



Epiphany 2021

Dear Parishioner,

As we enter another period of lockdown, I want to express my prayers and best wishes to each one of you, that your faith may bring you hope and joy even in the current circumstances. I write this letter to reflect on the situation, and to describe how Saint Michael's is responding. Most of you will receive this letter first by email, and then in hard copy, along with some other materials that will be useful over the coming weeks.

WORSHIP

Within the latest lockdown restrictions, **communal worship is permitted** and attending worship is a legitimate reason to leave home. This is important because it recognises the essential nature of worship to the wellbeing of individuals and to society as a whole. At Saint Michael's we are blessed with a large and flexible space that enables worship to continue in a modified form. For the time being the pattern of services will be:

On Sundays,

- 9am Morning Prayer - *in person*.
- Sung Mass at 10am – *in person or livestreamed via Facebook and You Tube*.
- 6.00pm Evening Prayer - *in person* (this Sunday 10th January, Epiphany Carols).

For the time being the 8am Low Mass is paused along with the 11.30am Children's Mass. I hope both of these services will restart again as soon as possible. We hope to hold a Children's Mass with Christingles for Candlemas at the end of January, but I am also actively exploring other activities to engage children.

During the week (Monday to Saturday)

- Morning Prayer at 9am - *in person and via Zoom every day except Friday (details below)*
- Mass on Wednesday at Noon and Saturday at 9.30am - *in person*.
- Monday 7-8pm Holy Hour of silent prayer before the Blessed Sacrament - *in person*.

Remember, that the **church is open every day** for prayer and reflection (except Friday). Some of you may not feel comfortable attending a service, but might prefer to come into church at other times.

I ask you to prayerfully discern whether you should attend worship. As your parish priest I never imagined I would be in the position of *discouraging* some of you from coming to church! My role is to ensure that risk is at a minimum as far as possible, and sanitising, cleaning and social-distancing are all fairly effective in that regard, and this should provide significant reassurance and confidence. On the other hand, in all situations that risk still exists, particularly for those who are older or have health conditions, and if you decide not to come to church at this time I fully support your decision. I only ask that you make a conscious effort to nourish your faith by taking part in services online and in other ways. Even if only a small number of people can attend in person, they do so on behalf of all those who are unable to, and though separated physically, we are united in love and prayer.

FAITH AND FELLOWSHIP

Worship unites us as the Body of Christ, but there are many other activities that support our unity in faith and so I encourage you to take part in the following –

- **Zoom Coffee** every Sunday during lockdown, 11.30-Noon with a short talk from a speaker followed by questions. I am also exploring the idea of a Zoom 'Cocktail Party' (or something like it) for Candlemas – more details soon.
- **Parish Quiz**, Saturday 13th February, 7.00pm, (online). Details TBC but put the date in your diary.
- We are taking forward our **Saint Michael's Cook Book** and if you haven't already given us a recipe, please get in touch.
- Any **other ideas?** I am keen to hear them!

PASTORAL CARE

This is a difficult time for us all, but for some more so than others. Fortunately, because of the previous lockdown and restrictions, most of us have now found support networks in family, friends and neighbours and coping strategies. However, please let the clergy know if you hear of anyone who is having a difficult time and who might appreciate a call or other forms of support. We are often able to advise how to access help in the local community. Please keep supporting each other, as you have been doing, and keep in your prayers those who experience particular loneliness, distress and hardship as a result of the pandemic.

PARISH CALENDAR 2021

Uncertainty about the future has made it impossible to issue the usual Parish Calendar for the whole year. With the hard copy of this letter will come a list of liturgical dates and some other events later in the year that we hope might be able to take place.

EPIPHANY OFFERINGS

Thank you to those who responded to previous appeals for financial support either by making a donation or joining Planned Giving. I'm sorry to have to ask again so soon, but as we remember the offering of the gifts of the Magi, now is an appropriate time to ask you to consider making an Epiphany Offering for the ministry and mission of Saint Michael's. In a normal year, many of you would have given to collections as part of Christmas services, and in the absence of these please consider whether you can make a special contribution in one of the following ways:

- Using the blue **Gift Aid envelope** that will be provided with the hard copy of this letter or picked up from church. This can be returned to Vicarage or to the wall safes at the back of church.
- Making a **bank transfer** to account no. 10774065, sort code 20-72-33. Use the reference 'Epiphany' to help us identify it as part of this appeal.
- Joining or increasing your **Planned Giving** (the relevant forms can be found on the website here: <http://www.stmichaelbarnes.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/Bankers-order-1.pdf>)
- To give by **text** simply text SAINTMICHAEL to 70470 followed by the amount you wish to give (e.g. SAINTMICHAEL£10) up the value of £20 – although you can donate more by texting again.

I know that this is a difficult time financially for many of you, but it is also very difficult for Saint Michael's with so many of the usual sources of income, being entirely impossible or greatly reduced. So if you are in a position to help, even by a small amount, please consider doing so.

EPIPHANY REFLECTION

At Epiphany we commemorate the visit of the Wise Men to the 'house' in Bethlehem where the Holy Family are staying. Ironically, none of us can receive visitors at this time, but it is the most domestic of feasts, and so the tradition of blessing one's home at Epiphany finds a new resonance in the order to 'stay at home', that we might remain safe inside at a time of fear and anxiety. At Mass on the Epiphany, we continue the ancient practice of blessing pieces of chalk which will then be available for collection from church (we can also deliver this to you) along with instructions on how to write the traditional Epiphany blessing at the entrance to your house, asking for God's blessing upon you and your household in the year ahead. **It is my prayer at this time that whatever the coming year holds, like the Magi, you may be 'overwhelmed with joy' (Matthew 2.11) at the revealing of Christ who is the light of all people.**

Father Stephen, *Vicar*

Topic: Morning Prayer

Time: This is a recurring meeting

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88998801204>

Meeting ID: 889 9880 1204

Topic: St Michael's Zoom Coffee

Time: This is a recurring meeting

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81480421749>

Meeting ID: 814 8042 1749