



Epiphanytide 2022

EPIPHANY GREETINGS



Dear Parishioners,

As we begin 2022 and celebrate Epiphany, I write to you to express my prayers for God's blessing on you in this New Year and share with you some hopes for the future.

'They were overwhelmed with joy' (Matthew 2.10)

The ongoing pandemic continues to challenge everyone, but I am struck by the verse in Matthew's Gospel in which the Magi are 'overwhelmed with joy' as they enter the house where Jesus was. In the same way, I hope that your faith may bring you that same joy even, indeed *especially*, in the current circumstances.

'O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness' (Psalm 69.9)

I want to express our thanks and praise to our Director of Music, Martin Neary, as he prepares to step down at the end of this month.

Martin has been a great blessing to Saint Michael's – his musicianship and experience have been gifts to us all – so it is with sadness, mixed with thanksgiving, that that we say farewell to him and his wife Penny, as forever dear friends who are welcome among us. As an appreciation of our thanks to Martin, we are currently collecting for a leaving gift for him, and I do hope you will consider contributing to this. *If you would like to do this please use the giving information at the end of the letter and let us know it is for this purpose.*

Martin's last day with us will be Sunday 30th January. There will be presentations and tributes to Martin during the 10am Family Mass. There is also Choral Evensong at 6pm that evening, when we will be joined by our newly-appointed Director of Music – Laurence Williams – so do join us to welcome him.

Even as we say farewell to Martin, we are excited by the arrival of Laurence as his successor, particularly as Martin taught Laurence when he was a chorister at Westminster Abbey! Laurence is a freelance musician, working both in London and internationally as a singer, choir trainer, organist and teacher. He is passionate about introducing people to choral music. Laurence has a great deal of experience running children's choirs and will be working towards launching our own children's choir in the near future. Laurence's first Sunday with us will be 13th February.

‘They offered him gifts’ (Matthew 2.11)

Epiphany is the season of gifts, and so it’s a good time to reflect on your giving to Saint Michael’s. Changing patterns of attendance because of the pandemic have been very challenging for Saint Michael’s. Moreover, changing patterns of how we carry and spend money continue to affect church as we gradually adjust to different ways of receiving donations. *Please may I ask you to consider three things about this –*

First, to encourage you to use the **contactless payment stations** for cards and mobiles in church. These have been available for some time after services, but now we have one permanently installed that can be used any time the church is open. I know that some of you will appreciate the opportunity to use these machines in your own time rather than in the rather brief period at the end of services.

Second, to ask you to consider making an **Epiphany offering**, especially if the pandemic prevented you from attending services at Saint Michael’s over Christmas, when you might have made a donation. Attendance at Christmas was, understandably, greatly reduced and with it the collections at these services, which are normally some of the most significant in the year.

Third, I must, as ever, encourage as many of you as possible to donate by **standing order**. This really is one of the most important things anyone can do to support Saint Michael’s, and whether you can give a small or a large amount it is the regularity and dependability that matters so much to us. It’s very easy to set up – just contact the Parish Office which will send you the form, and we will process it for you.

Details of how to give can be found at the end of this letter. Thank you for your gift, and all the many ways that all of you already give to Saint Michael’s whether financially, or in your time and skills.

‘Jesus revealed his glory, and his disciples believed in him’ (John 2.11)

Each new year at Saint Michael’s, we begin gathering together children and adults to be prepared for Confirmation. It is a sign of the health and strength of our church that every year there are many candidates wanting to affirm their Christian faith in this way.

Children are confirmed from school year 6 and upwards. We have found that Sundays at 4pm seems to be a good time for preparation sessions. Please send names of children to be confirmed to me or the Parish Office as soon as possible.

Adults should not be shy about coming forward for confirmation. There are two common reasons for reticence; on the one hand, many are under the mistaken impression that to be confirmed you have to believe everything and have all the answers! Quite the contrary – confirmation is about being willing to continue on the journey of discovery, and questioning your answers more than answering your questions. On the other hand, people are often held back by concerns over time. My motto here is to do the preparation that is possible rather than the preparation that is impossible. Each year, depending on the candidates, we work out something practical and flexible that reflects individual schedules and needs. If you are an adult who has not been confirmed and you would like to consider this, please do have a conversation with one of the clergy.

The Bishop of Southwark will be with us for a Confirmation service on Sunday 17th July at 10am.

‘Full of grace and truth’ (John 1.14)

My friends, there is so much to look forward to in the year ahead and I hope you have received a copy of the 2022 Parish Calendar, which is available online and in church.

As Christians we date each year as *Anno Domini* or 'Year of the Lord' to indicate that we live in an age of grace, where the love of the Father has been revealed in his Son through the visit of the Wise Men, in Christ's baptism in the Jordan and by the miracle at Cana. Nevertheless, each year, it is up to us to make this grace visible and expressed through our lives both individually and together. The words 'fullness', 'abundance' and 'overflowing' are key words in the Gospels to express all the wonderful things God has in store for us.

So I encourage you to join us at Saint Michael's in prayer and worship, fellowship and mission, so that everyone can share in this love. As St John says, 'we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth'. For this and God's many blessings and gifts to us, let us be filled with hope, joy and thanksgiving in the year ahead.

With best wishes and prayers,



Father Stephen Stavrou, *Vicar*

HOW TO GIVE

- ◆ If you are making a **cash** donation, we ask you to Gift Aid your offering using the blue envelopes provided in the pews.
- ◆ You can donate 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.
- ◆ There is a **contactless** giving machine at the back of the church. Simply tap the amount you wish to give (up to £40) and then hold your card or phone over the contactless symbol on top.
- ◆ A **bank transfer** can be made to our account no. 10774065, sort code 20-72-33

Please give generously to the ministry of the church. **Thank you for your gift.**