

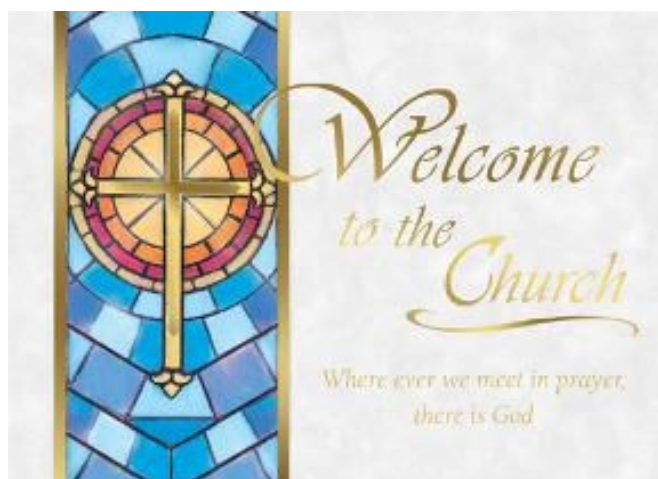


MONTHLY MAGAZINE OF THE
PARISH CHURCH OF
St MICHAEL & ALL ANGELS, RUNCORN.
www.runcornstmichaels.org.uk

ISSUE 169

FEBRUARY 2024

Growing Together



In GROWING TOGETHER THIS MONTH:
HUMOUR NEWS

PUZZLE PAGE

SERVICES FOR FEBRUARY
CELEBRATIONS

Vicar's Message

"Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness"

-Matthew 4: 1-11

It feels rather strange that no sooner as we have left the busyness of Christmas that we are already looking towards Lent. Alas, this is how the calendar falls this year, early, and we too must be early in our preparations.

Lent is one of the most deeply spiritual times of our year and one that can fully enrich the Christian on their own journey. If approached well, lent enhances body, mind and spirit and allows us to grow closer to Jesus Christ in our own walk of faith. But how exactly do we prepare well for lent?

One thing I hear a lot from people regarding Lenten preparations is the need to engage with giving something up, and this is about the sum of it. Unfortunately giving up chocolate, smoking, or bad language just as a solitary act in itself is actually missing the mark. Why? Well, we could give up these things any point of the year, and doing so during Lent is in some ways not denying yourself for a spiritual purpose, rather it is denying yourself for a moment in time, tradition, or maybe to fulfil a health need.

Furthermore, there are many more areas we should look at in order to grow during lent, all of which will enhance our spiritual devotion and draw us closer to Jesus in the desert. And that is actually what we should be aiming for, something that is similar to Jesus in the desert prior to his journey on. If we look at or imagine deeply his journey through the desert we see not only fasting, but we also see a lot of prayer, and given he was fully aware of the scriptures, Jesus would have engaged in the word of God too. So, what does this "desert" look like for us here in Runcorn in 2024?

Fasting

It is a misunderstanding that the church of England has no rules on fasting. The Book of common prayer does indeed give us the days of the year to fast. What constitutes a fast is basically to restrict the intake of food in such a way as you feel hungry for the majority of the day. Two small side plates spread out, or one meal at the end of the day is often best. However it is important that you do not partake in fasting if you are in the developmental stages of life (up to 18), you are elderly or have medical conditions. If any of these apply do speak to your Doctor first, prior to beginning a fast. But why fast? Well, fasting to some is a form of atonement for sins, though to many Anglicans it is mostly to show sorrow for sins and as an expression of the rejection of the world and its pleasures.

Prayer

Lent is the ideal time to revisit your prayer life, especially if it has slipped over the year. Why not try exploring other forms of prayer? Lectio Divina (Divine reading), prayer painting and prayer colouring are often overlooked. The Rosary, Meditative prayer, and many others. The list is endless where prayer is concerned. Personally, I am hoping to re-establish my 3pm prayers, the hour Jesus died. I have always done this, but it has slipped this year. What about you? What can you do to grow in prayer this lent?

Reading

Reading comes in two forms. The first is the Gospels which are essential for our walk of faith. The Gospels give us the life and ministry of Jesus and his followers, and if read slowly and meditatively you will come to grow closer to his teaching's day by day. The second could also be a Christian spiritual book, and you have so much to choose from and so much to explore, so why not have a look around or order something off the internet, maybe from the Desert Fathers, J. John, Nicky Gumbel, or Thomas Merton. Please do make contact with me if you would like to explore more.

Alms giving

Giving Alms is another area people explore during lent. I'm sure we all give financially in some form, but have you thought about giving to a lesser-known charity rather than the ones we are all familiar with. Or if you are unable to give to charity, how about giving your time to a good cause? All around us organizations are struggling for support and even our Sunday coffee ministry needs extra hands. Please do pray about how you can support the community and indeed your church further.

So you see, engaging in lent is a lot more than just giving up chocolate, it is about really trying to imitate that walk with the Holy Spirit as he guides us through our own person desert. It is about struggling a little more than we would normally and about taking the time to grow that little bit more. It is about growing in life and faith in our own desert of Runcorn in 2024.

Wishing you blessed lent, Revd George



FEBRUARY CHURCH SERVICES

Sunday 4th February (2nd Sunday before Lent)

9.00am Holy Communion

10.30am Café Style Church



Wednesday 7th February

10.00am Holy Communion

Sunday 11th February (Sunday before Lent)

10.30am Holy Communion



Wednesday 14th February

Ash Wednesday

10.00am Holy Communion

Sunday 18th February (1st Sunday of Lent)

10.30am Holy Communion

Wednesday 21st February

10.00am Holy Communion

Sunday 25th February (2nd Sunday of Lent)

10.30am Holy Communion



Wednesday 28th February

10.00am Holy Communion

MARCH CHURCH SERVICES

Sunday 3rd March (3rd Sunday of Lent)

9.00am Holy Communion

10.30am Café Style Church



Wednesday 6th March

10.00am Holy Communion



Sunday 10th March (Mothering Sunday)

10.30am Holy Communion

Wednesday 13th March

10.00am Holy Communion

Sunday 17th March (5th Sunday of Lent)

10.30am Holy Communion

Wednesday 20th March

10.00am Holy Communion

Sunday 24th March (Palm Sunday)

10.30am Holy Communion



Monday 25th March

3.00pm Meditation Service

Tuesday 26th March

3.00pm Meditation Service

Wednesday 27th March

10.00am Holy Communion



Thursday 28th March (Maundy Thursday)

7.30pm Holy Communion & Vigil

Friday 29th March (Good Friday)

3.00pm Stations of the Cross

Saturday 30th March (Easter Eve)

8.00pm Service of Light

Sunday 31st March (Easter Sunday)

10.30am Holy Communion

BIBLE READINGS FOR FEBRUARY

Sunday 4th February

Colossians 1: 15-20

John 1: 1-14

Sunday 11th February

2 Kings 2: 1-12

Mark 9: 2-9

Wednesday 14th February

Psalms 51:1-18

Matthew 6: 1-6, 16-21

Sunday 18th February

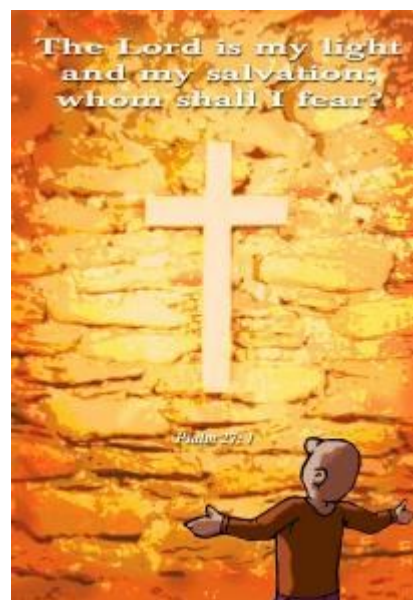
Genesis 9: 8-17

Mark 1: 9-15

Sunday 25th February

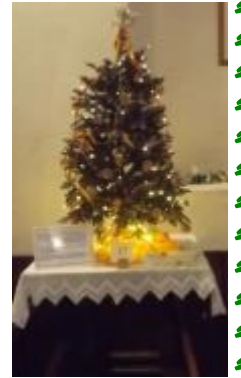
Genesis 17: 1-7, 15-16

Mark 8: 31-end



Community Christmas Tree Festival 2023

Again we held another successful Christmas Tree Festival and Grand Draw, with us raising just over a staggering **£3,100** for the church. In total, we had **24 trees** decorated by church congregation members, schools, community groups and local businesses. This year the weather was kinder to us, and we had **319 adults and children** who came along to visit the festival. Father Christmas was in attendance again with his very own elf as you can see from the photograph. Our vicar George and committee, would like to give a big **THANK YOU** to everyone who decorated a tree or one of the window sills, manned a stall, the kitchen and even the door.



Carols around the Christmas Tree

This was on Saturday 16th December in church and was attended by **125 Adults & Children**. Everyone enjoyed singing Christmas Carols, and listening to the choir of Pewithall School who made the night with their excellent singing.



Christingle 2023

Our annual Christingle was held Friday 22nd December in church, with around **92 adults and children** all making their own Christingle Oranges in the Meeting Room. Our new vicar Revd George Roach led the service which was a lovely service and enjoyed by all.



Prayer for February 2024

Father, In this coldest and shortest of months, this month when traditionally thoughts turn to love and the promise of Spring, help us to be thankful and steadfast and to see Your bigger picture in what is sometimes a frightening world, a world where love between nations seems to be in short supply and the future uncertain.

We pray for all those whose lives are in turmoil through a lack of love and justice. Help us to remember the great love You have for Your world and Your people, so great that You sent Jesus to show us how to live, how to love and how to overcome the troubles of the world. Thank you that Your love is stronger than the forces of evil, stronger than death. Help us to put our trust in Jesus, to keep our focus on Him, knowing He will never leave us or forsake us. Thank you that His love is stronger than the forces of evil, stronger than death. In his name, Amen.

By Daphne Kitching

27th Feb: George Herbert, vicar and poet

On this day the Church Calendar celebrates George Herbert. For those who are muttering 'never heard of him', just think of the hymn 'Let all the world/ In every corner sing', which he wrote, along with several other hymns which are still popular, even if they are well over 300 years old. In the course of his short life he was a graduate of Cambridge University, a favoured politician of King James, a distinguished poet of the so-called 'metaphysical' school, and a much-loved parish priest at Bemerton, in Wiltshire. He was born in Wales but grew up in a wealthy family in England. As a student he felt called to ordination, but when he had graduated, he was drawn instead into the government of the time. As a protégé of King James (yes, the one of the 'King James Bible') he could have pursued a career in government, but that youthful call persisted and after a while he turned instead to the ministry of the Church of England. It was an era when many clergy were absentee incumbents, paying someone else to do the parish work while they lived elsewhere, but Herbert set himself to be a true parish priest, noted for his pastoral care and practical support of his parishioners. The whole of his ministry was fulfilled in that one parish, until he died at 39 from what we would now call tuberculosis. It is of course his hymns for which he is chiefly remembered today, though his Collected Poems are also regarded as jewels of English poetry.

We have welcomed the following into the Church Family through Baptism



Recently we welcomed **two children** **Elijah Thomas Dobson and Austin Jacob Kelly (14th January)** into the Church Family.

Please pray for Elijah and Austin that they may grow up to love and follow Christ. Please pray for their parents and Godparents, and pray that they may seek to know Christ and to worship.

This is the baptism



from
14th
January



IMPORTANT INFORMATION

"The PCC met recently and discussed the potential new vision for the growth of St Michael's. As a result, we are trailing new times from the **first Sunday in February (Café Style Church) to the APCM.**

So the start time will be **9.00am** for the BCP service and **10.30am** for all the main Sunday services including Café Style Church.



Fundraising Event

On Saturday 24th February we are recreating the TV Show, 'Would I Lie To You' in the Meeting Room. This should be a fun evening. So 6.30pm for 7.00pm start and tickets are £7. **Bring your own drink and nibbles**

Activities at St Michael's Church

St Michael's Maintenance Appeal Committee

Tea & Toast in the Meeting Room

**Next Tea & Toast is on 2nd March & 6th April
@ 10.00am to 12.00 noon Admission: £2.00**

Crafters Group

Crafters Group meets in the Meeting Room every Tuesday from **10.00am to 12noon.** Everyone welcome, especially newcomers.



VML

Sing-along sessions on Tuesday nights @ **7.00pm** in the Meeting Room. So come along have a cuppa and a sing-along for just **£2.**

Now these three continue ...

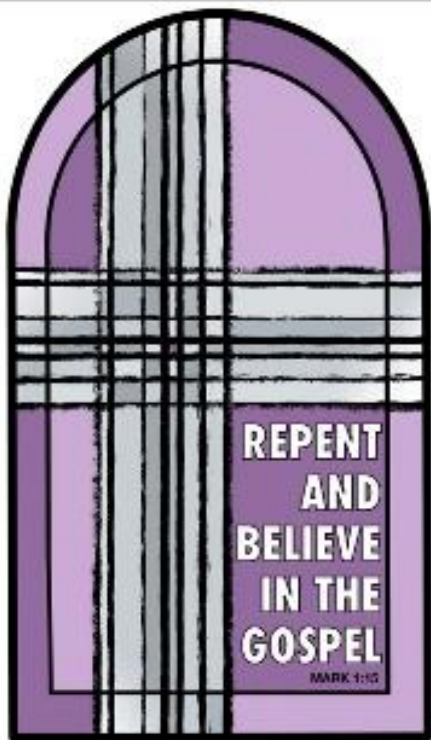


Of these, the greatest is ... 1 Cor 13:13

What's the Big Idea? *An Introduction to the Books of the Bible: Exodus*

This month we are looking at Exodus, the second book of the Old Testament. Its name means departure, reminding us that Israel's flight out of slavery in Egypt is the major focus of the book. Exodus is a book of two halves! The first part (chapters 1-19 & 32-34) is the story of an oppressed people who are delivered from slavery into a life of freedom. The second half (chapters 20-31 & 35-40) consists of detailed instructions about the life and worship of God's people. The book introduces us to their *salvation* or deliverance, as *story*. God's promises to Abraham are fulfilled as the people journey to the Promised Land. He also renews His covenant with them at Sinai, expressed in the Ten Commandments (20: 1-17). At the heart of Exodus is the person of God Himself. In chapter 3 God reveals His name as YHWH or *'I am who I am'* (3:14) to Moses. This is the name by which God is known throughout the Old Testament, expressed in the title *'the LORD'*. To know God's name is to know Him, as well as His character ie His justice, truthfulness, mercy, faithfulness and holiness. He is the God who controls history, delivering the people out of Egypt, while the death of the Passover lamb points us to Jesus' death on the cross (1 Corinthians 5:7). God's promises of help remain true for us today: *'Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the LORD will bring you today'* Exodus 14:13.

'This Exodus story continues to be a major means that God uses to draw men and women in trouble out of the mess of history into the kingdom of salvation.' (Eugene Peterson).



Food shortages are 'likely' this year

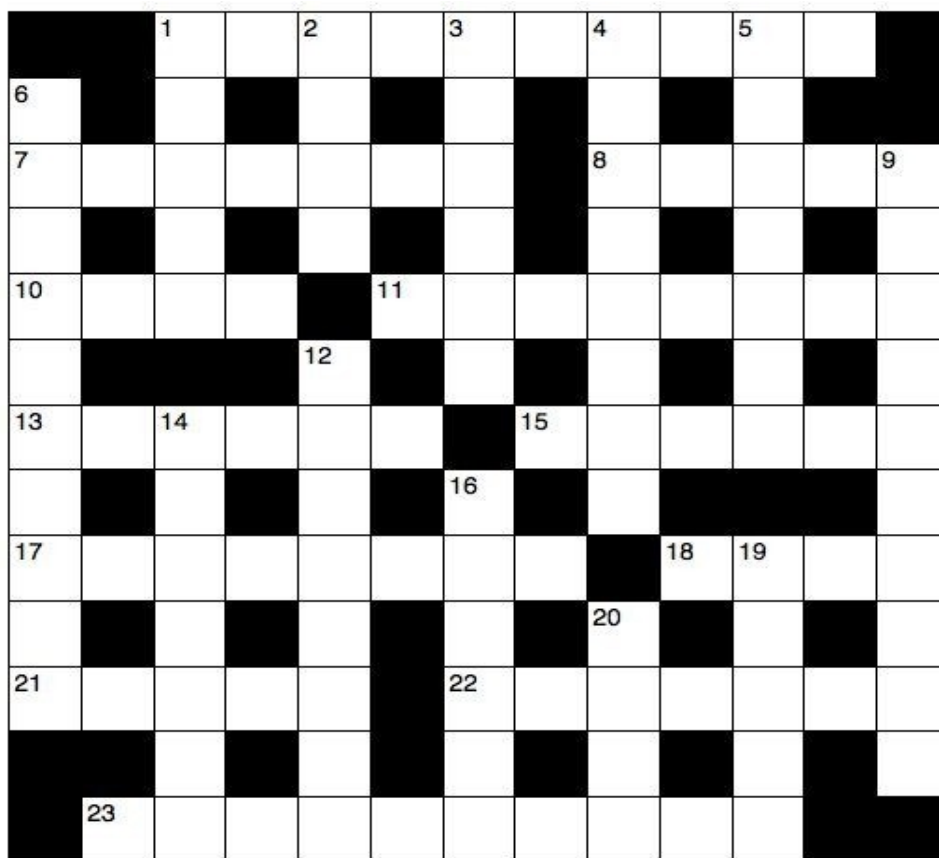
You might find some supermarket shelves empty in the coming months.

A combination of global conflicts, climate change and transportation issues are making it harder for food producers to get their products out of the field and onto your plate. And as at the end of last month (January), it got even more complicated, with the introduction of new checks on the goods coming from the EU into the UK. Professor Chris Elliott of Queen's University Belfast is a food security expert. He explains: "It'll be about affordability but also availability, and the likelihood of empty shelves, particularly fresh produce shelves, in 2024 is alarmingly high." Professor Elliott said: "We are virtually totally dependent on other countries for most of our fresh produce, our fruit and our vegetables. We were reasonably self-sufficient in dairy, we were reasonably self-sufficient in poultry and eggs. But that's also on the decline now, as a result of the collapse of some sectors of the food industry in the UK."

Why tea is "the drink of getting things done"

The drinking of tea has found an unexpected new champion: James May, the former Top Gear presenter. Speaking recently on Radio 4, James May said: "I'm just worried that the cult of coffee is going to destroy tea. And I don't like coffee, it is just rubbish. I like tea." He added: "Tea is the drink of getting things done." How did tea get so embedded in UK culture? Food historian Polly Russell says the answer lies in the Industrial Revolution of the mid-18th century. "Tea became less expensive and at the same time you had agricultural wages slumping, and agricultural workers literally not able to buy food, to buy fuel, or to afford a hot meal. So, tea became a way of having something hot and restorative – often with sugar – and that habit then also translated into the urban, as the industrial revolution expanded into our cities." And so it was that "tea became absolutely central to the diet of the working poor." And this provided the basis for the idea "that tea and sugar were fuelling the industrial nation." James May argues that tea drinking is still fundamental to "bringing everyone together and ensuring happiness as well as productivity." He believes: "Tea in the British workplace is more than a drink, it's a social glue. Britain is falling apart because we don't drink enough tea."





CROSSWORD CHALLENGE

See how you get on with this crossword. There is no prize, but whoever gets it back to the Editor by February 22nd will be entered on a Roll of Honour in the next edition of *Growing Together*.

Across

- 1 Success or wealth (Deuteronomy 28:11) (10)
- 7 Forbidden fruit for Nazirites (Numbers 6:3) (7)
- 8 Concede (Job 27:5) (5)
- 10 Look at (Psalm 48:13) (4)
- 11 Much in evidence after weddings (8)
- 13 Condense (Job 36:27) (6)
- 15 Breakwater (6)
- 17 Give a tan (anag.) (8)
- 18 More usually now called Pentecost, — Sunday (4)
- 21 After living for 365 years, it was said of him that 'he walked with God' (Genesis 5:23-24) (5)
- 22 Trampled (Judges 9:27) (7)
- 23 For example, Miriam, Deborah (Exodus 15:20; Judges 4:4) (10)

Down

- 1 Arrogance (Proverbs 8:13) (5)
- 2 Roman poet from first century BC (4)
- 3 So rapt (anag.) (6)
- 4 Declare again (2 Corinthians 2:8) (8)
- 5 Paul's 'fellow worker', to whom he sent two epistles (Romans 16:21) (7)
- 6 God's foreseeing care and protection (Job 10:12) (10)
- 9 Traditional form of Roman Catholic Mass (10)
- 12 'The Lord... has given the — of Israel to David and his descendants for ever' (2 Chronicles 13:5) (8)
- 14 'My soul glorifies the Lord and my spirit rejoices in God my — ' (Luke 1:46-47) (7)
- 16 The central element in Nebuchadnezzar's dream, identified and interpreted by Daniel (Daniel 2:31) (6)
- 19 'On this rock I will build my church, and the gates of — will not overcome it' (Matthew 16:18) (5)
- 20 City where Paul was under house arrest for two years (Acts 28:16) (4)



December/January
Crossword answer

ROLL OF HONOUR

Three people got the
crossword
answer and they were

Jim & Shelagh Goffin,
Margaret Myers
&
Wendy Sefton



February
2024



Please Pray



Please remember the following people in your prayers throughout this month.

Graham & Nicola Aylett

George Done

Gerald Cook

Helen Browne

Also please remember in your prayers anyone that you know who are home housebound or in hospital.

If you would like us to pray for someone close to you let the Pastoral Care Team know and they could visit someone at home don't hesitate to let them know.

....and the recently bereaved, especially any families known to you

Audrey Johnson



Gwendoline Rotherham

Samuel Bates

Winter Now

'Tis winter now; the fallen snow
Has left the heavens all coldly clear;
Through leafless boughs the sharp winds blow,
And all the earth lies dead and drear.

And yet God's love is not withdrawn;
His life within the keen air breathes;
His beauty paints the crimson dawn,
And clothes the boughs with glittering wreaths...

O God! Who giv'st the winter's cold,
As well as summer's joyous rays,
Us warmly in thy love enfold,
And keep us through life's wintry days.

From a poem by Samuel Longfellow 1819-92

INFORMATION

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Not on a Friday

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Chris Challoner 01928 715830

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e-mail:

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If you want to book
a wedding, baptism or funeral
please phone this number
07722470940
and ask for Robbie

VML

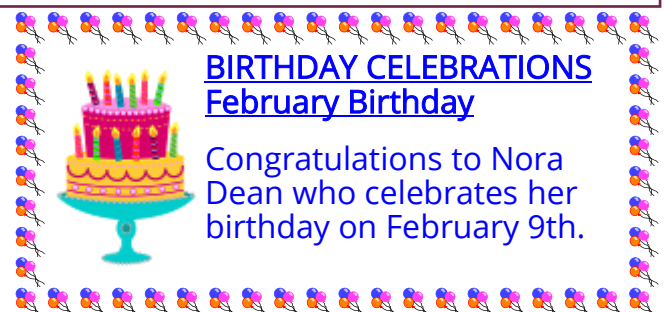


If you have some time to yourself on a Tuesday afternoon, why not tune into the VML Radio Show on HCR 92.3 FM.

LENT LUNCHES and PRAYER TIME 2024

During Lent we will be holding Lent prayer times and lunches on Fridays in the Meeting Room from **16th February until 22nd March**. The prayer times will be half an hour of creative prayer, easy to join in with, **starting at 12.00noon**. The prayer time will be followed by a bread and soup lunch, kindly provided by Robbie and VML helper's **at 12.30 p.m.** Donations this year will be sent to the British Red Cross which will used to help with the help in Gaza.

ALL WELCOME, WHENEVER YOU CAN MAKE IT



BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS February Birthday

Congratulations to Nora Dean who celebrates her birthday on February 9th.