...too old...I came once but have fallen away badly he won't have me back..... I have flagrantly rebelled against what I know to be right....I have no good thing to bring with me'.

To lovingly persuade men to come to Christ, Bunyan imagines the Lord Jesus overcoming the objections we put up. Bunyan has Our Lord saying:

'I know it all..... I understand....let me carry your burdens....I am the one most suited to forgive.'

If John Bunyan came back to Braintree, I guess he would be surprised to see his name given to a road, a school and on the front of a house. Also, he would be perhaps more than a little disappointed because he gave his life encouraging men and women to look to Jesus Christ and not to John Bunyan. If he came back to Braintree, he would still urge us to come to Jesus Christ.

Stephen Bailey.

SOCIAL MEDIA AND OUR EVANGELISM

This pandemic, and especially our extended lockdowns, has been a huge challenge for St Michael's, along with many other churches. During the first lockdown we were learning how we could do church online. Later we had to facilitate safe in-person services and work out how to integrate our online offering with them.

The pandemic also made it much harder to reach out, as we have been more restricted in running the sorts of events we might invite our family and friends to.

Yet there are also opportunities online to reach out. Here are some of the ways different members of our congregation have been using:

- Phoning friends and neighbours – keeping those non-church contacts alive
- Offering to help friends and neighbours, especially those who are vulnerable or isolated
- Using social media to keep in touch with others
- Liking St Michael's Facebook page, and encouraging others to do so. In this way not only do posts come up more regularly in your stream, but we increase our 'reach'. The number of people following our church page is creeping up, but can you help to grow that number?
- Reacting to individual church posts. The more people who like, comment on or share posts, the more likely it will be that the Facebook algorithm will boost posts – it isn't automatic.
- Where you think a post is particularly appropriate, sharing it to your own page (be selective, sharing everything may put people off!).
- Directly inviting contacts to log in to our services or events by sharing St Michael's posts. This may be particularly relevant at special occasions such as Christmas, Easter or Remembrance, or courses like 321 or Discipleship Explored.

If you can do some or all of these you will be helping to share the good news, and when lock-down comes to an end, we'll be in a much better position to promote our activities outside our own church family.

As a couple of examples to encourage you, the first post advertising Christmas Services was seen by about 300 different people, and one promoting the special Remembrance Service, "*Braintree and Bocking Remembers*" was viewed by 2,500!

If you have ideas for posts, please contact revnigeladams@gmail.com for the Evangelism Group to consider.

Jonathan Wicks on behalf of the Evangelism Group

OLD POLLUTION

Isaiah 1:18:

‘Come now and let us reason together,’ says the Lord. ‘Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool.’

Old pollution can be found in closed down factories and refuse depositories. It can contaminate the soil. Whether it is found on the surface or below it can cause lots of damage. It can be a danger for water and health of the population. Because of this most countries take this problem seriously and try to arrange a proper cleaning up.

Old pollution can also be found in our lives? Lots of sins which we have not yet dealt with? Perhaps they are not on the surface and nobody knows about them. It can also be that certain sins have not had any consequences in our lives. Perhaps this pollution does not bother us too much at the moment. Despite this we should take such old pollution seriously before it is too late. Sins have in any event very serious consequences. Already now they separate us from God. And soon they will result in an eternal punishment.

But God offers us a cleaning up option of our lives. When we open our heart for His love and confess all of it we will avoid the serious consequences. Then God cleanses our heart and our life from sin, because Jesus Christ has paid for them through His death on the cross. This is the start of a new, happy life with God.

Supplied by Peter Schaad, translated from his Swiss calendar

WOMEN @ ST MICHAEL'S

A note for your diary

Our next Saturday School is Saturday March 20th 2021 via Zoom Conferencing Service

9.45 until 12 noon.

Our theme for the morning is to be:

Women of Faith

This is our speaker: Lindsay Benn and a little about her

Lindsay is passionate about teaching the Bible to women. She is married to Wallace and has worked alongside him in ministry for 42 years.

She is Mum to two adult children and a grandmother to three adorable grandchildren! She has worked part-time for many years as a Learning Support teacher and now does some private tutoring.

Lindsay and Wallace moved eight years ago to Northamptonshire (on Wallace's retirement) and they are enjoying being part of St. Botolph's, Barton Seagrave, as well as travelling nationally and internationally to speak at conferences together.

Lindsay loves children, gardening, decorating, being creative and is a knitting nanny!

Details to join the morning will be available nearer the time.



Jennifer Bailey & Jo Adams

MARCH DIARY

www.stmichaelsbtree.co.uk

Online services are launched on Sundays as follows:

9.45am – Children’s & Families service – now on Zoom

10.00am – Adult services & monthly Family Service

<http://stmichaelsbtree.co.uk/website/index.php/worship/adult-service>

Links for Zoom services are on Nigel Adams’ weekly email – these need to be accessed “live” (at the time).

The 10am YouTube services are available at these times, or to watch or listen to after those times, on catch-up.

2 Tuesday

2:00pm Bible reading group on Conferoo

8:00pm Zoom Bible Study, led by Cyril Bamforth

3 Wednesday

10:00am Meeting Point on Zoom

7:30pm Discipleship Explored on Zoom

4 Thursday

11:00am Coffee@Home “Monthly Zoom Coffee morning” with Nigel & Jo Adams

7 Sunday

9:45am Children’s and Families Service – Live on Zoom

10:00am Worship on the Web – Adult Service

11:00am After Church “Zoom Coffee”

6.30pm Holy Communion on Zoom

9 Tuesday

2:00pm Bible reading group on Conferoo

8 - 9pm First Priority Prayer Meeting on Zoom

10 Wednesday

10:00am Meeting Point on Zoom

7:30pm Discipleship Explored on Zoom

14 Sunday

10:00am Worship on the Web – Church Family Worship (Mothering Sunday)

11:00am After Church “Zoom Coffee”

16 Tuesday

2:00pm Bible reading group on Conferoo

8:00pm Zoom Bible Study, led by Cyril Bamforth

17 Wednesday

10:00am Meeting Point on Zoom

7:30pm Discipleship Explored on Zoom

20 Saturday

10:00am Women @ St Michael’s Saturday School on Zoom

21 Sunday

9:45am Children’s and Families Service – Live on Zoom

10:00am Worship on the Web – Adult Service

11:00am After Church “Zoom Coffee”

6:30pm All Age Tonight – Live on Zoom

23 Tuesday MARCH LINK SUBMISSION DUE

2:00pm Bible reading group on Conferoo

8:00pm Zoom Bible Study, led by Cyril Bamforth

24 Wednesday

10:00am Meeting Point on Zoom

7:30pm Discipleship Explored on Zoom

28 Sunday

9:45am Children’s and Families Service – Live on Zoom

10:00am Worship on the Web – Adult Service

11:00am After Church “Zoom Coffee”

30 Tuesday

2:00pm Bible reading group on Conferoo

8:00pm Zoom Bible Study, led by Cyril Bamforth

31 Wednesday

10:00am Meeting Point on Zoom

7:30pm Discipleship Explored on Zoom

BELFRY BULLETIN

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

THE A.G.M. OF THE St. MICHAEL'S GUILD OF BELL RINGERS WAS HELD ON MONDAY 8th FEBRUARY 2021 on zoom with all but one member able to attend.

Guild master Bradley Hill welcomed all to the meeting especially Church Warden Dave Marriott who opened the meeting with a prayer looking forward to hearing the music of the bells again.

The minutes of the last AGM were accepted with no matters arising that were not covered in the agenda.

Bradley reported on a strange year with no bells in the tower and the global pandemic curtailing ringing elsewhere.

Not being able to meet in person we have kept in contact via Zoom with Quiz Nights and our virtual Christmas dinner, all good fun.

The Master is excited for the refurbishment project to be completed and our first ring on the bells.

The only outing was on Saturday 18th January 2020 to see the bells being refurbished at Whites of Appleton.

The Steeple Keeper reported that only the refurbishing work had been done.

The Treasurer reported that there had been no income to the general account and the only expense was our membership fees to the Essex Association.

All but I of the Officers were re-elected -: MASTER Bradley Hill, DEPUTY MASTER Debbie Hill, SECRETARY Lin Ould, TREASURER RICHARD Ould, STEEPLE KEEPER Bradley Hill, DEPUTY STEEPLE KEEPER Ellie Gray was the new appointment.

It was agreed to leave arranging any outing to a later date when we hope conditions will be right to go ringing.

In December Phil Kelly celebrated his 60th birthday but unfortunately for us he decided the time had come for him to resign from the Guild. We wish well for the future and thank him for all his support in the past. We will miss him, not least his humour.

BELL REFURBISHMENT

Due to Covid 19 the bells are not back in the tower and ringable. The good news is that they are back in the church ready to be installed in the tower. We hope this will be April taking 4 days to achieve.

It was reported that the funds are £7,000 short.

The ringing chamber has a new draft proof door. The walls have been plastered and painted with appropriate materials. New seating and cupboards have been installed and cushions purchased.

The bell frame has been painted and new windows fitted in the belfry.

Bradley Hill was thanked for all his efforts in driving this project forward.

Well done Brad.

Dave Marriott brought the meeting to a close in prayer.

Peter Smith