

The LINK

digital edition

April 2020



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



Change and an unchanging God

What incredible times we live in! I suspect that children alive today will be telling their grandchildren of these momentous times.

We are facing, what the Prime Minister called, “this invisible killer” – a virus for which we have neither prevention nor cure. The Government’s advice is for us to “stay at home, protect the NHS and save lives.” We should only leave our homes for certain very limited purposes.

In line with this advice, and in order to lead by example, all Church of England churches are to remain closed for public worship and private prayer for the time being. But despite having to close St Michael’s Church, we should remember that the church is us, the people of God, not our buildings.

Each Sunday, we are having both an adult and a children’s & families service on our St Michael’s Church Website. Over Easter, we will have some additional services, with some reflections for Good Friday and also an additional All-Age Tonight (youth-friendly service) on Easter Sunday. I am very grateful to all who have been involved in this and to all of you who have responded to the services. Particular thanks go to David & Rachel Huxter, who have been sorting out the technical side to make it happen.

We have started a series, for both of our Sunday services, on the character of God. As human beings, we often find change hard. The coronavirus changes have affected all of us, and for some, it has been a particularly difficult time. Many will be feeling lonely, isolated and even fearful of what the future holds. We would encourage everyone to

continue to do all you can to stay in touch with each other, by phone or video conferencing (Skype, Facetime, Zoom, etc.).

As we approach Easter, we should remember our amazing creator God – our Holy God – who chose to send his only Son, Jesus, into the world. Jesus came to show what perfect love looks like in a human being. But Jesus came, ultimately, to die and rise to life again – to die for our sins, our wrongdoing, and to rise to life – to show that he has victory over death itself.

In these hard and changing times for many of us, we should remember that we have an unchanging God, because “Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today and forever.” (Hebrews 13:8)

May I encourage you to come each day, praising our loving and unchanging God. Please pray for our nation and our world – for a special measure of wisdom for world leaders, as we battle coronavirus. Pray for our health service – for the brave men & women who seek to save lives. Pray for those seeking to develop treatments, new hospitals and a vaccine for coronavirus – for success in their endeavours. And this Easter, please praise God for Jesus.

Wishing you every blessing in these hard times,
Nigel

MISSION OF THE MONTH MAKE JESUS KNOWN (MJK)

Make Jesus Known is an evangelistic organisation, led by Tim Cooke (who grew up at St Michael's). It works in the UK and across Europe taking the Good News of Christ to young people, primarily through the medium of song.

As those of you who follow the exploits of Tim and the MJK team will know already they have had to cancel their extensive programme of schools and young people's work in this country and across Europe.

They did manage to issue their latest set of songs (go to the MJK website to find how to get a copy). Please pray that it will be listened to and will challenge folk with the claims of Christ.

Tim and the team decided to concentrate on on-line work for the duration of the shutdown. Tim produces a daily five-minute encouragement talk based on Matthews gospel. If you have not heard it either go to the MJK site and download the app or access it via Facebook or Twitter. If in doubt contact our church techie wizards.

<https://makejesusknown.com/#/>

<https://www.facebook.com/makejesusknown/>

As I type Tim and Charissa have been struck down by covid19 so please pray for them (and everyone else who is ill isolated or afraid). Tim said to me that now is a great time to get the message of God's grace out there on the web when folk are uncertain and perhaps aware for the first time that the apparent security and predictability for those in the West that has existed all my life is actually but a paper thin chimera. Folk need to hear of where the only true security and purpose lie - in Christ alone.

In will not surprise you to know that Tim had all sorts of plans germinating before the present impasse including (God willing) opening a location in Oldham where youngsters could be presented with the Truth of life but I will write more of that and much else later.

God Bless
Roger Cooke

WHEN WILL I GET MY NEXT HAIRCUT?

Will it be in three weeks' time? When will Boris allow the barber shops to open? End of April, end of June?

TRIVIAL!

Worrying about a 'short back and sides' doesn't compare with the real worries that come from being confined to our houses.

How will we cope with the children being off school perhaps from now until September? Will there be enough food in shops? What about getting our medication? Suppose I want to see a doctor? How will I get to the surgery? Despite the Spring sunshine, those prone to depression may fear that dark cloud settling on them as the weeks go by. Worrying about getting to the barbers is laughable compared with other concerns.

THE CHRISTIAN GOOD NEWS TO THE RESCUE

Maybe our present difficulties and anxieties will help us to discover the truth of these word: *'...I will boast more gladly of my weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon me'* (2 Corinthians 12:10).

THORN IN THE FLESH

Just before these words the Apostle Paul spoke about asking God to take away from him what he called a *'thorn in the flesh'*. Wisely, he does not say exactly what it was. It could have been an illness or a person. It may have been the misery that comes from being locked in a prison cell. (That happened to him often.) It seems our heavenly Father allows all kinds of different 'thorns in the flesh' to come our way.

WHY?

We may ask for a quick solution to our problems. But God our Father allows them to encourage us to pray. Paul prayed. He asked that the thorn maybe removed. Three times he approached his heavenly Father. In the end he got his answer. His heavenly Father promised another gift – his power perfecting Paul's weakness (2 Corinthians 12:10). That power turns out to be the presence and power of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 12:11). He goes on to say he even welcomes his difficulties because he knows the power of the Lord Jesus Christ with him. The 'thorn' was not removed but Someone greater came who beyond measure enabled him to cope.

GRINDING DOWN.

For some folk and some families, the call to stay at home may feel a bit like a holiday, but we may, little by little, begin to feel a little 'stir-crazy'. We may feel lonely, perhaps get anxious about getting enough to eat, or worried about elderly parents and friends. Shut down could wear us down.

But Jesus Christ is stronger. Why not pray that you may know and experience his powerful presence? Then on that first Sunday when we are able to meet again, we probably excitedly will want to tell each other that in those weeks we knew the Lord Jesus Christ better.

LOOKING UP

Just to encourage ourselves and heighten the sense of the presence of the Lord Jesus why not read through a couple of Gospels? Let's turn our isolation into the best holiday we have ever had with the best Friend we shall ever have.

Stephen Bailey.

THURSDAY 9th APRIL 2020

This day will be the 75th anniversary of one particular Nazi war-crime. The Nazis hung Dietrich Bonhoeffer in Flossenberg prison on 9th April 1945.

He was a Christian pastor who long before many others in the middle of the 1930s saw the evil that lay behind Hitler's regime.

SAFE IN NEW YORK

He had left Germany but under the urgings of his Swiss friend, Karl Barth, gave up the safety of his teaching job in the USA to support and encourage what was called 'the Confessing Church'. This was a tiny rump of the old Lutheran church of Germany. The Nazis had taken over the old church and 'Aryanised' it. Jesus was presented as a blond and blue-eyed non-Jewish Aryan. Chunks of the Old Testament and parts of the New Testament were scrapped, old beliefs jettisoned, and pastors had to preach a religious kind of Nazism.

ZINGST & FINKENWALDE

To cut a long story short another Lutheran pastor, Martin Niemoller, got Bonhoeffer to set up a training college to prepare men to be Confessing Church pastors. The seminary was first in Zingst and then Finkewalde which were remote places on Germany's Baltic coast. It was hoped they would be remote enough to be out of the eyes of the Gestapo. Sadly not: the seminary was closed in August 1937 and went underground.

ARREST AND CONCENTRATION CAMPS

Bonhoeffer was arrested in 1944 as part of a round-up of those thought to be involved in the assassination plot against Adolf Hitler. He was moved from concentration camp to concentration camp until finally was taken to Flossenburg. He was hung on April 9th 1945 – just a month before Nazi Germany was defeated.

THE RESURRECTION

What can we learn from this twentieth century Christian martyr as we face COVID-19 which seems to be so victorious? We are confined to our homes; the nation grinds to a halt; the global economy slows. So far, we have no cure. We can't even get out to celebrate Easter together. But the man hung on April 9th 1945 found the living Lord Jesus more lovingly powerful than anything else in all creation. He already knew that the way of Lord Jesus Christ – the way of the cross- was the way to the Resurrection. If Jesus Christ conquered death, then an unknown virus is nothing.

Stephen Bailey.

SOMETHING WORTH LISTENING TO

A dear friend, and Lydia's godmother, contacted me recently to tell me about a series of talks on the radio that might be of interest to those who have been bereaved or those who are supporting someone who has been bereaved.

My friend has given me permission to share with you that in the last twelve months both her mother and father died and in 2017 her cherished goddaughter (Lydia) died.

While the talks focus on those whose children have died, they are relevant for anyone who has been bereaved and my friend found them helpful following the death of her parents.

The talks feature Pastor Colin Smith and were initially broadcast on Premier Christian Radio but can now be found on the website unlockingthebible.org. under radio archives.

They were broadcast on February 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11 and 12 this year and each broadcast is about 30 minutes long, (<https://unlockingthebible.org/archive>). The first talk is entitled Tears and Talk and the teaching is based on the book of Lamentations.

We often pray 'for those who have recently been bereaved' but we should also remember those who were bereaved many years ago who still may need support. If that is you, please tune in and see what you think.

I have listened to all the talks in the series, found the teaching helpful and intend to listen to them again.

You may have noticed that in this piece I have not referred to the person who has died as 'lost'; as Christians we know that we will see our loved ones again because of what Jesus did for us on the cross, so no believer is 'lost', they have just gone on ahead.

God Bless
Caroline Benbrook

I love the LORD, for HE heard my voice; HE heard my cry for mercy. Because HE turned his ear to me, I will call on HIM as long as I live (Psalm 116:1+2)

The author of Psalm 116 had some superb experiences with HIS GOD. The All POWERFUL answered his pleading and saved him (verse 6). With a happy and thankful heart, he said: I LOVE THE LORD. As an answer to what happened to him, he wanted to put all his faith in GOD.

As believers we have even more reason to say with the words of the Apostle John: WE LOVE BECAUSE HE FIRST LOVED US (1 John 4:19). In HIS love HE chose us before Creation to become HIS children and to be one day with HIM forever.

He carried out HIS plans and as a result proved HIS great love to us. HE sent HIS SON as a human being to Earth in order to carry out HIS SALVATION PLAN so HE can forgive us. HE gave JESUS for us and our sins, to die on the cross.

In this way GOD's love has been revealed by sending HIS SON into the world so we may live through HIM (1 John 4:9).

Through faith in the SAVIOUR JESUS CHRIST we have become beloved children of GOD. Is that not enough reason to give our all to GOD our FATHER and honour HIM with daily worship and faith.

Peter Schaad

APRIL DIARY

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5 Sunday Palm Sunday

The Just God

Rev 20:11 – 21:4

Worship on the Web – Adult Service

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

Worship on the Web – Children's and Families Service

<http://stmichaelsbtree.co.uk/website/index.php/worship/junior-church>

10 Friday Good Friday

The Suffering God

Worship on the Web – Adult Service

12 Sunday EASTER DAY

The Risen King

Jn 20:1-10 – the Resurrection

Worship on the Web – Family Service

An Eggceptional Easter?!

Worship on the Web – Easter All Age-Tonight

14 Tuesday MAY LINK SUBMISSION DUE

19 Sunday 1st After Easter

The Gracious God

Romans 5:6-11

Worship on the Web – Adult Service

Worship on the Web – Children's and Families Service

26 Sunday 2nd After Easter

The Wise God

1 Cor 1:18-31

Worship on the Web – Adult Service

Worship on the Web – Children's and Families Service

A COMMUNICATOR WRITES

It has been a while since I wrote as the Magazine Editor, or one that produces a lot of publicity, or a user of technology for virtual meetings for the church and it's now I write asking you to think how you can share information.

In the current times we are all suffering from the effects of the Coronavirus, it is essential this communication is vital to share our faith, support each other and to enable our church to live on.

It might be times like this that you wish to communicate through the magazine something of faith, thoughts, ideas and activities and with the world of the internet you can. (In the magazine we have had recipes, gardening, craft, diaries and so much more)

So please help me fill the magazine, the Facebook page and other digital forms of communication with suitable material.

You can email the notices/magazine team on
notices@stmichaelsbtree.co.uk

Message the church on facebook: Stmichaelschurchbraintree

Or check out our website: <http://stmichaelsbtree.co.uk/website/>

Some of the tools we have used include Microsoft Teams, WhatsApp, Zoom, Facebook to talk to each other and this might be of use.

Going forward when we are back meeting again, think of how this digital communication allows us to reach round the world and to keep contact with old friends and bring new people to know Jesus.

Dave Marriott

p.s. If you want to print this magazine at home you can, though it might come out larger than you are used to.

BELFRY BULLETIN

BELL RESTORATION UPDATE

(The following article was written before the coronavirus restrictions)

All our bells have now been tuned and new wheels have been made with other work progressing steadily.

At the moment the new headstocks are being made. Headstocks which contain the bushes that allow the bells to swing, are fitted to the crown of the bell and then attached to the frame. The frame is, in our case, a metal construction into which all the bells are hung and kept stable so as not to damage the fabric of the Tower.

The ringing chamber has been fitted with new seating and cupboards making for a more comfortable environment for ringers and visitors and is looking very smart.

The ringers themselves have kept busy by joining local towers, mainly Felsted and Witham and also Writtle and Chelmsford Cathedral, for their practice nights. They have also been helping with service ring, again at Felsted and Witham but also at Kelvedon and Coggeshall.

Debbie Hill has conducted her 1st Quarter Peal of Stedman Doubles and also Grandsire Triples. Peter Smith conducted a Quarter Peal containing 6 methods and 1 variation his most as conductor,

Not all of us have been busy ringing, the Master, Bradley Hill has been snowboarding!!!

The Northern District of the Essex Association of Change Ringers is celebrating the 100th year of it's formation. To mark this centenary, it is hoped to ring 100 Quarter Peals encompassing all the District's ringable towers. Our ringers are helping with this by going wherever and whenever they are asked. We hope to contribute to this when our bells are back and ringing.

We are looking forward to the return of the bells. Hopefully soon.

We are still fund raising.

Peter Smith